

c | CATECHETICAL LEADER



THE ROLE OF THE

DIOCESAN STAFF



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Conference Report: Engage
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CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

Catechesis and the Baptismal Catechumenate

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SAVORING THE “MOMENT”

Mary Ann Ronan



We truly “engaged the catechetical moment” in Columbus, Ohio. The Scriptures of the week centered us on the Easter stories of Jesus continuing the catechesis of the disciples. I kept returning to the call of Peter...”when you were young you used to dress yourself and went where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone will lead you where you do not want to go...follow me.” This is Christ’s call to us.

Bishop Malone outlined the vision of the *National Directory of Catechesis* and shared this document’s vitality for all of us as catechists. He cheered us on in the path of discipleship.

Dr. Edward Hahnenberg sets us on the course of the cost of discipleship. He challenged us with the need to dialogue with this culture we live in and the rich resources of our Catholic tradition and Scripture to connect our living with our practice of faith.

“You will stretch out your hands and someone will lead you...”

Another challenge came from Dr. Adele Gonzalez in regard to multiculturalism. We were invited to see the face of Christ in one another. We, like Peter going before the crowd at Pentecost, must run toward one another. We need to go beyond appreciating our differences to see our own faces in one another.

Diocesan offices and parish offices can become one in the light of parish life. When we embrace life in faith, we see the cost of discipleship in the sorrows and joys of the parish community. Fr. Robert Duggan and Sue Clark shared a vision of discipleship in the light of death and resurrection. The vision is the spark, living it is the fire of catechesis, and the challenge is the letting go that leads us back to the shore to eat with Jesus to learn again what it means to “follow him”.

We discovered God in Sabbath rest through poetry, story and song that led us to see the great wisdom of rest. Fr. John Dillon, S.J., challenged us with the command of God to rest. Resting leads us to silence to hear and see God, which is so, needed in our ministry.

Dr. Thomas Groome invited us to engage the depth of both the *GDC* and *NDC* to stir our fire and ignite catechesis. He challenged us both as a professor of theology and a father. Apologetics alive is the gift of faith that is coherent, compelling and convincing. Discipleship as a way of life takes us out of our comfort zone into persuasion that encourages us to share this fantastic way to live with others. He challenged us to bring our lives to faith and faith to our lives so that, like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we recognize Jesus in the stories and breaking of bread and Jesus disappears into us and we into him. “Engaging This Catechetical Moment” was indeed catechetical.

This particular moment culminated in celebrating Neil Parent, our executive director of seventeen years. His *vision*, from NCDD to NCCL, has taken us beyond what we could have imagined. Neil’s *leadership* has always inspired and challenged us in ministry, governance, and association management. His *openness* to new endeavors have often stretched all of us but led us to places we needed to be with each other as diocesan directors and parish catechetical leaders. His *service* to family, diocesan directors, parish catechetical leaders, partner organizations and affiliations helped all us see our interconnection to each other. Neil’s gift to us is beyond all telling. We give thanks to God for him and we know he will keep cooking on the beach or his barbecue, catechizing, and helping all of us follow Christ. Blessings, Neil. ■

FAREWELL...

Neil A. Parent



The time has come for me to say goodbye, dear friends and colleagues. After nearly seventeen years as NCCL's executive director, I am leaving my post as of June 30.

It has been a wonderfully blessed and privileged opportunity for me to have worked with you and the staff in building an organization that has grown steadily in stature and importance over the years. Together, we have made NCCL the premiere association of professional catechetical leaders.

I am especially grateful to all the NCCL members who served on committees, forums, the Representative Council, and the board of directors during my tenor as executive director. Your leadership in these areas is what truly makes NCCL a member-owned and member-driven organization. I have had the good fortune of working with you to set goals and develop strategies for helping NCCL achieve its core mission of advancing excellence in catechetical leadership.

As I look back, I take my greatest satisfaction in having played a role in crafting the design and bylaws that created NCCL out of the National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education/CCD (NCDD). In addition to expanding the Conference's membership to include parish catechetical leaders, academics, publishers, and partner organizations, the new design also gave birth to the Representative Council and a streamlined board of directors.

Since those developments in 1991, other significant changes have taken place in the association, especially through the NCCL 2000 project, which further streamlined the board, launched the membership forums, the leadership discernment committee and process, and enabled more parish catechetical leaders to hold professional membership.

Even now, the board of directors is further clarifying its essential strategic and oversight functions. President Mary Ann Ronan and the other board members deserve special praise for their dedication to top-quality governance while striving at the same time to navigate the many strategic challenges that NCCL has had to face of late.

These organizational changes over the years are a clear indication that NCCL's membership, especially through its elected leaders, has been open and willing to take the steps necessary to ensure that the organization keep pace with developments, both internally and externally. What greatly matters for NCCL's wellbeing is that it continues to ask itself what it needs to both be and do to serve effectively the Church's catechetical mission.

CATECHETICAL LEADER

A few months after NCCL came into existence, I asked an organizational consultant how long it would be before we had to start thinking about making adjustments in the new organization. "The thinking must start now" was his quick response. He went on to explain that the unfolding seismic shifts in technology, communications, entertainment education and other areas would dramatically impact virtually every segment of society. Associations such as NCCL, he stressed, must be ready to make adjustments that will keep it poised to deliver quality services to its members.

As NCCL's membership grows in numbers and diversity, the challenges will become more acute as to how to meet the needs of the different leadership groups. More changes may be required to get the formula right, but it can be done. The guiding vision that gave birth to NCCL, namely, bringing together in one association all catechetical leaders, is still the right one. Research shows that health, strength, and creativity flower from the seedbed of diversity.

In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville traveled from France to America to study firsthand our experiment with democracy. In *Democracy in America*, his reflection on his findings, Tocqueville noted that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations" to address issues of common concern.

Certainly our founding members' common concern in the late 1960s was the effective nurturing of mature Christian faith through catechesis. They undoubtedly believed that by pooling their resources together in an association, they could address this concern far better than they could as individuals. They were right. Catechesis in the United States is better off today precisely because of NCDD and NCCL. By no means are we the only group contributing to the U.S. catechetical agenda, aside from the bishops. But the fact remains that NCCL has made a substantial contribution to the quality of catechesis in the United States, and it will continue to do so.

As I bid you goodbye, I pray for God's blessings that all the talents and gifts of our members will be effectively empowered through NCCL to do great things for infusing the Good News of Jesus in learners of all ages. I also pray for the success of my successor, Lee Nagel, who brings wonderful experience and skill to the role of executive director. NCCL is blessed to have him and the experienced staff of Kathy, Joyce and Bridgette to work with our elected leaders and members on behalf of NCCL's mission. |

Doing More with Less

by David M. Riley



When I was hired in 1982 as a member of the staff of what was then called the Office of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, our staff numbered twelve including our office director. During the heady times for catechesis shortly after Vatican II, I am told the office staff consisted of 22 full time staffers. Today our staff numbers eight, spread out over three regional offices. Staff cutbacks reflecting shrinking diocesan budgets coupled with natural attrition have resulted in the reshaping not only of our diocesan structure but those of many other dioceses across the country. A few years ago, in the wake of the *General Directory for Catechesis*, with its emphasis on evangelizing catechesis, our office added the responsibility for evangelization in the archdiocese to our already full plate. Later we even changed our name from Religious Education to be more consistent with the documents: Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. Thus, as often happens within many institutions in our day—business, government, and industry—we find ourselves trying to do more with less.

We need to sharpen the focus when staffing and resources are in short supply.

Major seismic shifts have—and are still—taking place in the United States Catholic community in the wake of the massive sexual abuse scandal in the priesthood, the gradual secularization of the society, the well documented disintegration of the Catholic subculture, the exit of young adults from the church, the financial difficulties resulting from all the above, and many other trends that have been written about extensively elsewhere. My concern in this article is not to recount the impact that change has had on the U.S. church, but rather to talk about the evolving role of the diocesan catechetical staff as I have experienced it over twenty-five years.

THE UPSIDE

Of course getting “leaner” doesn’t have to result in getting “meaner.” The upside of downsizing is that it forces staffs to re-examine priorities, take a hard look at what they currently do, and make some tough choices. Sometimes it even compels them to change their paradigm for how they think about their mission. This is not an easy or pleasant prospect because people in catechetical ministry are passionate, caring and committed and the temptation is ever present to continue doing what we are doing with less and somehow just make it work. If taken seriously, however, the acceptance of limitations can be a defining process, a clarifying one. It forces an office staff to ask questions: Who do we serve? What is important to them? How can we best serve our clientele given our limited situation?

Whether they are faced with scarcity or not, these are the kinds of basic questions that diocesan catechetical offices need to address in the form of planning. They will do so in light of their bishop’s directives, their diocesan culture, their own history of relating to parishes and parish catechetical leaders, the perceived needs of those whom they serve, and the resources available to them. While the *National Directory for Catechesis* calls for the development of a diocesan catechetical plan (p.249) that flows from the pastoral plan of the diocese, the fact is that every diocese engages in planning in different ways. The *Directory* acknowledges this diversity in implementing the diocesan catechetical mission. In the archdiocese of Cincinnati we do not have a central, overarching diocesan pastoral plan. What we do have are various plans to address specific pastoral needs such as the imminent priest’s shortage, the decline in Catholic school enrollments, and the need to increase a sense of stewardship among the faithful. Within this context each archdiocesan office then formulates its own plans for how it will serve its ministerial clientele.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

About three years ago our office embarked on a planning process known as Appreciative Inquiry. The AI process, developed by David Cooperrider and his associates, is based on the belief that the best way to manage change is to take a look at what you are doing right as rather than to focus on your problems. In every organization there are things that work. If we know what works, then the best direction to move in making change is to carry forward more of what works, to focus on what we are doing well. The best people to help you discover what you are doing well are those whom you serve. AI suggests that organizations begin by asking questions such as the following: What is working here? When do I (we) feel most proud and excited about what we are doing? What is it that we do that satisfies and truly helps those whom we serve? To begin to answer these questions our staff talked with catechetical leaders and principals face to face. We asked them what the staff of the Office of Evangelization does that is most helpful to them.

We try to honor the parishes as they are and respond to the needs that they express.

After distilling and reflecting on “The Best of What Is,” the next step is to “Envision What Might Be.” To accomplish this we formulated a series of six “Dream Statements” that described the preferred future of parish catechesis *as if it were already taking place*. Then for each dream statement we formulated some concrete steps to make the vision contained in the “dream” a reality. These “action steps” became the foundation for some of the proactive initiatives that we engaged in—and are, in fact, continuing to implement. The action steps can and do change every year, while the Dream Statements will be in front of us for at least five years.

The point of this description is not to recommend the use of AI or any particular process but to underscore the heightened necessity of

sharpening the focus of the diocesan office when staffing and resources are in short supply. It is extremely important to name some priorities and focus in order for an office staff to be on the same page and to be effective in any sense.

CORE ISSUES

Every diocesan staff has to decide at some point what kind of leadership it is going to provide to parishes and parish catechetical leaders. Aside from reductions in force, there are a few core issues with which our staff perennially wrestles. These are issues that do not have a clear resolution but appear in the form of questions that must be faced. I present them here as dichotomies, but in truth, they must be held in tension because both perspectives are important. I suspect that every diocesan staff deals with them in different ways.

PROACTIVE VERSUS REACTIVE

Our staff endeavors to keep current with new trends and developments in catechesis, the latest church documents, and resources. Accordingly, we attempt to formulate a vision for parish catechesis that embodies quality and effectiveness. Through various leadership development and other programs—and simply how we communicate with parish catechetical leaders—we attempt to “nudge” parishes in directions that we believe will help them accomplish their goals and to create quality catechesis.

While the vision is important to have, it is also true that parishes often operate

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under conditions that are less than ideal, and their issues are not always our issues. As a staff we try to honor the parishes as they are and respond to the needs that they express even when they fall short of some (albeit wonderful) vision. This is a polite way of saying that parish catechetical leaders “have their own fish to fry” and they will fry them despite our efforts to hold up a vision. After all, diocesan catechetical staffs exist because parishes exist. We are there for them. Consequently, as a staff we often find ourselves walking with catechetical leaders in parishes helping them where they need help. More often than not we are viewed as partners with them, but sometimes we are the “people downtown.”

DIRECTIVE VERSUS PERSUASIVE

Because the diocesan catechetical office is part of the staff of the local bishop, the staff has the authority to call parishes and catechetical leaders to accountability on certain measures. The bishop through his staff teaches and sets forth standards for catechetical activity and for promoting quality in parish programming. Our responsibility as a staff is to assist him in promoting his catechetical agenda. According to the *General Directory for Catechesis* and repeated in the *National Directory for Catechesis* (p. 250), “the diocesan catechetical office (Officium Catecheticum) is the means by which the Bishop as head of the community and teacher of doctrine utilizes to direct and moderate all of the catechetical activities of the diocese” (p.250). This vision is often expressed in terms of policies with which parishes are expected to comply.

The function of directing varies, of course, from diocese to diocese. In fact, there are very few mandates that come from on high in our

archdiocese. Pastors know this as well as catechetical leaders and Catholic school principals. Thus, we can issue salary ranges, job descriptions, certification requirements and any number of structural guidelines, and parish leaders may or may not take them seriously. The power of our office lies in our expertise and the credibility stemming from our perceived capacity to help those in our parishes do their jobs better. In my tenure on the diocesan staff I have learned to become a realist about this. Unless you “scratch where they itch,” catechetical leaders will not perceive the diocesan office as helpful and relevant. Fortunately we have gifted, talented people on our staff who understand the world of the parish staff and who have earned the right to speak to catechetical leaders. Most of us have been catechetical leaders at one time. This power of persuasion is our point of leverage in our work.

SERVICE VERSUS SUPPORT

Several years ago when our staff was much larger, members of the staff would often give retreats, provide faculty in-service training, teach courses, and even perform some duties in the parish that a catechetical leader would normally do today, such as observe catechists teaching. As our numbers diminished we had to make some decisions about who we could be for those in leadership roles in parishes. Even though some of our staff still perform some of those direct service activities, we have tried to turn our efforts more toward supporting the parish catechetical leader as consultants and advocates. Our role as we conceive it, and what that they value us most for, is that we are “there for them” as a supportive presence. We serve as resource brokers, advisors, and coaches.

COMPARTMENTALIZED VERSUS COLLABORATIVE

As anyone in church ministry has no doubt discovered, it is much harder to *be* collaborative than to *talk* about it. Volumes have been written about how important it is to collaborate, but in my experience it is not all that common. In our archdiocese we have made efforts to partner with other offices on occasional projects or in sponsoring

The power of persuasion is our point of leverage in our work.

*We serve as resource brokers, advisors,
and coaches.*

events. The *National Directory for Catechesis* states, “Ordinarily, several diocesan offices and agencies share responsibility for the diocesan catechetical mission” (p. 250). If asked, most diocesan offices probably would not claim this broader understanding of the catechetical mission. Diocesan structures are often fairly well segmented, which makes bridge building across institutional lines a challenge. How often do we think of other offices as partners in the catechetical mission? Yet with staffs shrinking, and more parish leaders wearing multiple hats, it is often the case that several diocesan offices interface with the same person at the parish. Would it not be helpful if parish catechetical leaders could experience a more seamless, less bureaucratic approach from the chancery?

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into the future it is likely that the role of the diocesan catechetical staff will continue to evolve. If present trends continue staffs will become smaller still, necessitating even more sharply focused leadership and clarity of mission. In our archdiocese in recent years we have seen the level of professional preparation of parish catechetical leaders erode. Pastors are hiring catechetical leaders with less experience and education. At the same time the number of men ordained to the permanent diaconate continues to rise and they are being hired in greater numbers to fill catechetical positions. What are the implications for diocesan staffs in terms of providing training and development so that catechetical leaders can rise to the challenges that the ministry will present? As the number of priests continues to decline and parishes join together, how will catechetical ministry and personnel be configured to meet the needs of multiple

faith communities led by teams of laity and clergy? What will the role of the diocesan staff be then? As bishops continue to become more directly involved in the catechetical ministry in their dioceses, what will be the implications for their catechetical staffs? These are just a few of the many questions that loom on the horizon as diocesan and parish leaders strive to work together for the sake of the catechetical mission. Stay tuned. ■

David M. Riley is regional director for the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Trinitarian Vision in Broad Strokes

by Humberto Ramos



In almost two decades of diocesan ministry, I have been asked over and over what I do for the dioceses. With diocesan down-sizing I, like many others, have to wear several hats and the recital of a laundry list of things I do usually suffices for the curious inquirer. Recently, however, a young priest in the diocese asked me a deeper question. He asked me to explain my philosophy and vision. Feeling that the question was a litmus test to gage my theological stance, I responded “to reconcile God’s people” — our archbishop’s motto, which is the work of the church as articulated *Lumen Gentium*. That document states the church is “the will of the Father, the mission of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit.” At the heart of the priest’s question is one about the role of diocesan staff.

Behind the very specific job description of each diocesan staff person is a vision of what the church proposes for those who collaborate in the ministry of chief shepherd of a local church. (See Canons 386, 387, 394 and 381 of the Code of Canon Law.) Local ordinaries may structure the ministry offices differently in each diocese and may give specific orientations, but it is fair to say that the role of diocesan staff collaborating with the bishop will share similarities with the apostolic mission entrusted to us by the Lord — to make disciples and to teach them all that he had commanded (Matt 28). It is my hope that I can accurately describe in broad strokes a vision that our Catholic tradition has developed for those who work in diocesan offices, particularly for those of us involved in religious education and catechetical ministry.


My reflection is rooted in the local church of Los Angeles, which is composed of people of every race and nation, led by Cardinal Roger Mahony. I work primarily with the Spanish-speaking community under the direction of Sr. Edith Prendergast. It is a privilege to minister with a team of talented and gifted individuals passionately committed to forming, training and enabling leaders and catechetical ministers to pass on the richness of our Catholic story and tradition.

STAFFING THE STAFF

It would be worthwhile to recall that our current vision of religious education and formation is anchored in the Second Vatican Council’s teaching and subsequent documents such as *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Catechesi Tradendae*, *General Directory for Catechesis*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the very recent *National Directory for Catechesis*. Let’s not forget the recent document published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-workers in Vineyard of the Lord*. While not directed specifically to religious educators, it offers insights on the mission and formation of the lay ministers.

A particular challenge today is to situate adults at the heart of our formational and educational endeavors.

Well expressed in the documents mentioned is the concept that religious education and catechetical ministry is broader in its scope than simply sacramental preparation for first communion and confirmation. Catechetical ministry has come to be understood as the work of the church and embraces the faithful in their formational processes “from womb to tomb.” A particular challenge today is to situate adults at the heart of our formational and educational endeavors. The concept of catechesis for the whole community, while not new, will challenge us to continue to discover innovative and exciting ways to engage the whole community in ongoing discipleship. This monumental desire of the church is alive and well within the Spanish speaking community in Los Angeles through the work done by SINE (*Sistema Integral de Nueva Evangelización*), *Catequesis para Toda la Comunidad*, *Catequesis Familiar*, *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (Small Ecclesial Communities) and the work done by some apostolic movements like the *Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* (Christian Family Movement).



Catechesis is not limited to what some Catholics associated with CCD or even to a step within the process of evangelization, but “catechesis by its very nature nurtures the seeds of faith sown by the Holy Spirit through the initial proclamation of the Gospel (NDC No. 22). Therefore the proclamation of the word of God is an indispensable and fundamental dimension of the catechetical ministry for it informs, forms and transforms communities of faith.

SOCIAL REALITIES

Without doubt there are common aspects in evangelizing and catechizing in every community, but we cannot dispense with the rich cultural diversity in our American church. The task of illuminating human life with the light of the Gospel is conditioned by the cultural diversity that at present is lived out in our parish communities. While the great commission of making disciples is universal, the concrete work of all good catechesis begins with understanding the language, customs, values, and reality lived out by the people that the church wishes to evangelize; thus, the need to have competent diocesan leaders that accompany and understand the needs and hopes of the diverse communities. Our local church has responded to the complexity of a multicultural reality in Los Angeles with specialized ministries offering Asian and African American cultural perspectives and ministry to the Spanish speaking.

The Religious Education Congress in Los Angeles is a good example of the blending the various charisms given by the Spirit to lay, religious, and ordained alike. It not only highlights the various ministries and cultures but engages countless number of people in active participation and manages to gather over 40,000 delegates annually.

HUMAN COMPLEXITY

Along with the social reality, another important aspect in the work of religious education is an appreciative understanding of the complexities of the human being. The human sciences such as psychology, sociology, and pedagogy have made great contributions in helping us to understand the processes of growth and human development. These too become indispensable tools that aid those people called forth by the community to form others. Currently

diocesan staff in the Office of Religious Education in Los

Angeles work hard to make available formational and educational opportunities that respond to a wide range of inter-generational needs. These on-going opportunities offered for leadership development and enrichment through of the diocesan office of Religious Education varies in scope from in-service workshops to full-blown institutes, conferences, congresses and other faith formation processes. These initial formational opportunities subsequently open the door for ministers to pursue academic degrees in theological studies.

THEOLOGICAL VISION

The incarnation of the word of God, the Word made flesh, is the model for catechesis, as is it is for evangelization. It points the way for what we call divine pedagogy. God takes our human condition in all things but sin to offer us the divine life. This mystery highlights the importance of integrating all aspects of our human condition into God’s divine plan, overcoming the dualism often inherent in the body/spirit, heaven/earth, doctrine/life, culture/Gospel separation.

We must temper the bureaucratic image often associated with those who “work downtown” and assume an air of welcome and openness to serve.

Our diverse cultures and ways of life image the diversity and yet unity in the mystery of Trinitarian life, which calls us to build up a new society. In a world marked by secularism and individualism, the church proclaims that it is possible to form a people, community forged in love. This oneness with each other and the divine is the nucleus of our profession of faith. We are a sacrament of the Trinitarian life and out of that sacramentality sprout all other sacraments.

These theological underpinnings provide the Christological and ecclesiological foundation that invites the church to integrate the

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diverse aspects of the Christian life in a common project that connects liturgy, faith formation, ethical and moral commitment of the believer, and the construction of the Christian community. Even when we can identify the various independent aspects of Christian life that are attended to by other diocesan offices, they cannot be separated in the concrete reality of the life of a Christian. We require a model of ministry that emphasis collaboration, co-responsibility and participation-what many church documents simply call *pastoral de conjunto*. While my ministry is directed primarily to the Spanish-speaking adults, it requires that I work closely not only with my coworkers in our office but with the Offices of Justice and Peace, Ethnic Ministries, Worship, Family Life, Vicar for Clergy, Deaconate, and a host of other ecclesial and community organizations.

THE IMPLICATIONS

Mindful of church's mission to evangelize and be at the service of the reign of God as community, diocesan staff — an extension of the ministry of the bishop — commit themselves to dedicated service. In particular the role of the diocesan catechetical staff includes the following:

- To articulate and communicate a clear and holistic vision for total catechetical ministry giving unified leadership to the various concerns reflected in this ministry
- To surface, analyze, and respond to the catechetical needs of the diocese
- To form and train catechetical leaders and provide resources and enrichment opportunities for personnel
- To communicate, collaborate and partner with diocesan offices and other ecclesial entities-lay, religious, and ordained
- To evaluate and recommend catechetical text books, materials, media, and other resources
- To provide parish on-site visits for support, consultation, information sharing, communication, collaboration and evaluation
- To work with catholic colleges and universities and to collaboratively develop programs and processes that will provide theologically and academically excellent programs of preparation and formation for catechetical leaders
- To establish guidelines for the certification of parish catechetical leaders, including parish DREs, adult formation coordinators, and youth and young adult ministers /coordinators.
- To collaborate with diocesan offices and in particular with the offices for worship, justice and peace, family life
- To work with the human resources office to develop processes for recruitment, employment, evaluation, and salary guidelines
- To evaluate present structures of participation, education/formation and to establish new structures as necessary

It is important to note that Spirit blows where it wills and that one finds the fruits in a variety of settings. Many apostolic movements often provide amazing faith formation results without a direct connection with parishes or the diocese. However, diocesan staffs need to connect with, accompany, offer support, and listen to these groups, and invite them to form part of the greater communion that is the church. For example, it is critical that I convene leaders from the fourteen different Spanish speaking ministries who broadcast religious programming on radio and TV. These ministries, while not directly part of the diocesan structure, reach audiences far beyond our diocese and need direction, support and communication.

It is important to note that Spirit blows where it wills and that one finds the fruits in a variety of settings.

Sharing the Gospel is more than simply leading a cognitive exercise or providing an intellectual treatise; it also implies a form-a way of being and acting. As Pope Pius XII reminds us, “the Bible that people will know walks on two feet.” We are called to live and share the Gospel values of justice, peace, compassion, and care for the other. It is very important that we temper the bureaucratic image that often is associated with those who “work downtown” and assume an air of welcome and openness to serve.

AT THE HEART

At the heart of catechetical ministry are persons-diocesan staff-enabled and empowered by their local ordinary to offer vision, direction and support in this most important enterprise of sharing Good News. As ministers of the word, listeners, enablers, collaborators, diocesan staffs exercise the responsibility for the formation, support and resorting of catechetical leaders at all levels. Working tirelessly for the extension of the reign of God, they gain solace and courage from the words of St. Paul who reminds us that “God’s power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:19-21). Buoyed up by this promise we move forward trusting in God’s presence and power and believing that all will be well. ■

Humberto Ramos is a Mexican immigrant, husband and father of six children who works as an associate director for the Office of Religious Education in Los Angeles. He holds a BA from the California State University in Los Angeles, and an MA from Mount St. Mary’s College in Los Angeles and is currently working on a doctoral degree through the Pontifical University of Salamanca.

BUT WHAT DO YOU DO? Diocesan Staff Wear a Lot of Hats



by Judith Dieterle, SSL



At a recent get-together, a friend I hadn't seen for a good ten years asked me, "What do you do?" I answered that I am the associate director of the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago (OFCYM) and the coordinator of the Media Center. Her next question was, "And what exactly does that mean? Are you a teacher? A writer? A librarian? An administrator? Or what?" So I told her about my many exciting and varied roles as a diocesan staff person.

I began at the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry in Chicago in July, 1995. Over the years I have seen people come and go, roles and job descriptions be shaped and reshaped. Even the office name changed a couple of times. Always the central focus remains the same—leading people to Jesus — as we nurture the seeds of faith in others and help them grow in discipleship. Our existence as an office keeps "the diocesan Church mindful of its mission to evangelize," in the words of the National Directory for Catechesis.

The NDC says that "the Diocesan Catechetical Office should have sufficient professional personnel to serve as resources to parishes, areas, or regions in relation to all aspects of catechesis." In our archdiocese that means a large staff. We have catechetical ministry coordinators and youth ministry coordinators for each of the six vicariates in the archdiocese. In some of the areas the Coordinators are, by necessity, bilingual English/Spanish. We also have specific catechetical ministry coordinators dedicated to adult formation in English and in Spanish, Polish catechetical ministry, and Polish youth ministry. Then there are the coordinators for catechist and catechetical leader formation, certification processes and ministerial development, and the Media Center.

EDUCATOR

I started my work in the archdiocese as coordinator in Vicariate IV. This helped me to get to know the people serving in the parishes, and to understand their needs. I discovered what kind of resource assistance they needed, what challenges they were facing, and what gifts they had to share with us. One of my favorite tasks in the parishes was assisting in the initial and ongoing formation of the volunteer catechists. With my teaching background I found a com-

fortable niche in providing catechist training courses and retreats. I was the liaison between the overall archdiocesan pastoral plan and the parish catechetical leaders, keeping the catechetical leaders informed about church documents and pertinent information for catechesis. In my role today I still enjoy the teaching opportunities I have, particularly in the formation program for new catechetical leaders, the training for new catechists, and the formation program that leads catechists to certification. Outside of these regular teaching opportunities, I accept occasional speaking engagements on other pertinent topics such as the new documents of the church, spiritual direction and how to choose a director, grant writing, catechist retreats, and so forth.

LIAISON WITH PUBLISHERS

Part of my initial job was also to be the liaison with the publishers of the religious education textbooks. This was an interesting challenge at first, as I had spent the last fifteen years as a missionary in Brazil. However, being an avid reader and an educator by profession, it didn't take long for me to know the contents and developmental styles of the various mainstream religion textbook publishers. That is still part of my job, now incorporated into the work of the media center. In that first year too, I took on the organization of the Chicago Catechetical Conference. For the first few years we hosted the conference at one of the Catholic universities in Chicago. In those days we thought five hundred participants was a good turnout! Today we have grown to hosting the conference in a large convention center and the numbers have grown considerably. Someone else takes care of the overall coordination and I work mostly with the exhibitors.

MEDIA CENTER COORDINATOR

In my second year at the Office, the director invited me to organize and set up a media center. Up until then, there had been a media and resource center run by Mundelein College attending to the media resource needs of the parishes and schools of the archdiocese. After Mundelein College merged with Loyola University, they passed the media resources on to us. With some grant sponsorship we were able to inaugurate the Jegen Center for Catechetical Media and Research in September, 1997. I thoroughly enjoyed organizing

continued on page 12

it, computerizing the access to the resources, and getting the catalog online.

I continue to oversee the running of the Jegen Center. We evaluate and recommend catechetical textbooks, materials, and other resources. We attend to the audio-visual needs of the parishes and schools of the archdiocese with a large collection of catechetical DVDs, videos, and books. On weekends you will often find me watching new DVDs at home or reading and reviewing new books for the collection.

Another service the Jegen Center offers is the Catechetical Technology Day, held in a tech lab, to train catechetical leaders in technology and tools to help them in their ministry. I evaluate websites, providing a listing of those I find most helpful for catechesis, and then teach others how to evaluate the sites for themselves. I also convene a Publishers' Connection Board. This is a wonderful collaboration between competitors. It provides a forum for the publishing companies to hear the same information, and an opportunity for the archdiocese to keep up to date on developments in the publishing milieu. With the publishers we provide Curriculum Exploration Days to give an opportunity to the parishes and schools to explore current approved religion texts and series and have their questions answered directly by the publishers at the same time.

I also maintain the Jegen website, www.jegen.org, and write the quarterly newsletter, "New Connections," that circulates to all catechetical leaders, youth ministers, and pastors. This four-page newsletter is included as an insert in the larger "Sower," the newsletter of the OFCYM. These publications are also available through the websites. As coordinator of the Jegen Center, I am also an active member of the National Association of Catechetical Media Professionals.

RESEARCH...

In 1999 I moved into the position of associate director of the Office while remaining the coordinator of the Jegen Center. By that time I had a full-time media assistant who knew the resources in the Jegen Center very well. I became increasingly more involved in the office administration as we continue to "provide advocacy, leadership and vision to the catechetical and youth ministries of the Archdiocese of Chicago" (OFCYM Mission Statement).

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

In February 2000, the archdiocese began a comprehensive study and analysis of the state of catechesis in the parishes and schools. First I was the chair of the Content Work Group of this Catechesis Task Force. When some changes happened in the management team, that became part of my role. After all the work groups had completed their tasks and surfaced their recommendations, I became one of the three writers of the final document of sixteen recommendations. Cardinal George accepted these recommendations in March 2002 and the work on implementation began. The initial study involved a variety of individuals, groups, offices and agencies, as did the committees who began the implementation stage.

..AND DEVELOPMENT

Currently much of the implementation is complete and the management team is pulling together the loose ends. I am very involved in this step-by-step work completing the implementation phase of the catechetical recommendations. They are shaping the vision and practice of catechetical ministry in our archdiocese. I am delighted that they tie so closely into the functions of a diocesan office as delineated in the National Directory of Catechesis! We have developed the roles and job descriptions of the director of religious education, the coordinator of religious education, the principal of the Catholic school as a coordinator of religious education, and the parish youth ministry coordinator and put them into practice. Along with these come the requirements for approval, certification, and renewal of certification for each category of catechetical leader.

We have begun the process of certification by the USCCB/CCA. This will probably take some time to complete.

As part of integrating “catechesis within the schools and parishes with the diocese’s total plan for Catholic education and preparing parish catechetical personnel to do the same” (*NDC*, p. 251) we are working on the restructuring of the catechist formation program. We recognize that the teachers in the Catholic schools are also catechists and we are working to have a uniform program of theological studies and formation for both groups, with an added module of catechetical skills for the teachers and teaching skills for the catechists. We have been working with the local Catholic universities to provide some of the courses needed for the core theological formation and for the ministerial courses for the catechetical leaders. They are good collaborators in this.

Another area of development that is nearing completion is a common religion curriculum for the archdiocese. The basic doctrinal content will be the same for both school and parish religious education, while the application and assessments will vary. We have also helped the parishes and schools adopt religious education texts that have been found by the Bishops’ Committee to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

MONITORING PROGRESS

For many years now we have been conducting an annual data survey “to determine the number of adults, youth, children, preschoolers, persons with disabilities, and so forth who are receiving formal catechetical instruction; the availability of training and continuing education of personnel; the kinds of programs in use and their effectiveness; the number of hours of instruction being given; the service and worship components of programs; and costs” (*NDC*, p. 252). Since the Office of Youth Ministry merged with the Office for Catechesis a couple of years ago we added a separate youth section to the survey. When the data is in, reports are generated and analyzed, then the vicariate catechetical ministry coordinators and the vicariate youth ministry coordinators write commentaries on the findings. The OFCYM director writes the general commentary, and each vicariate coordinator presents the findings of his/her area to the vicariate bishop and to the deans. The commentary is naturally enriched by the extensive knowledge each vicariate coordinator has of the specific parishes in the vicariate through site visits and cluster meetings.

These days we are preparing for the annual Catechetical Ministries Awards Banquet where outstanding catechists and catechetical lead-

ers are honored for excellence in the catechetical ministry. I often have the privilege of being the emcee of the event. Some people tease that since I am a religious the people listen better when I try to get their attention! In June we will have the graduation and certification ceremony, the graduates of the four-year Scripture schools in Spanish and in English will receive their certificates. The catechetical leaders and catechists who have completed their studies and formation will receive their certification. My challenge at this ceremony is trying to pronounce the variety of names so they can be understood!

AND...

So what else do I do as an associate director? My other major responsibilities include developing and managing the budget, screening for new positions, orientation of new staff members, supervision of some staff members, coordination of the annual planning process, and proofreading of publications prior to going to press. To keep me from getting too internally focused, I serve on the committee that is revising the guidelines for the Catholic school and parish programs regarding mandated reporting, and I represent the OFCYM at the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform. Occasionally I am a guest on our monthly radio program, “Echoing God’s Word.” It’s never dull! Yesterday I finished revising the Handbook for Hiring a Catechetical Leader. Tomorrow I am going to speak to the new pastors about their role in the catechetical ministry.

So when you ask me how to describe my job as an associate director, I suppose I could say that I am a liturgist, musician, homilist, broadcaster, teacher, mentor, spiritual advisor, facilitator, mediator, emcee, trainer, supervisor, screener, writer, editor, proofreader, web designer, librarian, researcher, organizer, planner, movie critic, book reviewer, architect, interior designer, accountant, analyst, grant writer, and event planner! But I think I will settle with the easiest definition. My role is a person with a single focus — leading people to Jesus!

Hearing all this, my old friend looked at me with her mouth open. After a stunned silence she said, “Wow! In comparison to yours, my life is sure boring!” ■

Sister Judith Dieterle, SSL, is associate director of the Office for Catechesis and Youth Ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago and coordinator for the Jegen Catechetical Media and Research Center.

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Abriendo la puerta / Opening the Door

by William S. Dinger



There are times in life when you recognize that a truly extraordinary moment took place, one that is graced and life-changing. For me and for many others such a moment was *Soy catequista: The Dignity, Vocation, and Mission of the Catechist*.

Soy catequista — I am a catechist — was a consultation, a coming together of catechetical ministers from all across the country that took place at the University of Notre Dame from November 7 to 9, 2006. *Soy catequista* had two objectives: first, to examine and emphasize the dignity, vocation, and mission of catechists, and, second, to surface effective catechetical approaches being used in Latino communities in the United States.

Writing about *Soy Catequista* in an article for *Catechist* magazine, Dr. Jerry Baumbach, a participant in the consultation, stated: “I would propose that in the years to come, a consultation entitled “*Soy catequista: The Dignity, Vocation, and Mission of the Catechist*” will claim its place among notable historic moments in the life of the Church in the United States.”

Father Virgilio Elizondo, a founder of the Mexican American Cultural Center, also participated in the consultation. On the last day he told us that “I felt throughout this just an incredible sense of excitement.” Father Elizondo noted that he had been fortunate in his lifetime to experience first hand four core moments—the catechetical movement with Father Johannes Hofinger, the birth of the RCIA with Christiane Brusselmans, the founding of the Mexican American Cultural Center, and now *Soy Catequista*. “I feel that I’m at the fourth one of those gatherings today... It always seems so simple but it’s so incredibly profound—retrieving the real dignity and role of Catequista.”

What happened at *Soy catequista* that touched hearts so deeply? What was the seed that began it all? How can we share this moment, this movement, with catechists throughout the United States?

A MOVEMENT FOR THE FUTURE

Soy catequista: the Dignity, Vocation, and Mission of the Catechist began on a glorious autumn evening at the University of Notre Dame. In my welcoming remarks to the fifty-five other participants, I reiterated the purpose of the consultation: “We need to tell the stories of the good that is done by catechists among Latinos. Listen, go home and share.” Share. From the beginning, our goal was not just to hold one event, but to use that event as a basis for a program that could be replicated. *Soy catequista* was envisioned as a movement to uplift catechists throughout the nation.

As stated earlier, *Soy catequista* had two objectives. Both were articulated well by Dr. Tim Matovina in his opening remarks. Of the first, examining the vocation, he explained: “And so we want to examine much more deeply and examine with you the dignity of the vocation of the catechist, the calling. People who are called to be catechists are called by God; it’s a ministry of the church. No more ‘I’m a volunteer.’ ¡*Soy catequista!*”

We need to tell the stories of the good that is done by catechists among Latinos.

As for the second objective, surfacing effective approaches, the Dr. Matovina referred to some of the challenges the church faces today. However, he continued, “. . . we also know there are some great things going on and we want to focus on those. To inspire one another, what’s going on that works in Hispanic catechesis.”

And so *Soy catequista* proceeded to examine these two issues by engaging the wisdom of each person in attendance. This included the presenters or *animadores*, the animators of discussion, whose rich and insightful presentations examined various aspects of the dignity, vocation, and mission of the catechist. It included the catechists who were *testigos*, giving *testimonios* about the effectiveness of their catechetical programs in Latino communities. And it included all the other catechetical leaders present, who shared their wisdom and experience in the discussions that took place during the course of the consultation. The power of *Soy catequista* resulted in large part from the synergistic interplay between the presentations, the *testimonios*, and the discussions.

THE CALLING

The first to speak was Dr. John Cavadini, chair of the Department of Theology at Notre Dame, who addressed *The Catechist in the History of the Church*. In a rich examination of the ministry, he stated that “the dignity and vocation of the catechist comes from the dignity and vocation of his or her defining activity, namely catechesis. This activity is one that is shared in the church and it begins at the highest level... thus the vocation of the catechist is a true apostolic vocation. And the dignity of the catechist an apostolic dignity.” He also examined some of the challenges a catechist faces through a

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moving, and at times humorous, review of correspondence St. Augustine had with a self-critical and doubting catechist in the fifth century.

Discussing the changes that have been taking place in religious education and faith formation, Rev. Alan Figueroa Deck, SJ, president and executive director at the Loyola Institute of Spirituality, examined *Models of Hispanic Ministry and Catechesis*. One of his main points was that “one of the things that discussing our reality in terms of model does, is that it takes the edge off of a univocal attitude, the idea that I’ve got one way to respond to the challenges and difficulties that we’re facing. What it does is it suggests that there are several ways that in fact we can begin to respond to the challenges that we face in every area of pastoral ministry.” He and other speakers also emphasized the importance of the affective component of catechesis.

Dr. Adele Gonzalez, professor of theology at Barry University, spoke of *Jesús el Catequista*, using Gospel passages to examine qualities that Jesus showed during his ministry—qualities that all evangelizing catechists must possess. As she explained, “As disciples we have been sent with authority. . . the same way that Jesus had the identity, the mission, the idea—the whole idea of self-knowledge clear; we have to have the same thing. I am sent by the Lord Jesus.”

No more ‘I’m a volunteer.’ ¡Soy catequista!

The topic addressed by Bishop Ricardo Ramírez, CSB, of Las Cruces, was *My Vocation as a Catechist*. He spoke of his twenty-five years’ experience as a bishop and also about his experiences as a missionary priest in Mexico where he helped develop a family catechetical program that is still in use. One of the points he emphasized was this: “In the process of catechesis, there are three entities: God, the catechist, and the one being catechized. The catechist is presenting God to the catechized, and the catechized to God. In order to be qualified to make that introduction, that catechist must know God and he must know the person being catechized. The catechist must develop a strong relationship, usually through prayer and meditation, with the divine Persons. It also, of course, includes the intellectual discipline of study.”

Dr. Michael E. Lee, assistant professor in the Department of Theology at Fordham University, and Natalia Imperatori-Lee, instructor in the Department of Religious Studies at Manhattan College, spoke about *Theology and Catechesis, Passing on the Faith*. Their shared presentation reflected their experiences as both catechists and theologians. Ms. Imperatori-Lee stated that “When theology hears catechesis I think it is grounded in life, and that is a vital task... It keeps us grounded. It keeps us real.” From another perspective Dr.

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From left to right: Antonio Medina, María Pilar Latorre, Rosie Torres, Sister Alice Molina, Adele Gonzalez, Maria Elena Puga, and Michael Lee listen attentively to Allan Deck.



Maruja Sedano, Sister Edith Prendergast, Sister Alice Michael, and Esmeralda Sierra



Bill Dinger extends a warm welcome to all the participants of Soy catequista.



Gerado Rojas describes the structure and logistics of a marriage validation program.



Anne Comeaux discusses a point with Bishop Ricardo Ramirez and Father Allan Deck.

ORIGINS

The idea for a consultation on catechesis in Latino communities came to me as I reflected on the following exhortation of our bishops in *Encuentro y Mission*: “Be relentless in seeking ways to promote and facilitate the full cooperation of Hispanic Catholics into the life of the Church and its mission” (No. 60). In seeking an effective way to do this, I invited diocesan leaders attending the April 2004 NCCL Annual Meeting in Albuquerque to a luncheon meeting. The question we examined was: “How can we meet the needs of recent immigrants to the United States who may be coming from different models and have different expectations of catechetical approaches?”

With the enthusiastic response from the participants of this meeting, the idea of a national symposium on catechesis in the Latino communities began to take shape. Olga Villa Parra, a member of Sadlier’s Board of Directors and former Director of the Midwest Hispanic Catholic Commission, under the direction of the Midwest Catholic Bishops, recommended meeting with members of the Institute for Latino Studies at Notre Dame to discuss the possibility of planning this symposium. This took place in South Bend in July 2004.

The Sadlier representatives at this discussion included Olga Villa Parra, Dulce Jiménez-Abreu, Thelma Delgado, and me. Representing the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame were Dr. Gilberto Cárdenas, Father Virgilio Elizondo, Terry Garza, and Father Daniel Groody, CSC. The attendees from Notre Dame’s Institute for Church Life included Dr. John Cavadini and Dr. Jerry Baumbach. Dr. Timothy Matovina represented the University’s Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. We were also fortunate that Sister Mary Lou Barba, MCDP, Superior, Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence, and Sister Alice Molina, RSHM, Director, Office of Religious Education and Formation, Diocese of San Bernardino, also participated in this discussion. It was here that the ideas for the consultation began to take shape with the theme of *Soy Catequista*.

The following November Father Elizondo, Dr. Cavadini and I traveled to Washington, D.C., where we met with Most Reverend James A. Tamayo, Bishop of Laredo and Chairman of the USCCB Bishops Committee on Hispanic Affairs. We received his enthusiastic response. He also directed us to speak with Ron Cruz, Executive Director of the Bishops Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs. The Secretariat became an important collaborator.

More meetings were held at the University of Notre Dame and at the 2005 NCCL Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, where further input was solicited and received. The event began to take shape as a consultation, *Soy catequista: The Dignity, Vocation, and Mission of the Catechist*. Truly this was to be based on a consultative process in which many voices had been and would continue to be heard.

Five organizations were the collaborators for *Soy catequista*. The USCCB Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, the University of Notre Dame, and William H. Sadlier, Inc., planned and implemented the consultation. Funding for the event came from Sadlier and from two grants. One was from the Louisville Institute and the other was from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute through the efforts of Greg Erlandson, President of Our Sunday Visitor. The University of Notre Dame applied for the grants, provided the facilities for the consultation, and arranged for the speakers.

William S. Dinger

Continuing the Partnership for Adolescent Catechesis

The ministry of catechesis helps adolescents develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Christian community, and increases their knowledge of the core content of the Catholic faith. (Renewing the Vision, p. 29)

To further this comprehensive approach to adolescent catechesis, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), the National Conference for Catechetical Leaders (NCCL) and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), with the support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, are collaborating on the Partnership for Adolescent Catechesis. The collective goal of the partnership is to promote a comprehensive and contemporary understanding of adolescent catechesis and to develop and support effective approaches to Catholic faith formation in parishes and schools.

One of the ways the partnership is promoting this comprehensive and contemporary understanding is by publishing articles written by experts in the field of adolescent catechesis, adolescent development and culture. These articles appear in *Momentum*, published by NCEA, and here in *Catechetical Leader*. They also are available on the following Web

sites: www.nfcym.org, www.nccl.org and www.ncea.org. Presently seven articles are available for study and discussion. Three more will be published in the coming months.

These articles are part of the overall vision of the Partnership for a National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis. The impetus for the development and evolution of this partnership began in 2004 with a desire to support themes and approaches for strengthening catechesis with adolescents in the National Directory for Catechesis, the response of the church in the United States to the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

The partnership takes a hiatus in this issue and promises to return in the next issue with its eighth article, this one focusing on adolescent catechesis within a culturally diverse church. Meanwhile the partnership invites you to return or turn to the past articles — in case you missed them on the first go around — and engage in this exciting endeavor of adolescent catechesis. ■



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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

CATECHESIS AND THE BAPTISMAL CATECHUMENATE

by Marguerite Main



The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, (often called “the catechumenate”), was approved by the United States bishops in 1986 and mandated by them in September 1988 to be implemented in all parishes. It offers a vision of conversion and catechesis aimed at transformation

that differs from the traditional educational model which is concerned primarily with information. The RCIA model, says Father Jim Dunning (founder of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate), can transform parishes when a community of the faithful is called to participate in ongoing conversion.

To understand this transforming process, we need to take a look at how catechesis is defined, both in the *General Directory for Catechesis* and in the Rite itself. The *GDC* states that “the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (No. 80). It further defines the tasks of catechesis as: promoting knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, and teaching to pray. Other fundamental tasks include education for community life and missionary initiation (Nos. 85 and 86). The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults affirms this.

The bottom line is that this is about relationship to Jesus. It is about conversion and transformation of minds and hearts. It is an apprenticeship into a way of life.

Many years ago, Father Dunning wrote in *New Wine: New Wineskins*: “For years we have marched people through very

‘efficient’ catechisms programs. We have seen the fall-off of ‘converts’ not converted. They learned a book but did not learn to integrate their unique life into the life of the community or their story into the larger story of Jesus and his people.” In other words, they learned “about” Jesus and the church, but did not come to “know” Jesus and the church.

How then do we provide this “apprenticeship” experience and do effective initiatory catechesis? What kinds of experiences and catechesis are appropriate for each of the periods of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults? What do we hope to accomplish in each period? I would like to examine the Rite for each period of the RCIA to discover what is expected in that period and what type of catechesis is appropriate.

THE PRECATECHUMENATE

The precatechumenate, which precedes the official admission into the catechumenate, is a time of evangelization. It is a time for proclaiming the Gospel and initial conversion to Jesus Christ. It is a time for those who are searching to ask their questions to hear the stories and traditions of our faith, to make connections between “their stories” and the “Big Story” of God’s saving love for us. The Rite states that it is a time when the beginnings of spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching are taking root in the candidates (*RCIA* No. 42). During this period, which is of indeterminate length, an “inquirer” begins to enter into a relationship with God in Christ, begins to learn how to pray, has some interaction with other members of the faith community and has some sense of who we are

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as church. It is a time when the inquirer may begin to develop a spirit of repentance and be challenged to change his or her life in order to follow the teachings of Jesus.

It might be helpful to state what catechesis during the precatechumenate is *not*. It is *not* of time of abstract doctrinal teaching, nor is it a time for a structured “curriculum” designed by the catechumenate team. It must be a time to address the life experiences, issues, concerns, questions, doubts and fears raised by the inquirers. It must be a time to help them to see how one strives to live as a “follower of Jesus,” in order that they may have the knowledge and example they need in order to be free to choose this path for themselves.

RCIA is a model that can transform parishes.

It should be evident that this cannot be put on a timetable. God’s grace in a person’s life does not work according to any preset calendar. By having an open-ended, ongoing process, and having our primary focus be to proclaim the Good News of the living God, we can be flexible and hospitable enough to address the needs brought to us by those seeking to find a path on which to follow the Lord.

When the time comes that an inquirer (or several inquirers) feels a genuine call to follow Jesus and believes that the Catholic Church is the best path for him or her to do this, it is time to schedule a Rite of Acceptance into the Catechumenate. This is the time that the inquirer will be introduced to the community and will publicly state a desire for baptism and a willingness to follow the Gospel. Obviously this cannot be pre-programmed on the parish calendar, but may be celebrated two or three times a year, whenever the need is present.

THE CATECHUMENATE

The catechumenate period, which follows the Rite of Acceptance, is a time of more structured, formalized catechesis. The Rite states that catechesis during this period should be of a kind that presents Catholic teaching in its entirety, enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic

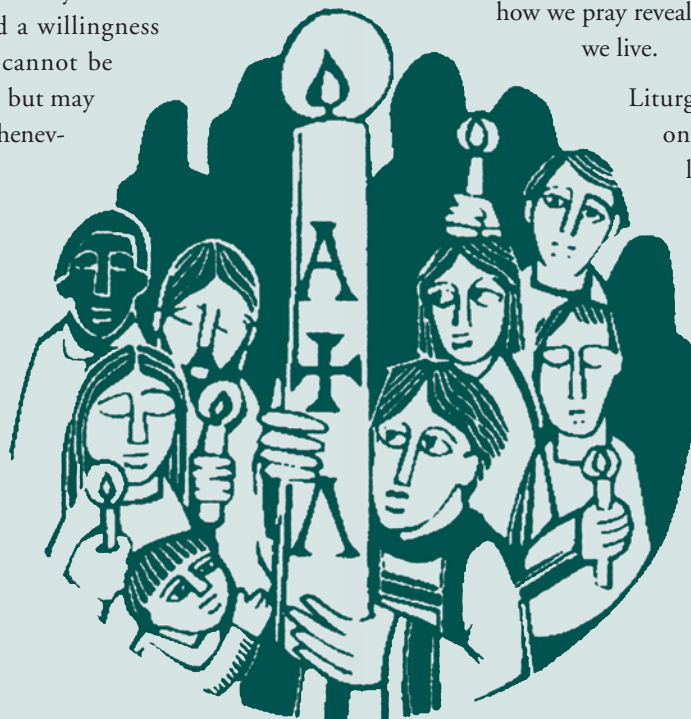
activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ (*RCIA* No. 78). Catechesis for this period always involves the fourfold process of catechesis as defined in the *General Directory for Catechesis*. All of this is done in the framework of the liturgical year and the proclaimed word of God (*RCIA* No. 75).

One of the tested and most-used methods of catechesis during the catechumenate period is liturgical catechesis. Those who have worked with the Rite for many years have become convinced of the importance of the link between liturgy, Scripture and catechesis. Some catechists think that “catechesis” is synonymous with “doctrine,” but the church sees it differently. Doctrine is only a fraction of what catechesis implies. Catechumenal formation is multidimensional. It includes formation in the word (Scripture and tradition); in worship (celebrated within the context of the liturgical year and the Sunday Eucharist); in community (in which the community assumes its baptismal responsibility for initiation); and in service, which is apprenticeship in the life, mission and apostolic witness of the church. Liturgical catechesis includes all that we do to enter into the liturgical experience, and all that we do to understand it and to come away somehow transformed and led to involvement in the mission of Christ.

Liturgical catechesis celebrates, remembers, and reflects upon the word (reflection and exegesis), the symbols, symbolic actions, gestures, music, and ritual prayers of the liturgical season (Advent, Lent...) the liturgy itself, the rites, the feast days, the sacraments—within these we find the major doctrines of our faith. It is through liturgical catechesis that people are formed in the life of the community.

Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi. Roughly translated: how we pray reveals what we believe, leads to how we live.

Liturgical catechesis does not give one an organized syllabus to follow. It does, however, reveal and uncover the basic truths of our faith inherent in the celebration of the liturgy, as Mary Birmingham points out in her *Word and Worship Workbook for Year C*. Catechesis of this magnitude cannot be accomplished in a period of only a few weeks. The United States bishops, in the National



Statutes for the Catechumenate, state that this period should normally last at least one calendar year for the unbaptized uncatechized (*RCIA* NS No. 6). In the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the church affirms that “within the cycle of a year, the Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from His incarnation and birth until His ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of blessed hope and of the Lord’s return.”

Thus, in a catechumenate where liturgical catechesis is the method of formation, all of the major doctrines of the church are presented in one cycle of the church year. Catechumens attend the Sunday liturgy, are dismissed after the homily to reflect on the Word which has been proclaimed and to name their experience of the liturgy celebrated. In an extended catechetical session, they hear the doctrine and tradition of the church, which are drawn from the readings, and they are challenged to make decisions which may change the direction of their lives, based on the values in the Gospel. During the period of the catechumenate, various blessings and prayers of exorcism may be celebrated with the catechumens as often as needed to give them healing, joy and peace as they continue on their journey to the paschal mystery.

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Having completed approximately a year in the catechumenate, those catechumens who are discerned to be ready for the sacraments of initiation participate in the Rite of Election, usually the first Sunday of Lent or during the first week of Lent. In this Rite the bishop declares the catechumens to be members of the elect and ready to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the Easter Vigil. The period of Purification and Enlightenment, which coincides with Lent, is the period of the elect’s immediate preparation for the sacraments of initiation. It is a time of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction. It is intended to “purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own consciences and do penance” (*RCIA* Nos. 138-139). It is also a time of renewal for the entire Christian community, as we all prepare for the celebration of the paschal mystery.

This period consists of several liturgical rites that assist the elect in their preparation. Major rites of this period are the three scrutinies, celebrated on the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent. It is recommended that the readings are always those from Cycle A. These key ritual moments help strengthen and heal the elect, and through reflection on their experiences provide an integral connection between liturgy and catechesis. Presentations of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer during this period also help to provide immediate preparation for the elect as they journey to the waters of baptism.

**Some catechists think that “catechesis” is synonymous with “doctrine,” but the church sees it differently.*

POST-BAPTISMAL CATECHESIS

Post-baptismal catechesis, or mystagogy, is a time for the community and the newly baptized to grow together in deepening their understanding of the paschal mystery. This happens through continued meditation on the Gospels during the Easter season, through sharing in the Eucharist, and through doing works of charity (*RCIA* No. 244). Officially this period comes to an end at Pentecost, but the United States bishops recommend that there should be at least monthly gatherings of these “neophytes” for a full year after their initiation (*RCIA* NS No. 24). This could be a time for deepening their conversion, fostering study of the church’s social teachings, and becoming more involved in apostolic activities and witness.

TRUSTING THE PROCESS

Baptismal catechesis is initiatory catechesis. It is an apprenticeship into a Christian way of life. It is comprehensive and systematic, and is focused on Jesus Christ. It is about conversion and transformation of hearts and lives. Key moments are ritualized and ongoing ritual nourishes the journey. It lays the foundation for mature faith and incorporates catechumens and candidates into the community. We can best help those who are doing catechesis by helping them fully understand the principles of initiation and conversion, and realize that catechesis is much more than simply a transfer of information. This understanding may require that catechists shift from a teaching model to an initiatory model, to a ritual process rather than a catechetical program. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a gradual process, taking place within the community of the faithful. It cannot be hurried, pre-programmed, or made to fit a calendar. It is a spiritual journey of adults, responding to God’s grace. If we trust the process, we will be amazed at what God can do in not only the lives of our catechumens, but in the life of our parish community as well. ■

Marguerite Main has been involved with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults for over thirty years on the parish, diocesan, and national level. She has been a team member with the North American Forum on the Catechumenate since 1985, and served a six-year term on the board of the Forum. She is presently retired from twenty-two years of parish ministry, having been pastoral associate at St. Louise Parish in Bellevue, WA. She is married and has three children, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

WILL WE TAKE THE LEAP?

A NEW APPROACH TO FAITH FORMATION

by Timothy Fitzgerald

**The whole parish community is intended to show the catechumens
“the whole Christian life.”*



It's not a new insight, for sure. We've all heard this a dozen times already. Still, its implications are so crucial to formation in faith that we must go back to the insight again and again: Formation in faith is to be multifaceted, inclusive, integrated.

For thirty-five years now, the church has been saying this — from *To Teach as Jesus Did* (1972) to the *National Catechetical Directory* (1978), with their calls for formation for the sake of transformation; through the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (provisional English text 1974; final text 1988) that defines the four-fold “message, community, prayer and service” components of catechumenal formation (No. 75).

The classroom model or the textbook model, the syllabus model, formation that is summed up as the imparting of information: these no longer are an adequate approach to growth in faith. *The General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) reiterates the insight: comprehensive formation for catechumens “includes more than instruction; it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life” (No. 67). This catechesis is “formation for the Christian life” and so “comprises but surpasses mere instruction” (No. 68).

Notice the images here — not of student, but of apprentice; not of lesson or classroom, but of hands-on working with, walking with and experiencing with a mentoring community. These images spring from the Second Vatican Council's call for restoration of the catechumenate — “The catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts, but a training period for the whole Christian life. It is an apprenticeship of appropriate length, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher” (*Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity/Ad Gentes*, No. 14). This was — and is — a strikingly different approach to formation: not a mere sharing of information but a training, an apprenticeship, with Christ the mentor in the community: “You have but only one teacher, the Christ.” (Matt 23:10) All others are disciples.

Growth in faith for all members of the church — the baptized as well as the catechumens — is intended to be comprehensive, gradual, ongoing, grounded in the Christian community, built upon the Scriptures and the liturgical life. For the *GDC* implies that what is good for catechumens, is good for the baptized as well: the baptismal catechumenate “is the model for catechesis in the Church” (*GDC*, No. 90), “the source of inspiration for post-baptismal catechesis” (No. 91).

Of course, to say this is one thing, to act upon it is another. Now catechetical leaders and catechists, ministers of initiation, adult faith formation coordinators and planners — all are struggling to embrace this ‘new’ perspective. In no small part, the ferment within catechetics these days reflects their efforts.

More and more communities are searching for new models, trying out new approaches. The language of “lifelong growth in faith” is beginning to have an effect. Parishes and dioceses are addressing adult growth in faith, often for the first time. Intergenerational faith formation, faith formation festivals, parish-wide catechesis are appearing, alongside or in place of classroom sessions. Hands-on formation-learning stations, parents-with-child parish sessions, take-home kits, liturgy as part of catechesis — is becoming the norm rather than the exception. It goes even further: parishes are beginning to promote “learning by doing,” with disciples young and old, through service projects and twinning parishes and faith in action.

Slowly, structural changes follow. In the Des Moines diocese where I work, the board of education has been replaced by the council for catechesis, with a wider, more inclusive, more integrated focus. This council “plans, promotes and advocates for the lifelong formation in faith of all members of the Catholic community.” (The council's foundational document is available online. Go to the diocesan website, www.dmdiocese.org, and click “Faith Formation.”) This same transition on the parish level, to a council that focuses on “lifelong growth in faith,” is now beginning.

This call to envision formation in a different way is energizing and challenging at the same time. There are signs of growth, signs of new life. Still, the transitions to happen are profound —

- from child-centered formation to adult-centered formation;
- from a student-and-teacher model to an apprenticeship-in-a-mentoring community model; and
- from an information-based process to a conversion-based process, one centered on transformation of self, of Christian community, of world (*Our Hearts Were Burning within Us*, No. 67 ff.).

These transitions are not fail-safe or inevitable, because “the way we’ve always done things” has a strong hold on us. To say that the baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for post-baptismal catechesis does not make it so.

Look at how the baptismal catechumenate itself struggles with these transitions. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* calls for formation that is “a gradual process...within the community... a spiritual journey of adults” that varies according to God’s grace, the response of the individual, the assistance of the church, and variation of circumstances (*RCIA*, Nos. 4 and 5). “The period of the catechumenate...should extend for at least one year...” (*RCIA*, “National Statutes for the Catechumenate,” No. 6). Yet in many parishes and dioceses, this process has been conformed to the school year calendar — starting in September and ending in May (or even at the Easter vigil). Too often, the apprenticeship model for formation gives way to the student and classroom model. The rite’s vision of a process whereby the measure of progress is faith brought to maturity (*RCIA*, No. 75) and conversion or transformation of minds and hearts and action (Nos. 118 and 120) is subsumed by a set curriculum and predetermined timeline and the imparting of information. “Why are you addressing the sacrament of baptism on December 19 with your catechumenate group?” I asked the parish coordinator. “Because,” the person answered, “that’s where it falls in our schedule. We’ll get to confirmation right after the holidays.” They might call this a baptismal catechumenate, but it has little relationship with the model that the rite lays out. It is little more than classes for converts with some rituals attached, “a training period for the whole Christian life” reduced to a question of “what comes next on the outline.”

In addition, the role of the community of faith is to be central to initiation. Initiation is the “responsibility of all the baptized,” with roles of



specific ministries within the community (*RCIA*, Nos. 9-16). If the intent is initiation as apprenticeship, the vision of the rite is *the community as mentor*, whereby the catechumens learn by seeing and doing and experiencing and asking and helping. More than the sponsor or the *RCIA* team, more than the small community of catechumens and candidates and inquirers, the whole parish community is intended to show the catechumens “the whole Christian life.” It’s the same as saying “The parish is the curriculum....” (*Our Hearts Were Burning within Us*, No. 118). Yet in practice, for many parishes this central task of mentoring remains the concern of a few, one parish project among many others. Both the apprentices and the mentoring community miss a graced opportunity to grow in faith — each giving, each receiving.

The same struggles echo through other catechetical efforts for parishes — how to integrate the six fundamental dimensions — knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, communal life and missionary spirit in all catechesis (*GDC*, Nos. 85-86); how to engage the household and the whole parish in faith formation; how to shift from a classroom model to an apprenticeship model.

These are not incidental struggles, soon to pass away. Rather, they spring from that unsettling call by the church to make the baptismal catechumenate “the model,” “the source of inspiration” for all catechesis.

Ultimately, the goal is to “keep our eyes fixed on Jesus,” he who is teacher and mentor of community and catechumens alike. This living relationship with Jesus is the purpose of all our formation: “...the ‘Christocentricity’ of catechesis: the mystery of Christ...is not another element [of catechesis] alongside others, it is rather the center from which all other elements are structured and illuminated” (*GDC* No.41). “Adult faith is clearly and explicitly rooted in a *personal relationship with Jesus lived in the Christian community*” (*OHWB*, No. 55). ■

Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald is director of the office of lay ecclesial ministry in his diocese of Des Moines, Iowa. He works with North American Forum on the Catechumenate to help parishes and dioceses implement the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. He is author of Infant Baptism: A Parish Celebration and Confirmation: A Parish Celebration, both published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago.

FRESH EYES ON THE BAPTISMAL CATECHUMENATE

by Rita Burns Senseman

Always, always make the connection between doctrine/story/teaching and one's own life story.



Recently, two of my daughters (ages eleven and thirteen) have asked me, independently and unbeknownst to one another, “Could I come and sit in on your class again sometime?” They have each, at different times, had occasion to be with me during my “class,” which is the baptismal catechumenate for children. This intriguing question from each of them prompted me to ask what it was about my class they found appealing. Or, why in the world would a preteen and teenager want to come to “their mother’s class?” Their responses were compelling and surprising. I discovered that much of what they said echoed what is becoming a common adage among catechetical leaders: namely, that, as the *National Directory for Catechesis* says repeatedly, the “baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for all catechesis.”

We must train our catechists to deliberately engage the culture in which they catechize.

I would like to explore three of the guiding principles of baptismal catechumenate as named by the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC). I will use my daughters’ comments, in some instances, to illustrate how the principles of catechumenate can inspire all catechetical activity.

CONTINUAL CONVERSION

One of the first inspiring elements of the catechumenate named by the NDC is that catechumenate “reminds the Church that her catechesis accompanies a continual conversion to Christ.” Indeed, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, which contains the theology, rites, rubrics and guidelines for the baptismal catechumenate, describes the catechumenate as a “spiritual journey,” a “gradual process,” and a “way of faith and conversion.”

Those involved in catechumenal ministry know that conversion to Jesus Christ is at the heart of the catechumenate. Throughout the catechumenate, the community of the faithful guides, accompanies, and nurtures the catechumens as they deepen their relationship with Christ. The catechumens, along with the faithful, turn their hearts

and minds toward Christ. They learn to be more like Christ and to carry on his mission. Although instruction and the teaching of doctrine is an important part of the baptismal catechumenate, conversion to the person of Jesus Christ is at the center.

My eleven year old daughter, Katherine, noted this element when asked why she liked my class. She said, “You talk about what’s going on in their lives and what it all means. We mostly read from the book.”

Granted, no professional catechetical leader promotes “reading from the book” as the most effective or most creative catechetical method. Nonetheless, my experience and that of my three children tell me that it is a common and overly used method in many religious education programs. A short time ago we moved to a new parish in a new city and “too much reading from the book” is a constant and reoccurring complaint from my children and their friends-in both parishes!

I believe that catechists often fall back on “reading from the book” because they are more focused on giving information than nurturing continual conversion to Jesus Christ. As responsible catechists, we need to do both: give information and lead children to conversion. Moreover, the baptismal catechumenate model tells us a central component to catechesis is ongoing conversion, for both adults and children.

How do we give more attention to one’s journey of conversion? I believe the best way to do this is to always, always make the connection between doctrine/story/teaching and one’s own life story. Whether the “students” are four-year-olds or forty-year-olds, whether the topic is creation or papal infallibility, I believe the catechist must help those they catechize see how God is present in their everyday life and calling them into a deeper union with Christ.

INCULTURATION

Sarah said she like coming to the catechumenate sessions because, “You bring in books, pictures, and stuff from our world today.” True enough. I do try to connect the weekly Gospel reading to what is happening in the world at present. Also, I try to help the catechumens connect the Gospel to their everyday lives as middle school, high school, and elementary school kids in an “average city” in the middle of America.

The encounter with our God in the liturgy is inherently formative.

The *GDC* and the *NDC* emphasize the importance of inculturation in the catechumenate and in all catechesis. The *NDC* says that the catechumenate is where the Gospel “deliberately engages the culture of the catechumens” — and taking inspiration from the catechumenate — “all catechesis must ‘take flesh’ in the various cultures and environments” in which we catechize.

Furthermore, I believe that when the *NDC* uses the word, “deliberately” we are being given a very clear message. Inculturation in the catechumenate as well as in all catechesis must be done purposely and thoughtfully. Catechetical leaders must give attention to ethnic and racial diversity. However, we must also attend to the fast-paced, high-tech, sometimes violent and stressful culture in which we live. We must train our catechists to “deliberately” engage the culture in which they catechize.

LITURGICAL CATECHESIS

A third inspiring principle of baptismal catechumenate, as John Paul II tells us in *On Catechesis in Our Time (CT)*, is the intrinsic bond between liturgy and catechesis. The catechumenate quite powerfully illustrates the formative nature of the liturgy. The major and minor rites of the catechumenate are key in the formation of the catechumens. In fact, the entire process is one of liturgical catechesis. The liturgical rituals are the peak moments of the journey and the entire process leads to the sacraments of initiation. Then in the period of mystagogy they, and we, reflect back on our *experience* of the sacraments.

Moreover, the baptismal catechumenate is our prime example of liturgical catechesis. The catechumenate bears out for the catechumens and for the community how the liturgy is — as the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says — the source and summit of our Christian life. In the liturgy the catechumens, along with the faithful, encounter the living God. This encounter with our God is inherently formative. We are



formed, changed, challenged by the liturgy. It is catechetical! Through sign, symbol, song, and ritual we “learn” about the living God. Then, through catechesis, we ponder the meaning of our liturgical experience of God. We put words and definition and context to the mystery we encountered in the liturgy. What the catechumenate exemplifies and what any good catechist knows is that catechesis is most effective when connected to what we experience for ourselves — in this case, what we experience in the liturgy.

Katherine observed this principle when she said, “You talk about the Mass and the Bible a lot. We hardly ever read from the Bible.” She happened to be with the child catechumens during the Sunday liturgy of the word and the dismissal catechesis that followed. We do dismissal catechesis by reflecting on the lectionary readings and doing some simple exegesis. In this setting, the readings have a liturgical context. Thus, the meaning of the Scriptures take life in the midst of the worshiping assembly. Katherine heard the word proclaimed in the assembly and then reflected on the meaning of that word with the catechumens.

There are two implications that I would like to point out here. The first concerns liturgical training and the second goes to Katherine’s point regarding lectionary catechesis. First, we as catechetical leaders must work with liturgists to provide our catechists with better liturgical training (*GDC*, No. 30). A “serious knowledge” of the liturgy, liturgical principles and the sacraments will not only deepen our understanding of liturgy and sacraments, but it will make us better catechists (*CT*, No. 23). For if we can help those we catechize better understand the liturgy, they are more likely to fully participate in liturgy. Sadly, in many parishes attendance at religious education is higher than atten-

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Catechetical Update Is Now Available Online

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

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dance at Sunday Eucharist. However, good catechesis that is connected to the liturgy will encourage children and teens, along with adults, to more regularly celebrate Sunday Eucharist.

The second implication is regarding Katherine's comment about our study of the lectionary readings. Lectionary catechesis is one type of liturgical catechesis. Although many parishes use some form of lectionary catechesis, I believe that more could be done in the area. In the catechumenate, the study of the word is paramount. Sunday after Sunday, the catechumens study the word of God as proclaimed in the liturgy. Asking all catechists to include reflection on the lectionary as part of their catechesis, is a relatively easy and very practical step that any religious education program can take. In this way, biblical literacy can improve as well as an appreciation for the liturgy.

Lastly, the liturgical catechesis of the baptismal catechumenate reminds us of one very important, yet sometimes neglected fact. The sacraments of initiation and the catechesis that accompanies the sacraments are "vital" for every local parish and for the Church universal (*GDC*, no. 91). Initiation is our life blood. Forming and welcoming new members keeps us alive and growing.

Here, I mean initiation in the broadest sense. Infant baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, as well as the *RCIA*. Sure, I strongly believe that the *RCIA*, in particular the *RCIA* for children, deserves more of a center stage. However, sacramental catechesis that leads to infant baptism, confirmation and first Eucharist needs to be more visible and focal in a parish, too. Often, "sacramental preparation" is relegated to the families that have babies, or kids in second grade or kids in tenth grade. Other than that, parishioners don't seem to pay a whole lot of attention.

But if we truly believed that baptismal catechumenate was the model for all catechesis, then the entire parish might take more seriously their "responsibility" for sacraments of initiation (*RCIA*, No. 9; *GDC*, Nos. 64, 91). For example, there might be whole community catechesis before a parish celebration of first communion or confirmation (an idea I heard from Sr. Kate Dooley). And there might be mystagogical catechesis after a parish celebration of the Easter Vigil, first communion or confirmation. These are possibilities that are beginning to happen in parishes that follow the baptismal catechumenate model.

YOUTHFUL INSIGHT-AND LONG PERSPECTIVE

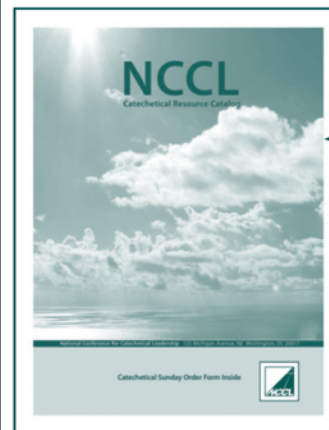
Inspired by my daughter's observations of the baptismal catechumenate, I have named three ways that the catechumenate serves as a model for all catechetical activity. The catechumenate's emphasis on continual conversion, inculturation and liturgical catechesis is a source for inspiration. Certainly, there are other ways the catechumenate inspires our catechetical activities. Much more could be said and much more has already been said.

Nonetheless, I believe that Katherine and Sarah's comments contain a small amount of youthful insight: First, we must keep our catechetical focus on conversion to Jesus Christ. Second, we must "deliberately" engage the culture in which we catechize. Third, catechists must more seriously study the liturgy and the pastoral implementation of liturgical catechesis.

And one final comment from an old, biased *RCIA* catechist. If we are indeed going to heed the crystal clear call to model catechesis on the baptismal catechumenate, then every catechetical leader, if not every catechist, needs to read and study the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. ■

Rita Burns Senseman has held catechetical leadership positions at both the diocesan and parish levels. She is currently a freelance writer and a team member for the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

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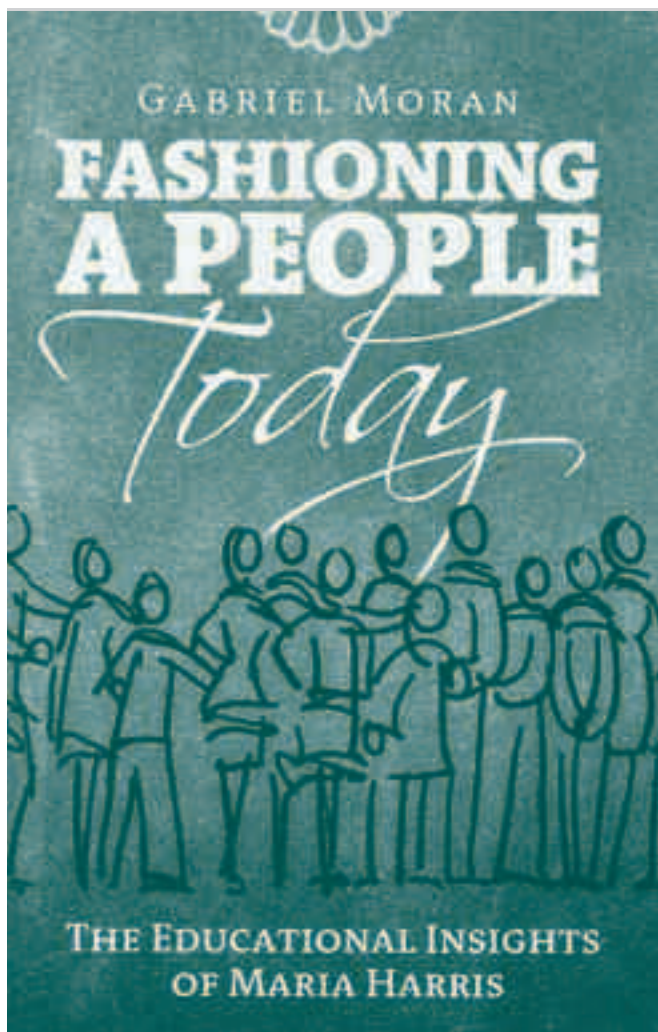
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LIFELONG COMMITMENT

Fashioning A People Today: The Educational Insights of Maria Harris by Gabriel Moran. New London, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 2007. Paperback, 128 pages, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Maureen Shaunessey, SC



Gabriel Moran, a leading figure in religious education for over forty years, has given us a gift in his newest work, *Fashioning A People Today*. In it, he engages us in a conversation with his late wife, Maria Harris, which develops her educational insights regarding the faith formation of a people as proposed in her book, *Fashion Me a People* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989). I personally was so taken by that book when it was first published — at that time I was working in a diocesan catechetical office for the Diocese of Paterson, NJ. There was such

energy to that book and a vision that so resonated with my convictions about what was needed to create authentic learning communities in our parishes. I used it in teaching both seminary and graduate courses.

In his introduction to this book, Moran says that he is simply “adding my voice to a continuing conversation about church curriculum.” However it is the sentence that follows this that truly speaks to his purpose: “As someone who was there for the writing of every sentence in *Fashion Me A People*, I might be able to provide a context for other readers and draw out what the book says for today.” And so the stage is set for a rich unfolding of key concepts that Maria Harris developed so well and that Gabriel Moran is able to take further for our time today. We are fortunate indeed to be invited to join in the conversation.

Chapter One explores the rich meaning of the phrase “church: a people.” Moran picks up on the three tensions that Maria Harris had identified in her book — local and global, clerical and lay, prophetic and priestly — and challenges us to think in different categories about these realities so that they can take us to a new place. The section on clergy and laity is particularly timely given the focus in the Roman Catholic Church on lay ecclesial ministry. His description of hierarchy as a sacred order of circles within circles also gives rise to new insights about roles and functions in the institutional church which are inclusive and comprehensive. In this chapter he also treats the need for interreligious dialogue stating strongly that “Education within each religion and between religions is the great task of this century.”

Moran then takes up the themes of educational mission and curriculum.

He quotes Harris: “Education in the church is life long. This is too obvious to bear repetition, too obvious until we begin to see how major are the revisions this belief demands in our educational curriculum.” These two themes are the basis for all that follows on how through its ministries the church educates its members.

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“A realistic form of community contains three generations and two genders.”

The discussion in this chapter is well worth the book. Moran urges us to rethink education from the very beginning of life. He states that the two most crucial moments of life are being born and dying. He calls for a dialogue between secular education and church education. He critiques theories of adult education that see it as the opposite of child education and that do not include the last part of life, old age, as part of adulthood. He comments on how this narrowness has influenced adult religious education efforts. I was particularly struck by these lines: “Describing education as lifelong is ineffective unless education is also seen as life wide. The big change is not that education lasts longer but that it is a different kind of experience, based on the interplay of ordinary life.”

In the five chapters that follow, Moran treats the five curricular forms that Harris had identified from the Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47: community, liturgy, proclamation, teaching and service. Each chapter begins with a quote from *Fashion Me a People* and then picks up on major themes.

In Chapter Three on Forms of Community, Moran explores the meanings of community found in our world today and the tensions that exist. He develops the theme of family as communal form and all the realities that are part of that including the need for the development of a healthy approach to the issues of sexuality. He reminds us that “a realistic form of community contains three generations and two genders.” He also reminds us to be careful about the claims we make with respect to community.

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“Engaging This Catechetical Moment”

A report from NCCL’s 71st Annual Conference and Exposition

by Jim Tucker



Anyone attuned to the “Star Trek” television series will know the forthright directive of Jean-Luc Picard, captain of Starship Enterprise, in the face of any challenging circumstance: “Engage!” For the more than seven hundred catechetical leaders who gathered in Columbus in April for NCCL’s annual gathering — leaders from diocesan, parish, publishing, and academic circles across the United States and beyond — that word’s many levels of meaning may capture significant moments. Here’s what the dictionary says:

en•gage [en-géyj] *verb*, -gaged, -gag•ing

1. to attract and hold fast, to occupy the attention or efforts of (a person or persons):

■ From pre-conference offerings on Sunday afternoon and Bishop Richard Malone’s opening address that evening, to Fr. Dennis Dillon’s and Tom Groome’s respective presentations on Thursday morning and many moments in between, attendees found countless opportunities for professional development and personal enrichment amid new and renewed friendships. Through lenses of connection and participation, we looked intently at past achievements, present endeavors and future challenges.

2. to hire, or otherwise secure for aid, employment, or use:

■ We welcomed Lee Nagel as our new executive director, and look forward to NCCL providing still greater service to the church under his guidance and direction. We raised our hands to invoke God’s blessing upon Neil Parent, leaving that position after seventeen years of vision, openness, leadership and faithfulness!

3. to betroth or bind, as by pledge, promise, contract or oath:

■ At Eucharistic liturgy and morning prayer, around banquet and breakout tables, in simple hallway conversations and festive celebrations, we entered into still deeper communion with the Risen Lord of Easter and one another. We recognized the contributions of the USCCB Committee on Catechesis, Sr. Rose Pacatte, FSP, and Peter Ries; and reaffirmed our commitment to the work which they have helped us embrace and claim as NCCL’s own.

4. to cause (gears or the like) to become interlocked for some operational purpose:

■ In meetings of the Board of Directors, Representative Council and general membership, president Mary Ann Ronan reaffirmed NCCL’s long-standing commitment to generate and provide leadership in catechetical ministry at all levels — parish, diocesan and national. Constituent Forum meetings provided valuable arenas for diocesan directors, their staffs, and parish catechetical leaders to discuss current organizational affairs and make plans for future needs.



Anne Comeaux, diocesan director for Galveston-Houston and past president of NCCL, receives the F. Sadlier Dinger Award for outstanding accomplishments in catechetical ministry.

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President Many Ann Ronan invited the entire assembly to raise their hands in a blessing for Neil Parent as he retires from NCCL.

5. to bring (troops) into conflict:

■ This is one we didn't do (at least, not intentionally!) unless it was to challenge our own intellectual comfort levels with insights of midweek keynoters Edward Hahnenberg, Adele Gonzalez, and Fr. Bob Duggan and Susan Clark.

The dictionary offers one last entry: to occupy oneself, or become involved. For the crew of Starship Enterprise, once a plan of engagement had been identified and developed, Captain Picard's subsequent directive was no less forthright: "Make it so!" For NCCL, the catechetical moments abound, and the work of forming competent catechetical leaders is constantly before us. This wondrous opportunity is ours: "Engage! Make it so!" ■

Jim Tucker is Catholic formation director for the Diocese of Helena, Montana.



Bishop Richard Malone, NCCL episcopal advisor, and Neil Parent enjoy chatting at dinner.



Sister Rose Pacatte, FSP, is presented the Technology Award for outstanding contributions in the field of technology and communications by Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, the chair of the NCCL Technology Committee.



Most Reverend Frederick F. Campbell, bishop of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, and Deacon Ray Latour, president of Silver Burdette Ginn Religion, at the opening celebration of the Eucharist.



NCCL members dance the night away after the Sadlier dinner.



Fr. David Loftus, vice president of NCCL, presents the Distinguished Service Award to Peter Ries, director of evangelization, in Lansing, Michigan.

WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER

by Jo Rotunno



Once upon a time, parish and diocesan catechetical leaders could look forward to a summer hiatus. Time for vacation, summer courses, family and community time, planning for the new year, even cleaning out files. While the catechetical ministry has become much more a year-round job, many leaders do still find time in the summer to turn to some projects that may have languished in the in-basket for months.

If you are responsible for catechist or adult formation, one of those projects may be to review new resources. In the case of *Echoes of Faith Plus*, you may have a stack of new modules either in your in-basket or stacked on shelves that are still shrink-wrapped or in their packing boxes. Here's a quick tour of what you will find and what you should look at first.

First of all, as you open those packages, you'll notice that you have two main pieces for each module — a booklet and a DVD case. At first glance, this is similar to the old packaging, except that the video has been replaced by a DVD. Then you may notice that there is a slight bulge in the back of the booklet. You may wonder, "What's this? Another DVD? Why do I need both? Couldn't I just buy the booklet? Can I send the DVD back and save money?"

Let's take a closer look. First of all, you don't have two DVD's. The back of the booklet contains a CD-Rom, and if you try to use it as a DVD, you'll be a bit disappointed. The CD is a new feature of *Echoes Plus*. Its purpose is to allow catechists to study and review the main video content of the module at home. Let's suppose that you

are using *Echoes Plus* as its designers intended, in a group setting in your parish or diocesan center. You are gaining all the benefits of the community-based process that the *National Directory for Catechesis* assumes will be the norm. (See *NDC 55 F*.) But what of people who have to miss a session, or who wish to review the content? We provided the CD-Rom just for them. Catechists can now take their booklet home and use the CD-Rom for review or home study. This use is not a substitute for formation within the community of faith, but it can be a very useful supplement.

Catechists who put the CD-Rom into a computer will find it quite easy to use. It has a built in video player, so no software downloads will be necessary. The CD is a self-directed instructional tool. A friendly voice will guide them through the *Echoes* process, and help them move back and forth between the four video segments and the companion booklet process. (Remember, over half the content of *Echoes Plus* is in the booklet.) On other hand, a DRE who attempts to use the CD-Rom in place of the DVD will find it cumbersome. The segments can only be viewed after moving through the opening and closing narration that accompanies each one. The image on the screen will be smaller and in lower resolution. Some older DVD players will not even play the CD-Rom.

In addition, there is one key feature of the DVD that is *not* on the CD-Rom: two bonus interviews to enrich and extend the content of the module. Such catechetical experts as Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski, Sr. Rose Pacatte, Tom Groome, Michael Horan, and Judith Dunlap appear on the modules already completed. These interviews provide

you with material for additional enrichment sessions with your catechists. You'll find session plans for using these interviews on the Echosoffaith.com website, as well as in the program director's manual to be published this fall.

So what else should you look for in the new *Echoes Plus* modules? I would suggest three pieces that you should be sure to view, because they are all new.

Adult Faith Formation module. If you have not previewed this module yet, choose at least one segment (I would suggest either segment 1 or segment 4) and get a feel for the style of this module. Remember, the goal of this module is to provide some basic facilitator training for parish facilitators. The demonstrations by seasoned facilitators, plus the expert advice by Dr. Jane Regan, Dave Riley, and British religious educator David Wells will offer you and your parish facilitators a rich resource.

Roles of the Catechist module. Segment 4 has been reworked and extended, so you may wish to start there. This segment, "The Catechist as Witness for Justice" was developed in partnership with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. We have added new footage and narration and a new article on Catholic social teaching.

Methodology modules. We have added a new video Segment 4 on ritual prayer to each of the four Methods modules for grade-level catechists. The segment includes new demonstration footage of effective classroom prayer, plus input by Amy Florian, well-known liturgical consultant, who also provided a bonus interview for these modules. The classroom footage was developed in collaboration with St. Linda Gaupin of the Diocese of Orlando.

All of the modules described here should be available to you by mid-June. Then watch for more surprises next fall as the final phase of *Echoes of Faith Plus* (the Theology modules) will near completion. The *Echoes* train has left the station and we hope that your diocese or parish will become a regular stop on our schedule. ■

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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STAFF KNOW THE WHOLE SCORE

by Jeanne D. Schrempf

My dictionary gives a multitude of meanings for the word “staff”. The two which seem to speak to the importance and value of a diocesan catechetical staff are *staff: a group working as a unity to achieve a goal under the leadership of another* and *staff: a tool of support for another*. Both definitions support my own experience of sharing ministry with a diocesan catechetical staff and embrace the vision of the *National Directory for Catechesis*.

There are many models for a diocesan staff depending on the structure and resources of a diocese and its catechetical office. The catechetical staff in the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Albany is composed of a director and four professional staff members in a central office. Due to budget constraints, all staff members wear more than one hat. The four associate directors are generalists with specialized ministries—catechist formation, youth ministry, intergenerational and sacramental catechesis—along with ministries with adults and young adults, persons with disabilities, and ecumenical/interfaith groups. Our staff also includes two support persons, a part-time resource library coordinator, a clergy liaison for youth ministry, and a project director for young adult evangelization.

The limitation of this model in a largely rural diocese like Albany is the difficulty in serving rural areas adequately. Several years ago a pastoral planning process produced a recommendation for regional offices in several rural areas. Although this plan would have served our diocese well, the financial resources to support this model were not available. We serve our rural parishes by assigning each staff person as a liaison to two or more deaneries.

ORCHESTRATING CATECHESIS

The catechetical staff of a diocesan office is the most prized gift that a diocesan director could ever hope to receive. Each person brings a personal and communal faith, a variety of gifts, life experience, and skills learned and honed through formation and practice. The task of the director is to assist each staff member to become both an exceptional catechetical minister and a member of an extraordinary diocesan team. The director becomes the orchestra leader, the staff

members the musicians, and the mission the musical score. Although each part is valued and respected, it is the whole that is essential. Each must be the most outstanding specialist that he or she can be, but they must know the whole score, not just their piece, and be able to articulate and embrace a comprehensive vision of catechesis.

I believe that the parish is the best ground for nurturing and forming diocesan catechetical leaders. Yet even with opportunities for formation, learning the skills of leadership and administration, and working collaboratively with people of differing backgrounds and ages, there is a transition from parish to diocesan ministry. The new person moves from being the person in charge to being part of a staff and institution. The culture, structure and formality of the diocese as institution can be formidable under the best of circumstances. The director needs to provide a time of orientation for new staff to help them feel welcome in this new environment and to provide training and support for them in their new position.

REHEARSING NEW STAFF

The hiring of new staff is a time of transition for the new employee and the rest of the staff. A diocesan catechetical staff needs commitment, hard work, and time to meld and grow into a team. Some of this occurs through formal processes such as clear but flexible job descriptions, periodic review and evaluation, formal and informal communication with the director, working together on processes and projects, regular staff meetings, times of prayer and renewal, and opportunities for formation and growth. Much of it occurs through the everyday sharing of life together — praying together, sharing meals and social times, carpooling to events, attending formation experiences together, sharing the highs and lows of personal life, and walking with one another through times of joy and celebration as well as times of anxiety and sadness. Many staffs have been helped to move through transition times by using the Myers-Briggs type indicator another similar tool.

STRETCHING VETERAN STAFF

While new staff members need training, mentoring, feedback, supervision and support, experienced staffs have their own unique needs. They need to be supported and affirmed — and not taken for granted because of their experience, job performance, commitment and dependability. They need to be challenged to grow and to leave their comfort zones to see new possibilities and to think “outside the box.” Their longevity brings numerous personal contacts and great opportunities for collaboration beyond the catechetical office. Being free from many of the administrative tasks of the director, they need to be encouraged to try new initiatives and dream new dreams. Each person should develop the aptitude to “see the big picture” and have the potential to move into new positions of leadership in and beyond the diocesan office.

Although Webster’s definition of staff as a leadership team is probably the most common definition of the word, the description of *staff* as a means of support is the most essential definition for me

personally. My ability to be the diocesan director, the longevity of my tenure, the reputation of our diocesan office, and the joy that I find in ministry are due largely to the fact that I am privileged to share catechetical ministry in the Diocese of Albany with incredible companions on the journey. ■

Each specialist must be able to articulate and embrace a comprehensive vision.

Jeanne D. Schrempf has been the diocesan director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Albany for fourteen years. She serves NCCL as the New York Province Representative and has served on numerous boards and committees for NCCL, conferences and universities. She holds a master’s degree in religious education from Fordham University. She and her husband are parents to four married children and 11 grandchildren.



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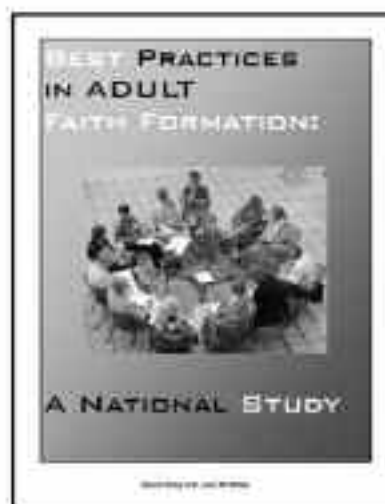
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HAVE A DREAM IN TECH-NICOLOR

by April Dietrich

Dreaming. It seems to be a lost art today. When I ask colleagues about their dreams I see them react with surprised eyes and wistful voices; as if they'd never seriously considered dreams to be worthy of discussion. Either that or they've fallen prey to the overlords of practicality who say, "If it can't be done — don't do it." If I had a gig for every time I hear "now, that's impossible" or "you just can't do that!" I'd have one of the biggest memories on the eastern seaboard! I've been told those same things when I express my dreams about catechesis and technology. Sometimes, though, I'm given hope by those who scratch their goatees and ponder the possibilities.

IMAGINEERS

I have great respect for the Disney approach to possibilities. *Imagineers* are employed to take dreams and make them reality. If you've ever taken a good look at the Disney enterprise, you'll see that just about anything is possible, or at least will be, given enough time and creativity. Remember the Disneyland automatons from thirty years ago? Compare them to the live-action dinosaurs of today! I'm betting it's only a matter of time before there are Disney imagineers who have figured out how the replicator on the Starship Enterprise made food appear out of thin air and have a working model in Tomorrowland.

Technology is ever-emerging. It's only a matter of time before just about anything is possible. (You've heard this before, right?) What would happen if we applied that bold optimism and creativity to technology and ministry? What if we could be imagineers and make our dreams possible? How far could we take technology in ministry? What if our limits were only our imaginations?

CONFERENCING

Some possibilities to ponder: What if we were to have our organization's forums meet not only at the Annual Meeting but other times of the year as well? Could it be possible to have a catechetical web conference with offices all over the country using technology currently in use in the business world? Web conferencing is wonderful innovation, even though one's monitor screen looks like the opening from "The Brady Bunch." We've already had discussions on the importance of connecting with others in ministry. What if we capitalized on these new ways to achieve connectivity?

What if we were to take our dreaming a step closer to home? Dioceses could hold meetings, seminars, and workshops in distant parishes via Internet (some already are!). How about update meetings, formation and mentoring opportunities whenever and wherever possible? How about streaming audio or video feeds from meetings of PCL's

or pastoral associates, or even pastors? Online formation courses for catechists? Happening already. For PCLs? Also happening in some dioceses. In this era of pared-down diocesan offices where fewer are asked to do more, big dreams could make the improbable conceivable and the conceivable real. If we can dream it, it can happen!

What if in our parishes we could have live streaming video of Mass on Sundays so that the homebound or travelers could experience liturgy with the community as closely as possible, even singing along with friends to familiar music?

PODCASTS

What about podcasts of homilies? Those parishioners who have children and miss half of the homily because of a four-year-old with a good case of the "squirmies" could have the homily downloaded automatically to their pc. They could then take it with them on their mp3 player wherever they go and listen to it whenever they would like. This is also a good option for the forty-something single person sitting next to them who missed the homily for the same reason. The opportunity for communication from the parish to the parishioner throughout the week could prove invaluable in these days of competition from the outside media.

The implications for communication and formation with catechumenate participants are boundless! Podcasts of sessions, lists of resources, weekly readings, chat rooms, message boards, blogs, personal pages, calendars updated real-time, oh my! And the catechumenate is just one process out of how many in a parish? Dream about the possibilities for other catechetical ministries: Children's formation...online parent participation? Bible studies with message boards? Ministry heads chat rooms? Homilies online in print, audio and video? Adult formation? FAQs? The list goes on almost indefinitely — bounded only by our imaginations.

DREAMING

Of course one of the greatest challenges is "How do we make it happen?" This is where the creativity comes into play. Enough determination and creativity and anything could happen... think Thomas Edison or Walt Disney.

Could we ever achieve the breadth of our dreams? Given enough time, I'm certain we will. Much of the technology we need exists now, or is in development; our dreams are only limited by our imaginations and our intrepid creativity! ■

Please email insights, comments, and suggestions to Adietrich@stjohn-frederick.org.

GROUP PHOTO “Soy catequista” consultation participants gathered at Notre Dame:



- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Verónica Alvarado, | 12. Sister Therese San Miguel, OSF, | 24. Carlos Aedo, | 38. Gerado Rojas, |
| 2. Dr. José Antonio Medina, | 13. Reynaldo Montemayor, | 25. Lupita Vital Cruz, | 39. Nicole Bernal, |
| 3. Rev. Virgilio Elizondo, STD, Ph.D., | 14. Humberto Ramos, | 26. Dulce Jiménez-Abreu, | 40. Beth McNamara, |
| 4. Sister Ana María Pineda, RSM, STD, | 15. Clem Schwartz, | 27. María Rivera, | 41. Jessy Lira, |
| 5. Enid Roman de Jesús, | 16. Brother Jeffrey Gros, FSC, | 28. Sister Alice Michael, SUSC, | 42. Bill Dinger, |
| 6. Bishop Ricardo Ramírez, CSB, | 17. Hna. Lucia Hinojosa, | 29. José Amaya, | 43. Maruja Sedano, |
| 7. Dr. Jerry Baumbach, | 18. Laura López, | 30. Anne Comeaux, | 44. Sister Edith Prendergast, RSC, |
| 8. Bill Ippolito, | 19. Dr. Adele Gonzalez, | 31. Dennis Johnson, Jr., | 45. Esmeralda Sierra, |
| 9. María Esther Hernández, | 20. Dr. Timothy Matovina, | 32. Elena Zavala, | 46. Terry Garza, |
| 10. Sister Guadalupe Ramírez, MCDP, | 21. Daniel Mulhall, | 33. María Elena Puga, | 47. Olga Villa Parra, |
| 11. María Pilar Latorre, | 22. Sister Alice Molina, RSHM, | 34. Vera Galeas, | 48. Hosffman Ospino, |
| | 23. Dr. José Planas, | 35. Greg Erlandson, | 49. Manuel Maldonado-Villalobos, |
| | | 36. Victor Valenzuela, | |
| | | 37. Rosie Torres, | |

Not pictured: Dr. John Cavadini, Rev. Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, Ph.D., STD, Mike Ferejohn, Rev. Daniel Groody, CSC, Natalia Imperatori-Lee, Dr. Michael E. Lee

Lee observed: “It’s a balance then, for when catechesis hears theology, it has this challenge to express clarity. We want clarity of expression of the Church, of teaching of the faith, and yet, at the same time, we can’t let the search for clarity overcome history.”

WHAT’S WORKING IN COMMUNITIES

The second objective of *Soy catequista* was to surface different types of effective catechetical approaches utilized in Latino communities in the United States. In February 2006, the *Soy catequista* committee mailed letters to leaders in the catechetical and Latino communities throughout the United States inviting them to nominate people they believed to be effective catechists. In addition to considering the catechetical programs of the nominees, the selection process sought to achieve a representative sample from all regions of the country and the many Latino cultures.

From the many nominations that were received, thirteen catechists were selected as *testigos*. The *testigos* spoke about their ministry and the challenges they encounter while working with adults, children, and families in a variety of cultures. Their *testimonios* provided concrete examples of catechesis that is working in Latino communities. The commitment, creativity, and personal witness of these catechists, as well as the opportunity to share ideas, were critical components of the consultation. These surfaced not only during the presentations, but in small group discussions. The *Consultation Booklet* that everyone received included descriptions of the programs, as well as discussion questions for all the presentations.

In thanking the people who gave *testimonios*, Father Elizondo said “The testimonials have been the core of this presentation, because this is where it is happening. We can always talk about it; you’re doing it. God bless you! And believe me there’s much more fruit than you’ll ever begin to realize.”

¡SOY CATEQUISTA!

Perhaps it is not possible to convey adequately in an article the excitement and enthusiasm that permeated the consultation last November. Ask the people who were there for their reaction. Go to soycatequista.com for more information. I do know that we have a commitment to share this incredible experience. As Father Elizondo said in his consultation summary, “Soy Catechesis is a beginning of a full movement to recapture the beautiful identity of the catequista.” All of the collaborators hope that the process used during the consultation will be employed across the country to uplift the dignity and vocation of all who labor as catechists and to elicit and share ideas for even more effective catechetical approaches, thereby claiming a new day for catechesis. ¡*Soy catequista!* ■

William S. Dinger is president of publishing house W. H. Sadlier, Inc.

SOY CATEQUISTA, THE PROGRAM

The event of *Soy catequista: The Dignity, Vocation, and Mission of the Catechist* was the first step. Those present were challenged to share the vision and the wisdom of the presentations with the people in their dioceses and parish communities. *Soy catequista* is meant to *abrir la puerta* — open the door. To facilitate this “opening,” the entire proceeding at Notre Dame was recorded on video. Drawing upon this record, Sadlier is producing DVDs and a Leader’s Guide that will help enable the *Soy catequista* participants and all catechetical leaders across the country to replicate the consultation in their dioceses, parishes, and in regional meetings. The goal of these consultations is to provide new emphasis to the central role of catechists in the mission of the church while simultaneously engaging catechists in an exchange of ideas and effective catechetical approaches.

The bilingual Leader’s Guide provides templates to organize meetings of different durations, recognizing that most will not have the opportunity to conduct a three-day consultation. It also offers a detailed description of the objectives of a *Soy catequista* event, guidelines for selecting *animadores*, directions for evaluating *testimonios*, suggestions for incorporating recorded presentations (abridged or unabridged), questions for small group discussions, and other recommendations for planning a consultation.

Six DVDs, designed to fit a variety of needs, can be used effectively in a consultation of any duration. They can also be used as resources for individual catechists. The first DVD offers a five to ten minute segment that presents an overview of *Soy catequista* that could be used as an introduction to any *Soy catequista* event. The DVD has abridged *Soy catequista* presentations — ten minute segments with highlights of the presentations of the *animadores* at Notre Dame, and will also contain an overview of the key ideas of the catechetical programs of the *testigos*. Finally, it contains a planning segment that complements the Leader’s Guide. The complete versions of each of the *Soy catequista* presentations of the *animadores* will be available on DVDs 2-6.

Other resources include soycatequista.com, launched in 2006, which offers resources for *Soy catequista* events and serves as a central location for catechists for resources and ideas. The *Soy Catequista Leadership Council*, consisting of the original planners and participants, will help continue the work begun at the consultation.

William S. Dinger

In Chapter Four on Liturgy and Work, Moran recalls the developments in liturgical reform. He reminds us that liturgy is the great work of the church, “a call to center all other forms of work within the origin of the meaning of work: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good”(Genesis 1:31). He addresses the roles of music and liturgical actions including eating rituals, dance, and funeral rituals. In describing the liturgy as an educational form, he speaks to an understanding of teaching that is not rationalistic and individualistic but broad and complex. He reminds us that a community does most of its teaching nonverbally. It is through the experiences that we have in the faith community that we gradually learn what it means to be a member. He then develops a section on the place of private prayer. In that section, he develops from Harris’ writings the understanding of Sabbath and all that word contains.

In Chapter Five on Proclamation and Witness, Moran treats the understanding of kerygma and then develops sections on what he calls three rhetorical languages of teaching: storytelling, preaching, and lecturing. Each of these languages has a particular purpose and place. He reminds us that Christianity is “a religion to be spoken, not just written about and read.” He concludes this chapter saying “In a world that proliferates in vacuous speeches, we still hunger for individuals to stand up and give witness to the truth as they know it, grounded in wisdom.

In Chapter Six on Teaching and Doctrine, Moran treats the topics of doctrinal teachings, moral teachings, moral guidance and classroom dialogue on religion. The section on Understanding Religion is particularly timely given the world we find ourselves in today.

“Learning religion”, he says, “is similar to learning language. You start with whatever you speak and move out to another language, usually one that is similar to your own.”

In Chapter Seven on Compassion and Service, Moran says “what is at stake in this discussion of service is the nature of power and how Christians are called to act in a world that constantly misunderstands and misuses power.” He then develops this from two perspectives: the local church and its response to the suffering brought on by grinding poverty and the global church and its ability to be an authentic witness for peace and nonviolence. This chapter is particularly compelling and challenging in light of the world situation today and both the role of the church and the role of government. Moran speaks quite clearly about the leadership that is needed in both arenas. He is quite candid about the challenges that the United States government faces. He also raises the danger we are facing in this country as government perceives itself to have a divine mandate for its policies.

As rich and challenging as this book is, for me the Introduction and the Epilogue are the heart of the book. In what he terms the bookends, the Introduction and Epilogue, Gabriel Moran shares with all of us who are the readers the story of Maria’s life and in particular her courage in the face of a devastating illness and eventually her death in February 2005. The story of this remarkable woman is one that needs to be told. In life she enriched so many of us who learned from her through her writings and her presentations. She challenged us to think creatively about how the faith is to be shared with those who will come after us. As our sisters and brothers in the Eastern tradition pray, “May her memory live forever!” ■

Maureen Shaughnessy, S.C., who writes and speaks widely on catechesis, serves on the provincial leadership team for her religious community, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth. She has been the representative for Catechesis and Leadership Development in the USCCB Department of Education and a catechetical leader for the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey.



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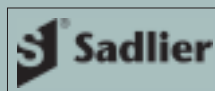


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NCCL WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NCCL is pleased to announce that Leland D. Nagel of Oneida, Wisconsin, has been named executive director and will assume his new role on July 1. Lee is a catechetical leader. He is known to many of us as the director of Total Catholic Education in the Diocese of Green Bay where he served from 1990 to 2005. But most of us probably know him from the more than one hundred appearances he has made as a keynoter or major presenter at conferences and meetings across the country. For CACE, NCEA, NACFLM, NCCL; from the LA Congress to Bismarck, Baker and Boise; Lee's words have made an impact on thousands of people over the years.

It is often said, "Just because one can speak does not mean one can write." Lee does both exceptionally well. He has authored articles for numerous journals and other publications, including one for the September 2005 issue of *CL* ("Catechesis Is Not a Field of Dreams").

In 2006 NCCL honored Lee with a special recognition award for his outstanding contribution in catechetical ministry.

Lee received his BA from St. Mary's College in Winona, Minnesota, and his MS from Northern State College in Aberdeen, South Dakota. He is currently a doctoral candidate working toward a PhD in Leadership and Human Behavior. But certainly Lee would never want us to leave out that once, while teaching at the University of Mary in Bismarck he was a theater director.

Welcome Lee. We look forward to ministering with you and ask God's blessing on you. |



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CATECHUMENATE CONNECTIONS

by Megan Anechiarico

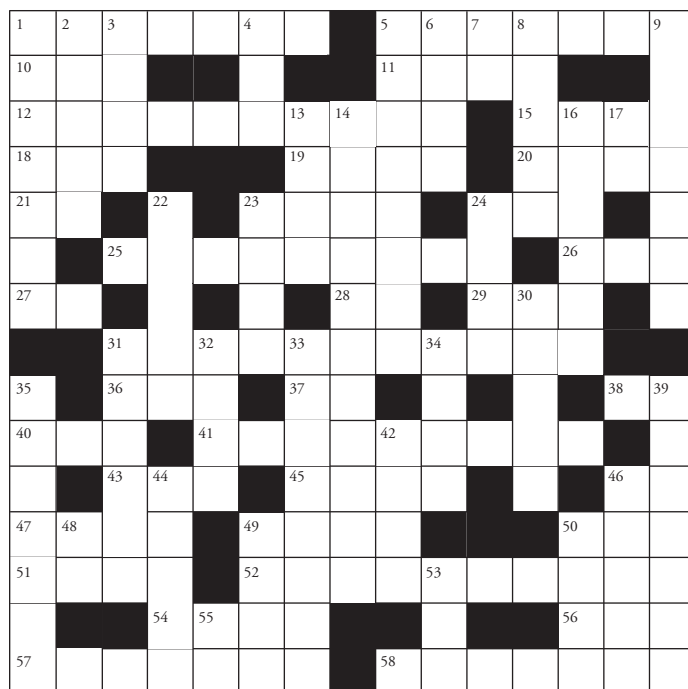
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