



CATECHESIS IN AN
AGE OF DOUBT

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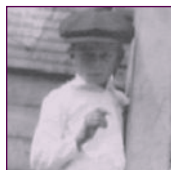
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LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP

Mary Ann Ronan



I have been reflecting on all the information you, our owners, have been sending to us through the Representative Council survey and diocesan director's survey, as well as the work of committees and task forces. Many of you are emailing me with your concerns, hopes and dreams.

The Board of Directors has been reflecting on the question: How do we want the world to be different for our owners? We know we must deliver value to you as well as sustain a reputation of relevance based on trust and communication. We must advocate so that catechesis regains its rightful place and is provided the necessary resources as one of the church's essential ministries.

I keep coming back to the *General Directory of Catechesis* and the *National Directory of Catechesis*, which both proclaim the central role catechesis needs to play in the church's mission. These documents provide us with the unifying theme around which to unite and focus our energies. The call to discipleship crosses all groups involved in the catechetical mission of the church. Discipleship as a central goal provides an equally creditable and compelling basis for uniting all segments of catechetical ministry.

NCCL is the organization to encourage and facilitate dialogue within the catechetical community. When we gather at our Annual Conference most of the catechetical community gathers with us and we could use this opportunity to reestablish intentional collaboration. We already collaborate on the standards designed to support the professionalism of our owners.

By collaborating with others we can shape the catechetical agenda.

We said clearly in our statement for discernment of officers in May that "we are committed to creative and sustained engagement with other national organizations that have catechesis at their heart." Our aim is to restore catechesis to its proper status within the church's mission and to advocate effectively for the catechetical agenda.

We believe that by collaborating with others we can shape the catechetical agenda. Dialogue encourages all of us to take responsibility for the catechetical mission while keeping our own focus and expertise. We have the potential to exercise leadership and speak with a unified voice to further the church's catechetical mission. ■



THE WORKSHOP OF DOUBT

Neil A. Parent



It is timely that we turn our attention in this issue of *Catechetical Leader* to the topic of catechesis in an age of doubt. It is virtually impossible today to meet any serious thinker who does not have some misgivings about the state of the world. The crises that have been smoldering in the Middle East for decades or longer have now ignited and are spreading ferociously to other parts of the world. One wonders about what is going to happen next and begins to doubt that everything will turn out okay.

To make matters worse, as Harold Horell observes in his article, many of our institutions, from businesses to governments to churches, seem to have let us down of late. We struggle in our belief that they will do the right thing when it counts. At times they have acted primarily out of self-interest, fueling doubts in us about their dependability for serving the common good.

But doubt doesn't stop at the doors of institutions. It seeps into the very fabric of belief itself. This is partly due to the failures of the institutions that sponsor the values and beliefs we are asked to honor and partly due to the fact that the modern mind is no longer as accepting of belief systems as it once was.

The modern mind is still a work in progress, of course, but what makes it so unique as compared with previous generations is its ready access to virtually limitless amounts of information through the Internet and media. Fr. Dave Dwyer notes in his essay that "God" is the second most frequently entered term in the Google search engine. Citing a Pew research project, he says that some 49 million people in the United States search for religious or spiritual information online. With so much information at hand, it is much harder, for example, for religious leaders to vie for their flock's attention and be in control of the message they want to impart.

The constantly shifting sands of modern life have caused many religious sojourners to seek firmer ground in certitude. And there is no dearth of those willing to provide it. In recent years we have witnessed the phenomenal growth of a variety of churches that offer a sure-fire grasp of the Christian faith. There are no "maybes" or "ifs" in their belief systems, only rock-solid answers. Indicative of their approach is a bumper sticker I once saw that read, "Jesus said it. I believe it. And that's it!"

This is a far cry from the father in Mark's Gospel who implored Jesus to heal his possessed son. When Jesus responded that everything was possible to one who has faith, the father shouted out, "I do believe, help my unbelief!"

Who among us can't identify with this man? We believe yet we struggle from time to time with doubts. We do fine for a while and then something unsettling happens in our life or in the lives of people we love, and we find our faith jarred, thrown off kilter. Questions and doubts begin to resurface.

The novelist Albert Camus struggled mightily over the issue of the suffering of innocent children. He could not fathom how a good God could permit suffering in such vulnerable, innocent lives. But faith is a never-ending process of renewing our trust in God, of allowing our hearts to follow God's gentle invitations of love. No one said that it was going to be easy.

Sometimes, in teaching the faith the temptation is to do so in a way that implies that we have all the answers. Our Catholic faith is indeed a solid platform on which to build life's meaning. But it is faith. It does require of us an ongoing, ever-renewing trust in God. We trust in God not because we have all the answers but because our trust binds us to God. Indeed, it is God's beckoning love that engenders our faith. As Cardinal Newman put it, "It is love that makes faith, not faith love."

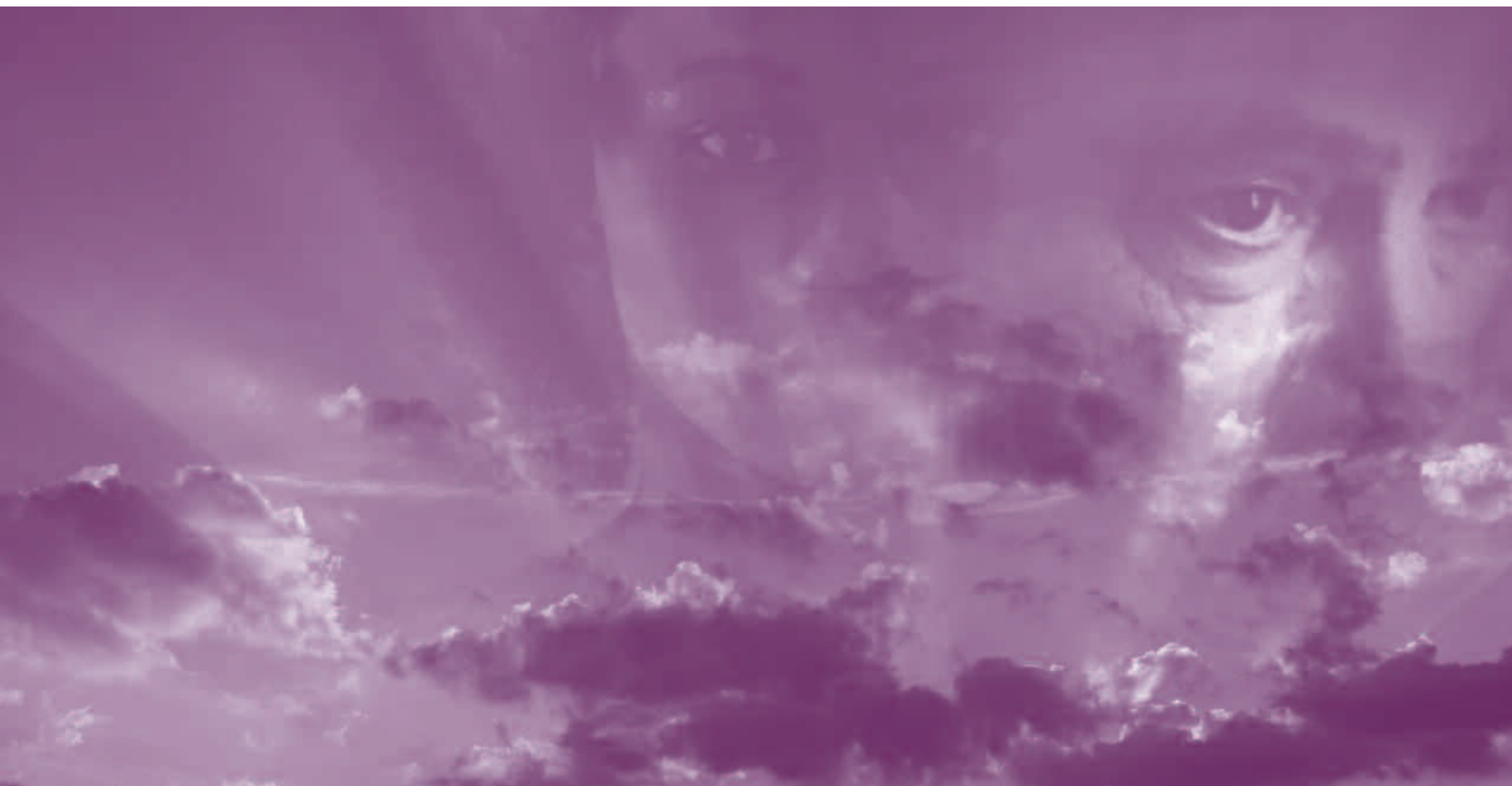
*It is hard for us as catechists
to answer a question by saying,
"We don't know."*

Striking the right balance between presenting the doctrines of the faith as true guideposts and nurturing a trust in God in the face of mystery is not always easy. But it is essential that in the catechetical process we not provide a false sense of certainty and thereby co-opt the soul's essential need to seek its own path to God. It is hard for us as catechists to answer a question by saying, "We don't know." But in some instances that may be the best thing we can do to help the believer come to terms with the sacred mystery that underlies our faith.

Harvard psychologist Gordon W. Allport, who a half century ago explored the psychological underpinnings of religion, identified the ability to make a commitment to one's beliefs in the face of doubt as a major attribute of a mature faith. He even went on to say that "mature religious sentiment is ordinarily fashioned in the workshop of doubt." If that is the case, we as catechetical leaders will have lots of opportunity during these uncertain and troubling times to help believers achieve greater maturity in their faith. ■

Catechesis in an Age of Doubt

by Harold D. Horell



We live in an age of doubt. The institutions that once stood as symbols of stability and social and moral values are often questioned today. Business corporations, political parties, and even churches no longer command the respect they once did. For example, we read that the Monsanto Company learned about the toxicity of PCBs in 1935 but continued to dump them into Snow Creek in Anniston, Alabama, until 1971, thus poisoning the local flora and fauna and causing many people to suffer, and we may wonder what other corporations are also carelessly poisoning the natural environment.

We hear allegations that a major U.S. retailer is employing unfair labor practices and we wonder about the ethics of the retail business. We may doubt the political process as we see politicians lapsing more often into bitter partisan disputes and seeming to lose sight of the common good. We may find that there are times when we can not

trust the words and actions of our elected leaders. Even our churches have been rocked by scandal: the scandal of sexual abuse. Within Catholicism this scandal has been compounded by revelations of the inability or unwillingness of church leaders to address issues of clergy sexual abuse in the past, and continuing difficulties in creating policies and procedures that ensure the accountability of pastoral leaders. Hence, more and more people harbor doubts about the ability of our churches to provide moral and spiritual leadership.

DOUBT CORRODES

For some people our contemporary tendency to doubt becomes an acid that corrodes the fabric of life. Doubt has become a breeding ground for uncertainty, suspicion, lack of confidence and even cynicism, skepticism and despair. We are at times uncertain about

Adult faith formation must encourage both trust and critically reflective doubt.

whom we can trust and where to turn for accurate information. We are more inclined to be suspicious about the motives and intentions of civic and church leaders, experts and institutions. For some, these uncertainties and suspicions lead to a lack of confidence in our ability to make sense of our lives and our world. In turn, this lack of confidence can foster any number of cynical or skeptical attitudes towards life. For example, a person may become contemptuously distrustful of any claims about the possibilities for social development or progress and even about the good will of others. Or a person may come to think of life as a kind of power struggle. In the absence of any clearly discernible and agreed-upon social and moral norms, life can appear to be a competition in which individuals or groups try to force their ways of seeing the world upon one another. Moreover, destructive doubt can leave people feeling wounded, while life as a whole can seem to be quite fragile. And destructive doubt has led many to experience a loss of feeling, exhaustion, and a chronic sense of hopelessness.

Some people respond to the destructive doubt of our age by striving to re-establish a foundation for secure knowledge and truth. For example, some people turn to social or political philosophies for security. Espousing Marxism, socialism, libertarianism, liberalism, conservatism or some other philosophy can provide a way to make sense of life and the world. Other people turn to religion to quiet the cries of doubt. Thus, many Christians, Jews, Muslims, and people of other faiths strive to identify core religious beliefs and practices that enable them to establish a sense of order, stability, and meaning in their personal and social lives.

Philosophies of life and religious convictions can provide an alternative to the uncertainty, suspiciousness, cynicism, and despair of our contemporary age. Moreover, political parties, social groups, and faith communities can become places that offer a safe refuge from the voices of doubt and the social chaos that destructive doubt encourages.

NARROW PERSPECTIVES INADEQUATE

Yet, those who adopt a philosophical perspective or embrace specific religious convictions in order to retreat from doubt sometimes end up contributing to, rather than quelling, the forces of destructive

doubt. When a person or group is motivated by a desire to find absolutely certain beliefs, a philosophy of life can become narrowly ideological and religious belief can become sectarian. Those who adopt a narrowly ideological outlook or a religious sectarianism tend to separate people into two groups: those who recognize the truth about the world (that is, those who share a particular philosophical or religious worldview) and everyone else (who are judged to be people who belong to the world of destructive doubt.)

Because they cannot address the realities of pluralism and globalization, narrow ideologies and sectarianism are inadequate guides for making sense of life in our contemporary age of doubt.

The worldviews of ideologues and religious sectarians is divisive and non-dialogical. One is either with them or against them. If the various communities of people bound together by ideological convictions or religious sectarianism could exist apart from one another, there would be no need for dialogue. However, in our increasingly global, multi-cultural, religiously and culturally pluralistic world, we are connected and may interact daily with people who hold a variety of philosophical and religious convictions. Because they cannot address the realities of pluralism and globalization, narrowly ideological perspectives and religious sectarianism prove to be inadequate guides for making sense of life in our contemporary age of doubt.

The clearest sign of the inadequacy of narrowly ideological and religiously sectarian outlooks on life is their tendency toward violence. First, there is the verbal violence of social, political and religious rhetoric—as seen, for example, in the tendency to demonize those who do not share some particular ideological or religious mindset. This verbal violence helps ideologues and sectarian religionists establish a self-identity as people who proclaim truth in a world of corruption. Second, there is the physical violence of ethnic cleansing, terrorism

continued on next page

and war—often done under the banner of some ideological cause and with a firm conviction that “God is on our side.” Such verbal and physical violence can, of course, only contribute to the destructive tendencies of our times.

As we take a realistic look at the destructive doubting of our age and the unhealthy ways people have responded to destructive doubt we must ask: What are we to do? How can we find a way forward in our age of doubt?

CHANNELING DOUBT PRODUCTIVELY

Within Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other traditions there are other ways of dealing with doubt; ways that focus not on overcoming doubt, but instead, on channeling the energies of doubt in productive rather than destructive directions. Within Christian traditions, a classic expression of one such approach to doubt is found in Thomas Aquinas’ “Treatise on God” (*Summa Theologica*, Part I, Questions 2-26). St. Thomas, who lived in an age of doubt that was similar in some ways to our own, begins his reflections on God with the affirmation *that* God exists. According to Thomas (referring to Psalm, 52:1) it is only the fool who says in his heart that there is no God. Indeed, Thomas argues that if we examine the movement, structure, and governance of the world, there are a number of ways we can be led to affirm the existence of God. Yet, Thomas also argues that we never truly know the essence of God. Stated differently, Thomas declares that while we can know *that* God exists, we can never say for certain *what* God is. In our understanding of God there is always an element of doubt.

*In our understanding of God
there is always an element of doubt.*

Thomas examines human experience of goodness, perfection, truth, love, justice, and a number of other praiseworthy qualities. On the one hand, he notes that our experiences of these qualities can tell us something about God. When we find something that is truly and genuinely good, it can give us some sense of God, who is good. To experience love can help us to develop a sense of God, who is love. On the other hand, Thomas is emphatic in reminding us that the goodness, perfection, love, and justice of God are far beyond the goodness, perfection, love, and justice we normally experience in our everyday lives. Thomas notes that our experience of goodness, for example, reflects the goodness of God, but that the goodness of God is something greater, something that we may, at our best, only be

able to glimpse in this life. Thomas concludes that while we can affirm the presence and existence of God, the fullness of God is always beyond us. God always remains mystery. Thomas also counsels us to bring a critically reflective and questioning stance to all discussions of the nature of God. He notes that we need to be careful that we do not try to say too much about God, knowing that our attempts to talk about God will inevitably be inadequate.

Throughout his reflections on God, Thomas suggests that doubt should not lead us to despair. Rather, he states that critically reflective doubt can lead us to seek what is truly good and to be hopeful about the possibility of achieving genuine happiness and fullness of life. That is, Thomas argues that critical reflection can enkindle within us a greater desire for God, and that a holy longing to encounter God ever more fully through what is genuinely good, beautiful, just, and loving can motivate us to strive to live good and holy lives. Moreover, our desire to know God can lead us to think about the end of our lives and to live with the end of our lives in mind—because it will be at the end of our days that we will finally have an opportunity to experience the happiness and fulfillment that can only come through meeting God face to face.

AFFIRM TRUST

So, taking St. Thomas’ reflection on God as our guide, what can we say about catechesis in an age of doubt? First, in an age of doubt catechesis must *affirm a basic sense of trust in God* and an awareness of the signs of God’s presence in everyday life guiding us to *develop a sense of the basic trustworthiness of life*. A sense of trust should, ideally, be nurtured in early childhood and should be an underlying theme throughout the religious education of children. In adult faith formation today, it is often necessary to begin by reaffirming or working to re-establish a basic sense of the trustworthiness of life. Doubt becomes destructive when it erodes our sense of trust: trust in ourselves, others, the world and God. Following in the footsteps of Thomas Aquinas, in an age of doubt we need to affirm: 1) *that* God exists; 2) that when we gather as two or more in God’s name, God is present; and 3) that by means of God’s grace we can create safe, trustworthy places to explore questions about the meaning and purpose of life.

GRAPPLE WITH COMPLEXITIES

Yet, we need to be careful that we do not encourage a false sense of certainty. As Thomas points out, encouraging the idea that our Christian faith provides answers to all questions and that we no longer need to grapple with the complexities of our world can only ever give us a false and idolatrous sense of faith. Rather, from the first catechesis provided by parents through adult faith formation, *we need to encourage a sense of trust that moves outward* toward further questioning and a sense of the infinite mystery of God. We must

Encouraging the idea that our Christian faith provides answers to all questions can only ever give us a false and idolatrous sense of faith.

nurture a sense of faith that enables us to be *non-anxiously present* to the negativities and complexities of life and the world—as we remain centered in the conviction that God is present and that, even with our partial and incomplete understandings of life, we can, by God’s grace, find a way to move forward no matter what we encounter.

SEE THE IMMANENT AND THE TRANSCENDENT

Next, in an age of doubt catechesis must encourage a sense of God as both immanent and transcendent—that is, *of God as present here and now and God as beyond* the here and now. From a developmental perspective, it is during early adolescence that we develop a sense of social consciousness—that is, a reflective sense of society and of the various communities that shape our lives. From early adolescence onwards catechesis must help us to develop an ability to discern the presence of God in our faith communities and our broader social world. At the same time catechesis must enable us to recognize that the church is not the kingdom or reign of God, and that while God is present in the church (despite our sins, including the grievous sins of sexual abuse and the covering up of sexual abuse) the fullness of God’s reign is yet to come. Similarly, while catechesis should help us to open to the presence of God in the communities in which we live and work, it must also enable us to recognize that our communities and our nation are not the full embodiment of all truth, and that we must always be open to the fuller realization of God’s presence as made known in the ongoing unfolding of our lives and within the broader context of other cultures and ways of life.

When catechesis nurtures a healthy understanding of God as both present and beyond, it can also foster a sense of social ministry or *education for peace and justice*. Catechesis can enable us to recognize the presence of goodness, love, justice, and peace in our lives and

world. At the same time, it can lead us to see that in this life we can only glimpse the goodness, love, justice and peace of God, and that we need to commit ourselves to being open to welcoming and working to bring about the fuller realization of the values of God’s reign. However, unlike those who cling for security to a narrowly ideological or religiously sectarian perspective, our work for peace and justice should not be based on a search for secure knowledge in a world of doubt. It should be rooted in a desire to help to heal the broken heart of a world ravaged by human sinfulness, destructive doubt and the fear and violence that destructive doubt often brings in its wake.

NURTURE WISDOM

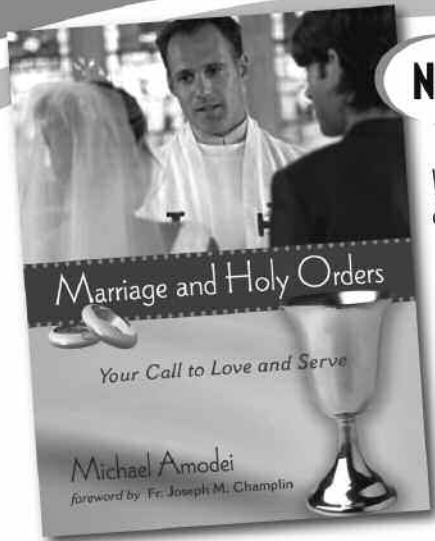
Finally, in an age of doubt catechesis must go beyond teaching about Christian faith and *nurture wisdom in faith that can last a lifetime and beyond*. More fully, as we emerge into adulthood in our twenties, we have a new sense of ourselves. At this stage in life we are drawn to reflect upon where we want to be in ten, twenty, fifty years and beyond. Hence, young adulthood is the first time in life when we are ready, existentially, to think critically about our lives as a whole and what lies beyond life in this world. Then, throughout our adult lives, especially at times of life transition, we are drawn to review and, as need be, to reassess the direction of our lives.

While adult faith formation must provide opportunities to learn more about our Christian faith, it must go beyond this. It must encourage both trust (as an anecdote to destructive doubt) and critically reflective doubt (as a counterweight to unhealthy ways of responding to doubt). On the one hand, catechesis should help us understand and trust in the rich resources of our faith traditions and help us to learn how the treasures of our Christian faith (even such abstruse texts as St. Thomas’ “Treatise on God”) can inspire and guide us as we strive to make wise decisions about the direction of our lives. On the other hand, catechesis should explore how the best of our Christian faith traditions lead us to be open to God’s ever-present call to move beyond the status quo toward fullness of life for both the here and the hereafter. ■

Harold D. (Bud) Horell is an assistant professor of religious education in the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education at Fordham University.

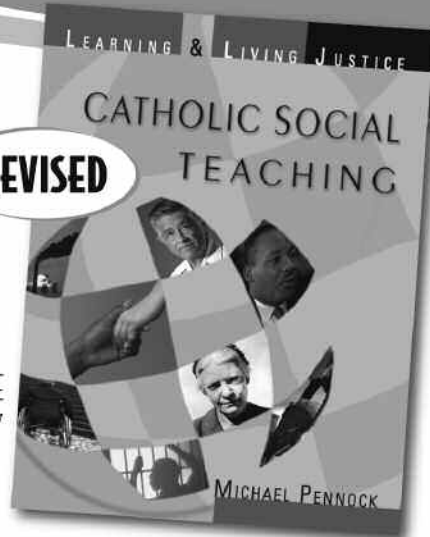
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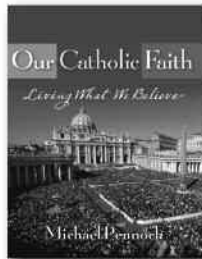
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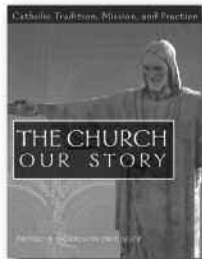


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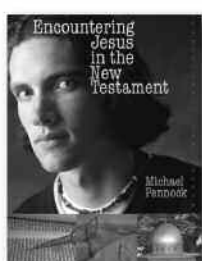
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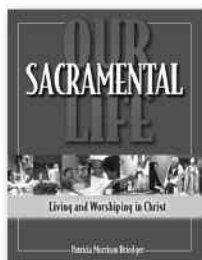
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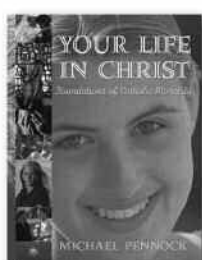
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Using the C-R-E-E-D

By Scott Mussari



While clutching my youngest son's ankles high in the air with my left hand, I stretched out to snatch my oldest son's arm with my right hand. I was attempting to get the child lying on the floor into a leak-proof diaper and at the same time get my other three children, running loose, into their waterproof jackets. Since I was unsuccessful at grabbing anyone else's appendages, I resorted to getting their attention by bellowing out, "Kids, we have to finish getting dressed now so we can get to Religious Ed on time."

I then had to weather the storm of responses that immediately rained down on me: "Aw, Dad, do we have to go?" "It's so boring at Religious Ed." "This is the worstest day ever."

I quickly realized it was going to require much more effort from me to get my plea taken seriously. Knowing their passion for Pokemon, I switched strategies and engaged them in a conversation about how they became so knowledgeable about hundreds of characters, from Aerodactyl to Zubat. As we discoursed in detail the nuances of gas attacks, water blasts and electric energy, I innocently inferred that they had earned their trainer status because they had so fully immersed themselves in Pokemon paraphernalia. In fact, their first encounter with this new world had left them lost and unimpressed. But because they continued to explore and learn more, they soon chanted and embraced the mantra of "Gotta catch 'em all!"

Recognizing the connection I was suggesting—being equally as open to their faith as they were to their fantasies—my children did decide to acquiesce and add the remaining clothing so they could attend their religious ed classes. It could be argued they did so solely because I am their father and I told them to do it. However, virtually all parents would acknowledge that that particular leverage loses its impact the day kids start speaking. As most children begin to talk, they likewise learn to talk back and renounce the because-I-told-you-so rationale.

A more probable explanation is that my children chose to change their behavior because of the manner in which we interacted together. This may be seen as a manipulative technique for teaching children about everyday life, but it can also be seen as a method—let's call it C-R-E-E-D—for educating young and old alike about everlasting faith.

COMPREHENSIBLE

Whether we are discussing an ordinary occurrence of family life or talking about an extraordinary doctrine of faith life, any conversation ought to be at a level those involved can comprehend. Case in point: when I talked with my children, my choice of words they could hear and understand was equal in importance to the actual wisdom being articulated. If they had been confused and unable to understand our discussion, they never would have had



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Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord

A THIRD AND COMPLEMENTARY DOCUMENT ON CHURCH MINISTERS

By Amy M. Hoey, RSM



During the years when one USCCB Committee was working on the Fifth Edition of the *Plan for Priestly Formation* and another awaiting the final *recognitio* of the *National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States*, the Committee on the Laity, through its Subcommittee on Lay Ministry, was preparing a third document that the bishops adopted in November, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. The three documents are related in more than timing. Each addresses issues of concern to those who minister publicly in the Church, and, therefore, issues that are important for the whole Church. Although *Co-Workers* makes clear from the beginning that it does not establish norms or have the force of particular law as do the other two, it is similar in that it addresses the theological grounding for lay ecclesial ministry and gives guid-

ance for the preparation, authorization, and integration of lay ecclesial ministers.

Using the term that the bishops introduced twenty-five years ago in *Called and Gifted*, *Co-Workers* identifies lay ecclesial ministry as characterized by

- Authorization by the hierarchy to serve publicly in the local church
- Leadership in a particular area of ministry
- Close, mutual collaboration with the pastoral ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons
- Preparation and formation appropriate to the level of assigned responsibilities

“The bishops created this document by practicing the collaboration that it encourages.”

Lay ecclesial minister is a generic term which can be applied to a variety of specific roles; e.g. pastoral associate; director of religious education, youth ministry, liturgy, or pastoral music; campus minister; school principal; hospital or prison minister—roles in which today’s Catholics routinely expect to meet a lay person. The document explicitly states that “it is the responsibility of the bishop to identify those roles that most clearly exemplify lay ecclesial ministry [and] application of the term may vary from diocese to diocese.”

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CO-WORKERS

The Subcommittee on Lay Ministry has been addressing issues of concern about lay ecclesial ministry since its beginning in 1994. In 1999 it published *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions* and engaged the bishops in a consultation about what further work was needed on the topic. Their responses highlighted a need for guidance about the preparation of lay ecclesial ministers. Subsequently, the subcommittee conducted three regional consultations (Regions X, VII, and II), which brought together bishops, pastors, formation directors and lay ecclesial ministers themselves. The consultations confirmed the need for some kind of guidance and the hope for a common terminology and language. The subcommittee began to draw up a tentative outline for what was called a “foundational document” on lay ecclesial ministry. From the beginning, it was recognized that the proposed document, while parallel to the Plan for Priestly Formation and the Diaconate Directory, would not have the force of particular law.

When the 2002–2005 Subcommittee membership was pending, there was a deliberate decision to invite bishop representatives from what were called “the related committees”: Diaconate, Doctrine, Pastoral Practices, Priestly Formation, Priestly Life and Ministry, and Vocations, so that the work of the subcommittee would not be done in isolation from the other committees. That kind of collaboration became characteristic of the entire process of developing *Co-Workers*.

In June 2003, the USCCB authorized the Subcommittee on Lay Ministry to prepare a document which would “seek the further integration of lay ecclesial ministers within the ministerial community and structures of the Church in the United States.” With the support of a \$250,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment, the subcommittee began work with a survey of all bishops, based on a tentative outline of the document, asking for their suggestions and recommendations for each topic and for ideas about expanding or revising the outline.

The subcommittee then initiated a series of consultations with theologians, ministry formation program directors (both diocesan and graduate school), canonists, pastors, deacons, pastoral planners, human resource professionals and lay ecclesial ministers. These consultations focused on the theology of lay ecclesial ministry, the pathways by which one comes to lay ecclesial ministry, formation and authorization for lay ecclesial ministry, and the church as a workplace. Ninety-nine individuals participated in these consultations, the fruit of which provided the ground from which the first draft of *Co-Workers* was written.

Subsequent drafts of the document were sent for consultation to all the bishops, to particular committees and specific individuals. One especially noteworthy consultation was held with the lay ministry professional associations. Twenty-one such associations responded to the consultation and each had involved as many of their members as possible in submitting a single group response. (The National Association for Lay Ministry, for example, posted the draft on its website, inviting their members to respond, and received over fifty written responses that they then collated into a single one for the subcommittee.) After the subcommittee reviewed all the responses, they made significant changes in the draft as a result of that consultation.

Co-workers is a clear affirmation of the more than 30,000 lay persons who already share the public ministry of the Church.

The draft that all the bishops received prior to the November 2005 meeting was the seventh in what had been a two-year process. Writing about the process, Dr. Gregory Sobolewski, Director of the Institute for Pastoral Ministry at St. Mary’s University, Winona, MN, noted that “the bishops created this document by practicing the collaboration that it encourages. Patiently, they have engaged hundreds of people nationally and internationally, from parishes, chanceries, the academy, and professional organizations. Thus their words refreshingly present a coherence of Catholic teachings, innovative theology, best practices, and true optimism.”

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Conference procedures provided yet two more opportunities for bishops to propose revisions. Before the meeting opened the Subcommittee had accepted 80 of the 130 “modifications” submitted by the bishops; during the meeting, they accepted 35 of 46 amendments. When Bishops Dale Melczek, chair of the Laity Committee, and Gerald Kicanas, chair of the Lay Ministry Subcommittee, introduced the document for the bishops’ vote, they stressed that it contained no new teaching nor any binding legislation, but that it was written “to be a common frame of reference for ensuring that the development of lay ecclesial ministry continues in ways that are faithful to the church’s theological and doctrinal tradition and that respond to contemporary pastoral needs and situations.”

Reports of the discussion before the bishops’ vote characterized it as “lively.” Much of the discussion centered on the use of *minister*, a term which some bishops would limit to the ordained. Other issues included the need for more consultation. Just before the vote, Cardinal Avery Dulles recommended the acceptance of the document, adding that the subcommittee had consulted very widely and had been “very careful to see that the terminology is in accord with the documents of the Holy See, and with a whole series of documents previously published by the Conference.” The document was approved with 190 votes in favor, 45 opposed, and 5 abstentions.

The document distinguishes between certification and appointment, sometimes called—or accompanied by—“commissioning.”

THE MESSAGE OF CO-WORKERS

Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord is a clear affirmation of the more than 30,000 lay persons who already share the public ministry of the Church and a resource for bishops and others who share responsibility for the preparation of those people, as well as for their authorization and integration within parish and diocesan structures. In Part I the document establishes the theological basis for such lay ecclesial ministry, grounding it in the communion and mission of the Church that flow from an understanding and appreciation of the Trinity. It notes at one point that “the one true God is fundamentally relational: a loving communion of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” At another it comments, “Ministry is diverse and at the same time profoundly relational. This is so because ministry has its source in the triune God and because it takes its shape within the church understood as a communion.” Throughout the document, it is clear that “the primary distinction lies between the ministry of the lay faithful and the ministry of the ordained, which is a special apostolic calling.” It also emphasizes that the vast majority of lay persons work

for the transformation of the world in the secular arena which is their unique setting. In the section on theology, *Co-Workers* also explores the relationship of the lay ecclesial minister with the bishop, the priest, the deacon, and the lay faithful.

Part II consists of practical applications. In the first of these the document explores the paths by which lay persons come to lay ecclesial ministry. It speaks of the need for ecclesial as well as personal discernment and gives some suggestions about the habits of mind and heart that determine suitability. By far the most substantial of the practical applications is the section on formation. The subcommittee made a deliberate choice to frame this section according to the four categories used for priestly and diaconate formation (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral), giving goals, elements and methods for each category. *Co-workers* emphasizes that those responsible for the formation of lay ecclesial ministers should be ever-mindful of their lay state and “the different life circumstances of those who are married, single or non-ordained members of religious communities.” The document notes that the level of preparation and extent of formation are important questions that have no single answer and are best left to the discernment of the local bishop, the lay ecclesial minister and his or her supervisor. It comments later, however, that “usually a graduate degree or at least a bachelor’s degree in an appropriate field of study is preferable.” The section on intellectual formation includes some comments on theology for ministry and an ecumenical and interfaith dimension to that formation, the latter comments already welcomed by those directing diocesan ministry formation programs in the “home-mission” dioceses. The section concludes with comments on the necessity of the integration of the four categories and of ongoing formation, and on the agents of formation, noting in the final paragraph that “all formation is ultimately self-formation and lay ecclesial ministers are themselves the pivotal agents of their own formation.”

The third practical application is titled Authorization for Lay Ecclesial Ministry and reflects the subcommittee’s deepening conviction about the importance of authorization in the description of the lay ecclesial minister. It is defined as “the process by which properly prepared lay men and women are given responsibilities for ecclesial ministry by competent church authority.” The section distinguishes between certification (verification that a candidate “has the education, formation, and professional skills necessary to serve in a particular role”) and appointment, sometimes called—or accompanied by—“commissioning.” It suggests ways in which diocesan bishops can set certification requirements, citing the standards approved by the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation as a useful resource. The document recommends public prayer and ritual at certain points in the authorization process as “significant for the lay ecclesial minister and the community, highlighting the new relationships that the person is beginning in the life of the community.” The section concludes: “the authorization process can provide occasions for the bishop to demon-

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A New Adult Formation Resource



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Adult Faith Formation

A Love Beyond Imagining | Mark 10: 40-51

Bearing Good Fruit
Adult Faith Formation

Jesus Christ, our brother, friend and savior, is able to bring peace and trust to our constant inquietudes and fears. Each of us has to work at faith, and it is not done in work of sports, business, family life, and managing our daily lives. Time spent with others probing a few verses of God's word, sharing its relevance for us today, and praying together will help our faith mature and bear good fruit.

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Confidentially gather in silence for a few moments.

Prayer
Jesus our brother, our friend and savior, is able to bring peace and trust to our constant inquietudes and fears. Each of us has to work at faith, and it is not done in work of sports, business, family life, and managing our daily lives. Time spent with others probing a few verses of God's word, sharing its relevance for us today, and praying together will help our faith mature and bear good fruit.

Scripture Reading
Mark 10: 40-51
Listen as one of the group proclaims this passage aloud.



Listening
What Does It Say?
Reflect for a moment or silence, then share your thoughts.
What is the Scripture passage about for you?
What made the passage this difficult for you?
Do you identify more with Bartimaeus or the crowd?

Going Deeper
What Does It Mean?
Mark's Gospel tells us that Jesus was on his way out of Jericho when he encountered Bartimaeus. Jericho is an oasis in the desert. Mark positions him on the edge of some. Bartimaeus literally sits between life and death.
Now listen as someone else in the group proclaims the same reading once again.

Spreading the Kingdom of God | Mark 4: 20-32

Bearing Good Fruit
Adult Faith Formation

Jesus Christ, our brother, friend and savior, is able to bring peace and trust to our constant inquietudes and fears. Each of us has to work at faith, and it is not done in work of sports, business, family life, and managing our daily lives. Time spent with others probing a few verses of God's word, sharing its relevance for us today, and praying together will help our faith mature and bear good fruit.

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Confidentially gather in silence for a few moments.

Prayer
Lord, there are some days that I do not remember you very often, help me each day to give thanks in the morning for a new day of life, at noon for the people who stepped into my work, and in the evening for the support and forgiveness that I experienced all through this day.
Father, all powerful and ever living God, we do seek always and everywhere to give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord, God of the Mass.

Scripture Reading
Mark 4: 20-32
Listen as one of the group proclaims this passage aloud.



Listening
What Does It Say?
Reflect for a moment and then share your thoughts.
Have you ever seen a mustard seed in a field of crops? How many familiar uses do you place from small seeds might a mustard plant in this time and place?
What does the phrase "Kingdom of God" (or "king of God") mean to you?

Going Deeper
What Does It Mean?
The size of the mustard seed is puny. It is used for both weeding (and) for healing. The mustard shrub provides shade and a nesting place for small birds. Mustard shrubs spread quickly over a field whether farmers or nature's elements plant the seeds.
Now listen as someone else in the group proclaims the same reading once again.

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Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

THE MISSIONARY CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND ITS WISDOM FOR TODAY

By Kenneth Ogorek



MCCD members assemble before traveling to mining towns and inner city neighborhoods to teach the faith.

It's an early Sunday morning. And rosy-fingered dawn looks a bit coal-smudged as the sun rises over a 1903 southwestern Pennsylvania mining town.

Enter the fishers. Not sportsmen or sportswomen, but members of an effort known as the MCCD—the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The fishers searched the mining towns and inner-city neighborhoods in the Diocese of Pittsburgh 100 years ago, gathering children and adults for Mass, for religious instruction, for formation into communities of faith.

In what follows I will offer a brief account of the MCCD's contribution to catechesis in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and beyond; of the lasting connections that were made to six areas of strategic focus in this diocese today—evangelization, Eucharist, adult education, youth and young

adult ministry, leadership, and stewardship; and, finally, I will suggest how the present Pittsburgh diocese's Secretariat for Education flows directly from the work of the MCCD. History, experience, and vision tell us all that catechesis—standing on the shoulders of giants—can be a healthy influence on culture and cultures throughout America.

THE TEEN YEARS

One hundred years ago, Pittsburgh and its surrounding communities were dependent, economically, on heavy industry. While many of the immigrants in the early twentieth century made a living in the city's mills and factories, thousands of others settled in small mining towns located several difficult miles from this industrial center.

In 1985 Mary Downey James, a long-time catechetical minister in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, compiled a history of the CCD in this diocese. In her work, *CCD: An Expression of Ministry*, James records in great detail the legacy of the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine—so-named by Bishop Regis Canevin, circa 1908—and much of what follows below draws heavily on her invaluable contribution to preserving this precious heritage of catechesis.

In 1903, Fr. Ed Griffin presented to Bishop Canevin a plan of action that sought to attend to the catechetical needs of Catholic families who lived in the many small, isolated mining communities. Griffin's proposal was based, in part, on a program being used in Detroit, Michigan. His plan called for an apostolate whereby lay catechists under clerical guidance would journey regularly to remote areas of the diocese. Apostolate clergy in turn would visit these scattered, newly-formed settlements to celebrate Mass and other sacraments. Various difficult conditions made initial progress a bit slow. In 1908, though, a breakthrough occurred when Jim Doyle, an urban Catholic, moved to the mining town of Cecil—whose nearest Catholic church was approximately nine miles distant.

MCCD merged with the parish CCD in a way that made adult education—in the form of catechist formation—a fundamental area of focus.

In the early 1920s MCCD catechists engaged in what amounted to special religious education.

Jim asked his former parish's CCD president, Anna Sweeney, for help in finding catechists willing to travel and teach. Two of Jim's former fellow parishioners, Anne Collins and Mary Dunn, agreed to ride with Mrs. Sweeney's son to the Doyle home for a catechism class. In the above-mentioned book we read: "The Doyles 'fished,' and when the young people arrived on that memorable Sunday, they found forty-three children assembled in the Doyle grape arbor."

Mary Dunn helped form three other mission classes in the Cecil vicinity over the next few months. She recruited additional teachers from Pittsburgh, and to Father Griffin as well as the two priests now assisting him, it is said that the "mission outreach on the part of these young workers seemed an answer to prayer." Father Griffin saw to their training and throughout this apostolate's early years helped garner financial support from various Catholic organizations.

From 1913 to 1919 the effort that had become known as the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine followed what became a familiar pattern. For the most part, catechists would gather very early in the morning on Sunday at Saint Mary of Mercy Church in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh. From there—by buses, trains and automobiles—they fanned out to the remotest corners of our diocese, or in some cases, small urban niches. A long day was spent traveling, praying, setting up, teaching, grabbing a bite to eat then traveling, praying and singing some more; these are in a sense punctuation marks on pages filled with love, preparation, evangelizing, celebration—simply caring enough to spend time with people who had deep spiritual and physical needs, and who gave so much in return for these MCCD efforts.

A passage from James' book paints a fairly vivid picture: "With great sacrifice of time, with unlimited generosity of effort the lay missionaries went out weekly to teach. Their classes were held in the most undesirable and unlikely places: in tents, bedrooms of private homes, cellars, a jail, stables, store-rooms, attics, Miners' Halls, non-Catholic private homes, motion picture theaters and box-cars, to mention the most unusual. No site was too primitive, too inconvenient or too uncomfortable for these spirited people. No one of faint heart could have withstood the rigors of life for those who made up the ranks of the MCCD." By 1920 there were over 35 missions (some urban) and nearly 3,000 Catholics receiving instruction through the work of the MCCD.

STEWARDSHIP AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

As mentioned earlier, the MCCD like all missionary endeavors relied on stewardship to meet its budgetary needs. A formal effort called "Adopt-a-Sunday-School"—the idea of individuals and in some cases groups adopting a specific mission Sunday School—was employed as early as 1921. Also in the early 1920s MCCD catechists engaged in what amounted to special religious education by serving young Catholics both at the Home for Crippled Children and the Blind Institute. Over time, religious instruction for the deaf became more readily available.

FISHERS

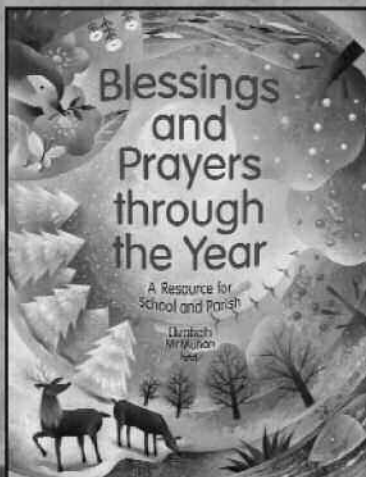
It is noteworthy that specific persons were usually designated as fishers in the MCCD movement. Writes James, "Fishing was the preliminary step taken by the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in planning and organizing a mission. An experienced fisher would visit a settlement, conduct a census, determine the number of Catholic families in the area, and obtain as much information as possible about the religious condition of each family. It was common for fishers to find a high incidence of religious ignorance in a district...unbaptized children, invalid marriages, and many families



In a small southwestern Pennsylvania mining town—perhaps on the steps of a mission chapel—youngsters and their catechists allow a moment in time to be captured for our future edification.

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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

THE DIGITAL CATECHIST: USING MODERN MEDIA TO TEACH THE FAITH

by David Dwyer, CSP

Young adults have questions. Not agenda-laden arguments disguised as questions, but actual questions about the basics of the faith.



Every morning when I come into the office I check the voicemail—but not for my personal messages. I'm looking for questions.

Some days I hear a young voice on the other end of the phone that poses a query like, "Is it true that Catholics worship Mary?" "Why do I have to confess my sins to a priest—can't I just pray to God?" "If a married couple discovers they are incapable of having children, does the church require that they adopt a child?"

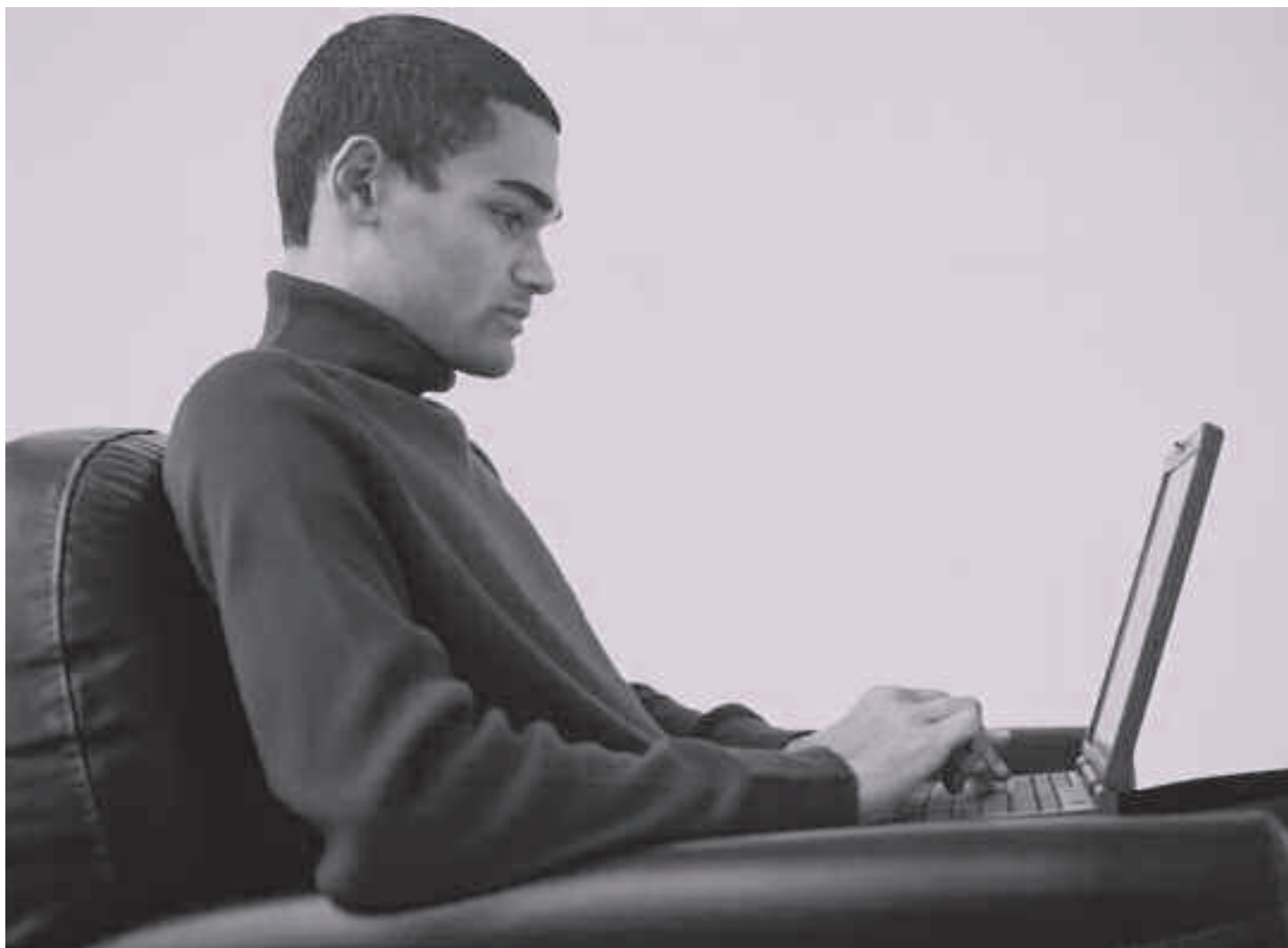
If I find a question on the voicemail line, my staff and I get to work preparing an honest and thorough answer for our next podcast, which will be posted to our website and downloaded to computers and mp3 players all over North America. This is today's catechesis: answering the most basic questions of faith not in a parish classroom but through the Internet, in iPod headphones, or on the text screen of a mobile phone.

Young adults want catechesis

In my two years as director of Paulist Young Adult Ministries I have been confronted over and over again with the fact that Catholics in

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their twenties and thirties need catechesis. Perhaps even more surprisingly I find that they want catechesis. It is true that fewer and fewer of them claim membership in a parish community (in the last fifteen years the number of American adults who do not attend church has doubled) and that they quite often describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” However, unlike their parents’ generation, they have not distanced themselves from the church because they are wounded or vehemently disagree with some Catholic teaching or need to vent their anger. By and large today’s young adults feel disconnected from the church because they simply don’t know their faith. They have questions. And for the most part these are not agenda-laden arguments disguised as questions. No, these are actual questions about the basics of the faith. “Can I marry a non-Catholic and still get married in the church?” “Why are some Catholic doctrines not found in the Bible?”

Look for young adults...

What young adults seem to need and want the most these days is good, solid catechesis. In their 1996 pastoral letter on young adult ministry, *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults*, the U.S. bishops identified adult religious education as a key strategy for reconnecting young Catholics with the church. The many young people they listened to in preparing the document “spoke of their desire for effective adult religious education.” The bishops discovered that “much of what young adults feel about the institutional Church arises from a misunderstanding of what the Church actually teaches. Many young adults told us that what is most convincing is an open but well-reasoned discussion . . .”

Catholic University of America sociologist Dean Hoge and his colleagues concluded their six-year study of Catholic young adults by

*Nearly one-third of the nation's 147 million Internet users
"look for religious or spiritual information online," and of these,
64 percent are seeking to learn more about their own faith.*

recommending, in *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice*, that the church adopt a "preferential option for young Catholics." Their research included in-depth interviews with young people who didn't mince words about their faith. "Many of the young adults feel the need for adult religious education now. One respondent put this cogently: 'I want to be a Catholic. I want to know more about my faith. I want some substance.' A twenty-six-year-old man with twelve years of CCD lamented, 'To this day I still don't know what it is to really be a Catholic.'"

...in the digital world

This *preferential option* for young adults means that we as a church need to go out of our way to connect with these young Catholics, so many of whom are not in the pews on Sunday. It is no longer enough to make a verbal announcement from the pulpit after communion about the latest adult ed opportunity. An 8-1/2 x 11 inch flyer on canary yellow paper hanging in the vestibule publicizing, "Inquiry Class every Monday night in the church basement," just doesn't do the trick. And don't even get me started on the church bulletin. "How quaint," I can hear a twenty-year-old say, "getting information by means of a piece of paper. Very old-school." Using the new wineskins for catechesis in the twenty-first century require us to step beyond the doors of our local churches. Parish, diocesan and catechetical leaders need to encourage catechists to think outside the box, to be pioneers in this brave new digital world.

I am a Paulist priest, so from the time of my novitiate the vision of our Paulist founder, Fr. Isaac Hecker, has driven my approach to teaching and preaching the faith. Hecker, whose cause for sainthood will soon be opened to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of our community, believed that contemporary ears deserved to hear the "old truths in new forms, [with a] fresh new tone and air and spirit." Surely that does not mean rewriting the Gospels, but rather making sure the timeless truths of our Catholic tradition are expressed in a relevant way to the faithful in every age. Today, as in Hecker's day, that includes the various means by which

the truth is proclaimed and the faith is taught—the media that transmit the message.

Many in the church today seem to think "media" is a dirty word. I disagree. Our Paulist founder launched the first magazine that placed the Catholic faith in dialogue with American culture (*The Catholic World*, recently resurrected online at www.thecatholic-world.com). His descendents in the 1930s broadcast the Word into New York living rooms via one of the first radio stations in the country. Paulist Fr. Elwood Kaiser, "The Hollywood Priest," produced the Emmy Award-winning series "Insight" for television in the 1960s. In 2006, Paulist Young Adult Ministries evangelizes and teaches the faith through computers, the Internet, satellite radio, cell phones, iPods, and any other media we can utilize.

*Many in the church today seem to
think "media" is a dirty word.
I disagree.*

Find them on the Internet...

Working from the standpoint of a preferential option for young adults, we believe we must go where they are in order to connect them to their faith. One place (well, a virtual place anyway) that young Catholics find themselves in droves is on the Internet. And when they're online, you just may be surprised by what they're looking at. Google reports that the second most frequently entered term into their popular search engine is "God." (Number one is "sex"; you're probably not as surprised to hear that.) According to a 2004 study for the Pew Internet & American Life Project (see www.pewinternet.org), nearly one-third of the nation's 147 million Internet users "look for religious or spiritual information online,"

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and of these, 64 percent are seeking to learn more *about their own faith*.

The church's own Pontifical Council for Social Communications has encouraged us to harness the power of this ubiquitous medium. "The Internet is relevant to many activities and programs of the Church: evangelization, catechesis and other kinds of education, news and information, apologetics, governance and administration, and some forms of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction," they say in their 2002 document, *The Church and the Internet*. "The virtual reality of cyberspace ... can attract people to a fuller experience of the life of faith, and enrich the religious lives of users."

Imagine: the Internet used for evangelization, catechesis, counseling, even spiritual direction! Why is it, then, that all I ever see on the home page of parish web sites is an announcement of the finance committee meeting and pictures of the summer picnic (from 2 years ago)? Or on diocesan sites: lots of biographical information about the bishop and the address of the tribunal . . . but hardly ever anything resembling catechesis or evangelization or spiritual direction? The Pontifical Council for Social Communications got it right: we need to make better use of the Internet! And it's really not that difficult.

Try website Q &A...

The website of which I am publisher, targeted toward "spiritual seekers in their 20s and 30s," is called BustedHalo.com. Young adults come to our site mainly to read our daily magazine features that meld faith with everyday life and popular culture. Once there, however, many of these "seekers" discover our Faith Guides section containing catechetical tools like Bible Boot Camp, and Mass Class, or they click on one of the most popular portions of our site, Ask Fr. Joe. "Why do Catholics pray for the dead?" "What's the best way to read the Bible?" "Does the church have an official position on speaking in tongues?" The questions just keep coming. The anonymity of cyberspace allows young people to ask questions they likely would not feel comfortable dropping by the rectory to ask the pastor (if they even knew what the rectory was). We get young adults answers to their questions by grabbing a resource off the shelf, writing up an e-mail answer, and posting it for the inquirer and others to see. And we're certainly not the only ones doing this.



Recording the BustedHalo Cast are, from left: the author; Paulist seminarian Steven Bell; associate director of Paulist Young Adult Ministries Mike Hayes; editorial assistant Brooke Thomas.

There are quite a few Catholic sites on the web that have a Q & A section. Yours should too!

...or text messages...

But why be tied down to a desk and computer? Last Holy Thursday I was walking down Ninth Avenue in New York City when my mobile phone vibrated because of an incoming text message. The sender was a college student in Colorado where I had served at a campus ministry parish a couple of years earlier. My screen displayed this: "went 2 crism mass 2day. m i allwd to recv comunon @mass 2nite? thats 2x in 1 day—im told not" (With texting, one is usually typing on a cell phone keypad with one thumb, and allotted only a limited number of characters per message—so there's a lot of abbreviating.) I flexed my thumb and began to type: "2x is OK. u can go 2 comunon 2nite". As I walked to church I cryptically thumbed out a brief explanation for why it is all right (particularly on Holy Thursday) to receive communion twice in one day. Catechesis, cell-phone style.

The 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis* holds up the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as a kind of paradigm for lifelong catechesis. While they have technically been initiated into the Catholic Church, a great many young spiritual seekers find themselves in the inquiry stage. They have questions about the basics of the faith, and we who have the vocation of catechizing them need to get creative

about ways to answer their questions. The bishops, in *Sons and Daughters of the Light*, advocate “using adult-centered methods that are compatible with the culture of the participants,” and “making available print resources, audio and videocassettes, and computer resources such as CD-ROM. Audiotapes can be used while traveling, exercising, or at home in the evening.”

...or podcasts

Substitute the word “podcasts” for the word “audiotapes” in that previous sentence and you realize just how cutting edge the bishops were back in 1996. A podcast is a radio-like program posted on a website that people can either listen to on their computer or “subscribe to” so that new episodes are automatically downloaded onto their iPod or other portable device whenever they are posted. Those who first got used to synchronizing their address book and calendar between their phone and their computer, now sync their iPods every day so that during their commute to work or while working out at the gym they can hear the newest episodes of their favorite podcasts. Podcasting is the medium of the masses: it takes nothing more than a laptop, a microphone and a high-speed Internet connection for every Tom, Dick or Mary to be his or her own radio show host.

Our show is called “The BustedHalo Cast.” Twice a week our cast of regulars spends thirty minutes answering questions of faith that our listeners have left on our voicemail line. We choose to catechize by way of casual conversation about our faith. We’ll usually have some resources in front of us and end up quoting the Catechism or *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Understanding Catholicism* or a nun we had in grammar school. Our young adult listeners put on their headphones while on the Stairmaster or the subway and get their dose of inquiry class. And they tell us they appreciate getting answers and it bolsters their faith. A month ago Roberto from Chicago called in. After he asked his question he added, “I love your show. You make me laugh. You make me see my faith in a whole different light, and really helps me out. I used to rarely go to church, and when I did I wouldn’t pay attention at all. But now, thanks to you guys, I get a lot more out of Mass.” Thanks be to God.

I wonder what will be on the voicemail tomorrow? ■

Fr. Dave Dwyer is director of Paulist Young Adult Ministries based in New York City. He can be reached at fatherdave@bustedhalo.com.

You Can Purchase Copies of Catechetical Update

As in the past you can order additional copies of *Catechetical Update*. Many of our membership find it a valuable resource for use in their ministry. To order call the NCCL office (202) 884-9753 or email Sr. Kathy Kandefter, BVM at kkandefter@nccl.org. *Catechetical Update* reprint costs: 1–49 copies \$1.29 each, 50 or more \$0.79 each (plus shipping).

FROM *ADVICE TO NUNS* TO *JOAN OF ARCADIA* CATECHESIS AND THE MEDIA

By John Molyneux, CMF



In 1843, six years before he founded the religious community to which I belong, St. Anthony Claret wrote what he considered his first booklet. While he was preaching a retreat to the Carmelite Nuns at Vic, Spain, the sisters asked him to leave behind some written record of the retreat. The resultant booklet was titled simply and to the point: *Advice for Nuns*. Claret, a tireless and fervent preacher of missions to the people and of retreats to clergy and religious, discovered that the written word could have a broader outreach and deeper impact than the spoken word. He found that through his booklets and leaflets he could reach a larger audience who could follow his thoughts more deeply and remember what he said. He saw that the media could and would enhance and reinforce his catechesis.

With those counsels to nuns, Claret had discovered a literary genre that he would exploit heavily in the coming years: the “Advice to” series was addressed to various vocations and stages of life: *Advice to Single Women*, *Advice to Boys*, *Advice to Parents*, *Advice to a Married Woman*, and *Advice to Widows*. Of course, these works contain some of the accepted stereotypes of the time, such as the image of woman as the patient, silent, and efficient housewife, and the manifest aversion to modish styles of dress, to dances, and to comedies. One could hardly expect them to do otherwise. But the important thing about these works is that in them Claret lays the foundation for a genuine lay spirituality. For him, there are no second-rate Christians who only have to limit themselves to keeping the minimum requirements of the Commandments. More importantly, perhaps, Claret reminds us that catechesis is an ongoing process that must respond effectively to different stages and states of life. There is no “one-size-fits-all.” We must begin by becoming a listening church.

LEARNING TO LISTEN

In order to be a listening church, we must listen to *all* our members. In an article entitled “New Challenges for Catholic Media,” Mark Brummel, CMF, the former editor of Claretian Publications, quite accurately singles out “Hispanic and ethnic concerns.” Today, nearly 45 percent of the Catholics in the United States are of Hispanic/Latino origin. It is no longer sufficient to translate material

from English into Spanish; the content must truly reflect the diverse cultures of Hispanics/Latinos, whether they are Cuban Americans in Miami, Puerto Rican Americans in New York, or Mexican Americans in Los Angeles. The Catholic media faces a formidable challenge to make the faith accessible to the entire Hispanic/Latino Catholic community. In addition, the media needs to discern what comprises “church” for Catholics. If the voices, concerns, gifts, and contributions of Latino Catholics aren’t woven into the fabric of Catholic media, a great opportunity will be lost. Every effort should be made to welcome and incorporate Hispanics at all levels as writers and editors, to reflect the growing Catholic Hispanic presence in the United States. The media must find a way to bridge the gap so that all are included—their voices, their faces, their thoughts, their celebrations, and their vision—to reflect a realistic picture of the church.

REACHING MODERN PEOPLE

In his *Autobiography*, St. Anthony Claret reminded his missionaries that catechetical material ought to be small-sized, “because modern people are in such a rush.” Although written in 1862, his words continue to challenge the Catholic media—particularly the Catholic press. It is not surprising, then, to see the proliferation, and subsequent success, of specialized newsletters and a concerted effort to keep magazine articles short.

Although there is no way that Anthony Claret could fathom the advances in the communications media during these intervening years, I am quite confident that he would be a vocal proponent of the Internet and media literacy for spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. I think he would echo the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, who on February 28, 2002 wrote:

Three decades ago *Communio et Progressio* pointed out that “modern media offers new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel.” Pope Paul VI said that the Church “would feel guilty before the Lord” if it failed to use the media for evangelization. Pope John Paul II has called the media “the first Areopagus of the modern age,” and declared that “it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to inte-



grate the message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications." Doing this is all the more important today, since not only do the media now strongly influence what people think about life but also to a great extent "human experience itself is an experience of media." All this applies to the Internet. And even though the world of social communications "may at times seem at odds with the Christian message, it also offers unique opportunities for proclaiming the saving truth of Christ to the whole human family. Consider...the positive capacities of the Internet to carry religious information and teaching beyond all barriers and frontiers. Such a wide audience would have been beyond the wildest imaginings of those who preached the Gospel before us...Catholics should not be afraid to throw open the doors of social communications to Christ, so that his Good News may be heard from the housetops of the world."

Today many six year olds are computer savvy, and search engines like *Google* can provide a fun and fast research tool as they begin their formal religious education. Ask them, for example, where their favorite saint was born, and I bet the first place they will go is to the Internet.

The Internet has been especially successful, too, in reaching the "young adult" market. Sites such as *Busted Halo* are visited by twenty-somethings who would never think to pick up a religious magazine.

With the rising costs of printing, paper, and postage, many Catholic magazines are switching to an on-line version as a cost-saving measure. At Claretian Publications, for example, in 1997, we relaunched *Salt of the Earth*, a monthly magazine exploring issues of social justice, as a webzine, saltonline.org, paving the way for future publishing endeavors via the Internet.

The Internet holds enormous promise as an evangelization tool even for a print publication. Daily newspapers, for example, will run sto-

ries about events and then provide much more detail on the website. And many dailies generate extra revenue through their Internet presence by charging readers for research. At *U.S. Catholic*, we found our web presence particularly useful during the time-sensitive papal transition. Catholic publishers should not fear that the Net will diminish their audience or replace them. Print and online presences are complimentary: one can enhance the other.

MINDFUL VIEWING, REFLECTIVE JUDGMENT

Whereas our reflection thus far has concentrated on specifically religious content and its interface with the media, what about the "sec-

Catholic publishers should not fear that the Net will diminish their audience or replace them.

ular" media as a tool for evangelization? According to Kevin O'Brien, a religious educator, youth minister, and media producer, as Catholic religious educators, ministers, and teachers, we need to process the publications, translate the television, make sense of the music videos. We need a decoder for the data. And media literacy is that decoder.

The National Telemedia Council defines media literacy as "mindful viewing, reflective judgment." According to Sr. Rose Pacatte, FSP, Director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies, on a very practical level media literacy education means that educators (and parents) need to *know why* they like or do not like certain programs, songs, and games. By articulating their ideas they are challenged to think about the media and their own lives, and decide what their opinions and convictions are in front of the media. It means they need to be one step

continued on page U8

CATECHESIS AND THE MEDIA *continued from page U7*

ahead of their students and know what is going on in the media world and why certain films, songs, and the Internet are important to them. And better yet, to be media literate means to accompany young people in their media consumption and then talk about and share not only likes and dislikes, but above all, values. Media literacy, for religious educators especially, never means to turn one's back on the culture, but rather to engage it in order to create it anew in Christ.

The role of religious educators regarding the media is not to denigrate media artifacts so students will "turn off the tube." Instead, their role is to assist in the development of "mindful viewing" leading to Christ-like living. And this will include learning and practicing media management skills integrated with media learning and catechesis.

The new *National Directory for Catechesis* from the U.S. bishops says, "Especially in the U.S., 'the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media.' In fact, the mass media is so influential that they have a culture all their own, which has its own language, customs, and values. Heralds of

Media literacy for religious educators never means to turn one's back on the culture, but rather to engage it

the gospel must enter the world of the mass media, learn as much as possible about the culture, evangelize the culture, and determine how best to employ the media to serve the Christian message."

From *Advice to Nuns* to *Joan of Arcadia*, the media has served the Christian message well. As St. Anthony Claret could never have imagined television and the Internet, we do not know where cyber-communications will lead. We trust, however, that the Good News of Jesus will permeate and transform them. ■

Father John Molyneux, CME, is editor of Claretian Publications in Chicago. He is also a formation minister for his community.

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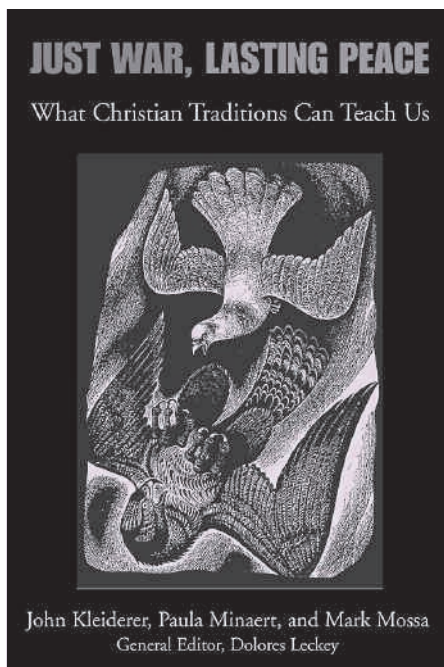
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WIDENING OUR PERSPECTIVES ON WAR AND PEACE



Just War, Lasting Peace. John Kleiderer, Paula Minaert, and Mark Mossa SJ, editors; Dolores Leckey, general editor. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006. Paperback, 224 pages, \$16.

Reviewed by Gene Betit

In the months before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the Jesuit provincials of the United States embarked on a process to explore Catholic perspectives on peace and war, not only to educate themselves but with an aim of inform-

ing group activities and case studies to help a group process issues; the other contains a cultural survey of poetry, works of fiction, plays and movies. Both will be invaluable for facilitators and organizers of youth groups, RCIA, JustFaith, and for other seekers hoping to discern their faith's relevance in the murky world of *geopolitik*. There is an extensive compendium of documents for further study and the book is footnoted in a non-distracting way.

ing a much broader audience. They convened a one-day forum held at Georgetown University in November 2003, jointly sponsored by Woodstock Theological Center and the US Jesuit Conference.

The contributions of the fifty authorities who participated that day have been distilled into *Just War, Lasting Peace*. One hopes this well-edited work will enjoy a wide audience. Not only are the three distinct Catholic viewpoints (classical just war, nonviolence—sometimes not all too accurately described as ‘pacifism,’ and contemporary just war) comprehensively laid out, but Jewish and Muslim teaching on these two fundamental topics are presented by authorities from those two faith traditions. In addition, insightful background is provided on the “historic peace churches” (Church of the Brethren, the Society of Friends or ‘Quakers,’ and the Mennonites) and others (Amish, Moravians, Hutterites). Unlike many studies, this work does not duck complex reality, and allows the reader to form conclusions from the rich materials provided.

Intended for use as a study guide for the widest possible audience, the book includes two extremely valuable appendices. One contain-

Not only are the three distinct Catholic viewpoints laid out, but Jewish and Muslim teaching as well.

Three years into the war in Iraq, American citizens ought to be asking if there is not a better way to invest our national resources than devoting prodigious sums to national ‘defense,’ or at least asking whether we ought not increase the options for mediation and non-violent conflict resolution. This book will go a long way to making informed debate possible. We can hope that it will encourage a larger segment of the folks in the pews to devote greater concern to these life and death issues. The book’s potential effect is enormous; this is just the tool that has been needed! ■

Gene Betit, a deacon at Our Lady Queen of Peace in Arlington, Virginia, heads the parish’s social justice ministry. Reach him at genebetit@comcast.net.

Announcing the Arrival of Echoes of Faith Plus

By Jo Rotunno

We know that faith conversations, where adults reflect with their peers on faith-life issues, can be a tremendous catalyst “to bring to maturity the seed of faith sown in them by God” (GDC, No. 173).

NCCL and RCL, the producer of the catechist formation program *Echoes of Faith*, are working on updating the program to incorporate insights from both the General and National directories of catechesis and to utilize the growing popularity of the DVD format. A new module on adult faith formation is the first installment in the new series, *Echoes of Faith Plus*.

STRUCTURE

The segment topics are:

1. **The Journey of Faith:** The centrality of personal stories of faith in adult faith formation and skills for drawing out such stories
2. **The Value of Faith Sharing Groups:** The importance of small group processes in faith formation
3. **Facilitating Faith Sharing Groups:** The roles of facilitators and some skills for facilitating adult faith formation, especially questioning skills
4. **Catechesis and Transformation:** Transformation as the goal of adult faith formation and helpful ways to integrate doctrinal content into the faith sharing process

As you look at this new module of *Echoes of Faith Plus*, you will be seeing the features that will characterize each of the upcoming modules. Each module will include a DVD, a companion booklet, and a CD-Rom. The DVD includes the four-segment process plus two expert interviews. The companion booklet anchors the *Echoes* process. It is the interaction of the two components that delivers the full module content. The CD features compressed files of the four DVD segments for review on a home or office computer. The CD does *not* include the bonus interviews found. The CD-Rom is included at no charge with each companion booklet.

MODULE CONTRIBUTORS

A number of respected experts in adult faith formation contributed to this module. **Ed Gordon**, *Echoes* Project Director for NCCL, has long and valuable experience in adult faith formation. **David Riley**, module consultant, now a Regional Catechetical Director for Archdiocese of Cincinnati, has served as a consultant to the USCCB National Advisory Committee in Adult Religious Education (NACARE).

Three expert interviews anchor the DVD presentation. **Jane Regan**, theology professor at Boston College, **David Wells**, Diocesan Director of Faith Formation in Plymouth, England and a popular public speaker on adult faith formation, and **Dave Riley**, module consultant, offer their insights across the entire DVD presentation. Facilitators of adult faith formation in two parishes agreed to allow us to videotape small group sessions: **Beth Lang-Sletten** of St. Luke’s Parish, Beaver Creek, Ohio, and **Giovanni Perez**, DRE and master catechist at St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Gardena California. The reflections of the group members and the skill of their facilitators provide an invaluable part of the module content.

BOOKLET FEATURES

The companion booklet offers a new feature for the spiritual formation of the catechist that will appear in every module—a two-page reflection on the spirituality of the catechist written by **Father Louis Cameli**. Fr. Cameli, whose doctorate is in theology and spirituality, is former director of continuing education for the clergy in the Archdiocese of Chicago and director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House in Mundelein, Illinois.

The booklet process then continues with four segments whose topics were described above. Each segment concludes with an enrichment article to extend learning. Suggestions for using the two additional articles and other resources in the back of the booklet are integrated at appropriate points throughout the module segments.

The following individuals provided the professional articles:

- **Archbishop Donald Wuerl**, Archbishop of Washington, DC
- **Bishop Richard Malone**, Bishop of Portland, Maine and Episcopal Advisor for NCCL
- **Rose Bennett**, former coordinator of Evangelization, Adult Catechesis, and Adult Initiation for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, provided the original outline for the module as well as a segment article.
- **Jack McBride**, past chair of NACARE and former associate director of the Diocese of Madison, WI
- **Daniel Mulhall**, Assistant Secretary for Catechesis and Inculturation in the Office of Catechesis, Department of Education at USCCB
- **Neil Parent**, Executive Director of NCCL and former Representative for Adult Education to USCCB

We at NCCL and RCL hope that this new module on Adult Faith Formation will help you to prepare good facilitators who will enrich all the small group processes in your parish. ■

Echoes of Faith® Plus

A project of NCCL produced by RCL



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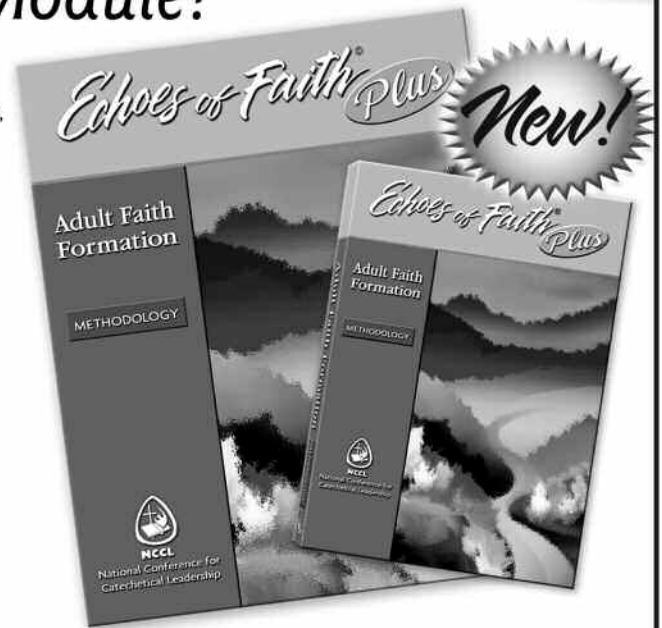
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THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR IN ADULT FAITH FORMATION

by Jo Rotunno



The launch this month of the first title in *Echoes of Faith Plus* gives us a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the quality of our ministry to the adult community in our parishes. Over the past several years, a number of advocates for whole community or intergenerational catechesis, myself included, spoke in many dioceses around the country. Many of us could

see the wisdom of intergenerational gatherings where all the age groups of a parish share faith together. We saw how such gatherings could strengthen and bind together more deeply the whole community of faith.

At one of these early workshops, a diocesan director told me that her principal interest in whole community catechesis was the potential it had to engage more adults in faith formation. I thought long and hard about her remark. It seemed to me that while it would get more adults engaged and would certainly benefit all the participants, an intergenerational gathering could never offer the forum that adults require for an in-depth conversation about faith and their own particular life issues, many of which simply cannot be explored in an intergenerational setting.

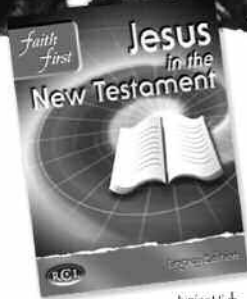
I still believe in the formational value of the seasonal or occasional intergenerational gatherings, and I hope they continue to become an integral part of parish life. But when it was time to develop this Adult Faith Formation module for *Echoes of Faith Plus*, we made a very conscious decision to focus attention on the dynamic of the small group conversation in which adults can come to terms with the intersection of faith and life in the company of their peers.

The module does not provide an exhaustive course on adult faith formation. Rather, it offers facilitators a process of presentation, reflection, and application that will provide some core understandings and basic skills to enrich their ministry. The facilitator is the linchpin in the process, the person who creates the hospitable climate and provides the structure for a good process of faith sharing.

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. Her column on catechist formation using Echoes of Faith appears in each issue of Catechetical Leader.



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COWORKERS *continued from page 12*

strate his support for the lay ecclesial ministers of his diocese and to model collaboration with them as his lay co-workers.”

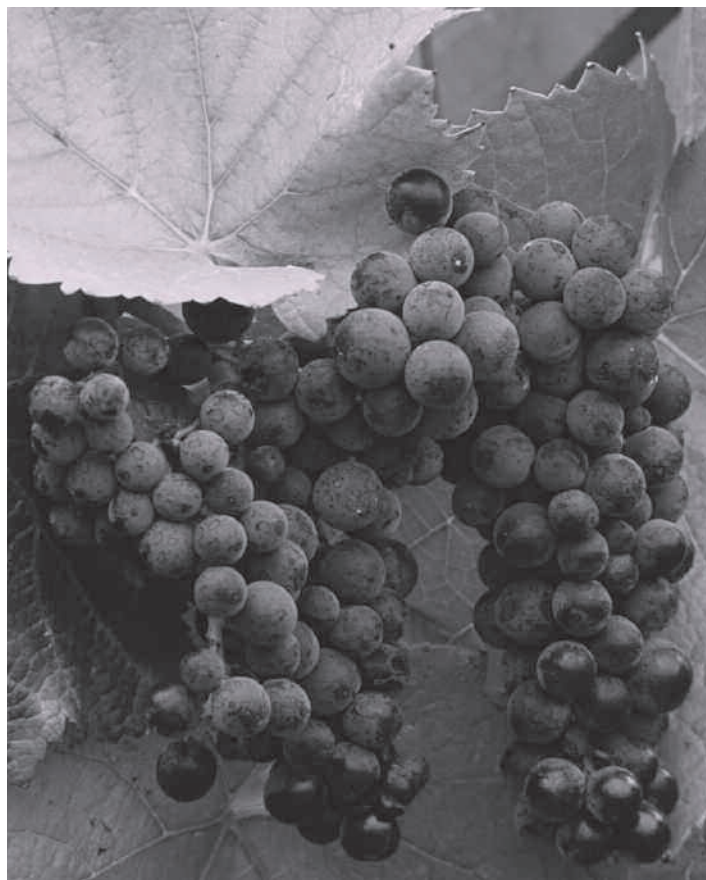
The final practical application treats the ministerial workplace, recognizing that lay ecclesial ministers function in a workplace that shares the characteristics of both a faith community and a modern organization. This requires the integration of Gospel values and best organizational practices. The document acknowledges once again the diversity among dioceses: “Many dioceses have well-developed human resource departments, while others are in the initial stages of developing policies.” The document prescribes nothing, but offers helpful suggestions, chief among them the implementation of a comprehensive personnel system that “includes both the variety of people serving the church (lay people, sisters, brothers, deacons, and priests) and the range of personnel functions.” Typically such a system addresses such areas as recruitment and selection; orientation and support for new lay ecclesial ministers; evaluation and feedback; compensation; transitions and terminations; and grievance procedures. The section concludes with a reference to available resources and the outcomes that might be anticipated from a comprehensive personnel system.

THE “RECEPTION” OF CO-WORKERS

When a document has been almost ten years in the making, a few months is hardly sufficient time to evaluate its reception. There have been some indications, however, which are worth noting. The document itself anticipates differing implementations. One bishop said he would be cautious about “commissioning” lay ecclesial ministers, a caution proceeding from liability concerns. Another bishop, presiding at the commissioning of lay ecclesial ministers in his diocese in November 2005 congratulated them as the first to be commissioned after the approval of the document. Another diocese moved forward with plans to establish a council of lay ecclesial ministers whose mission is to assist the bishop in promoting lay ecclesial ministry in collaboration with the ordained. One bishop expressed concerns about needlessly complicating matters, while another said he wanted to see the Church “cultivate religious vocations and lay ministry [because] you can’t have a Church without both.”

The National Association for Lay Ministry welcomed the document, saying that it “publicly affirms their [lay ecclesial ministers’] leadership, invites appropriate authorization for their ministry and clarifies their accountability within ecclesial structures.” The National Association for Lay Ministry, the Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry, the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers and the Seminary division of NCEA have all scheduled discussion of the document during their gatherings.

Interest in the document has not been confined to the United States. At the time the bishops were voting on the document, a group of Franciscans were watching developments from Geneva and “hearing good things about it.” Shortly after its approval, members of the University of Louvain told a USCCB official that they considered the document “groundbreaking” and that they intended to use it in class “both for its content and as a model of what episcopal conferences should be doing on the subject.”



The long-term reception of the document will be determined by many. Diocesan bishops are most important, since it is intended as a resource for them in their responsibility of acknowledging, fostering, and ordering the various ministries within their dioceses. A second key group are those responsible for the formation of priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers themselves. While it is unreasonable to expect that each group be thoroughly familiar with all the details of the “foundational” documents for the other groups, it seems essential that they be aware of those documents and supportive of the goals of each. That kind of awareness and support can do much to bring about what is envisaged in the concluding words of *Co-workers*: “a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in pilgrimage toward the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message for all humanity.”

Amy M. Hoey, RSM, Lay Ministry Project Coordinator for the USCCB (1996-2006), was the 2000 recipient of Gaudium et Spes award, a presented of the National Association for Lay Ministry. (The award recognizes individuals who evidence commitment to the vision of the Church as articulated in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and who advocate and foster the enhanced role of the laity who respond to their baptismal call to ministry in the Church and in society.)

Reprinted with permission from the Spring 2006 issue of the National Catholic Education Association’s *Seminary Journal*.

Eucharist for the Journey

By Christopher Vaccaro

Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you! (I Kings 19: 7)



The journey of life is one that is both difficult and tiring. We encounter so many problems during our travels through the desert of life and they exhaust us—problems at our workplace, problems in our families, financial difficulties—the list could go on and on. On top of that are problems in the world: terrorism, war, poverty, prejudices to name a few.

Yet each week we have the blessing of coming to the oasis of the Mass where we are nourished by the body and blood of Christ. At Mass we come to the table of the Lord we receive his life... we are nourished by the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ

God recognizes in his great love that we need the time at the oasis each week. He sees that we are striving to come to do his will by all the good works that we do. He says to each of us 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' And yet this good God is never outdone in his love or good works. St. John Vianney said, "All the good works in the world are not equal to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because they are the works of men; but the Mass is the work of God. Even Martyrdom is nothing in comparison for it is but the sacrifice of man to God; but the Mass is the sacrifice of God for man."

The Mass then, while primarily an act of our worship for God, becomes yet again a sign of the great generosity of God as he gives us himself.

He gives us himself—he who the source of all tranquility, he who is the source of all compassion. He does this so that we can continue our walk through the desert of life with peace, know-

ing where we are headed. And where are we headed? We are ultimately headed home to be with God for all eternity.

Each week when we gather to celebrate the Eucharist with this in mind—that we are coming to be refreshed for the week ahead and nourished with the bread of life for our journey

It is for that reason that we should make Mass a priority on Sunday and make sure that we plan for it at least with the same care that we show when we are invited to a friends house for a nice dinner. When going to dinner we make sure to dress nicely and arrive on time. We are attentive to the conversation at the table and we would never dream of excusing ourselves before the end of the meal or leaving without expressing our gratitude. The same should be true of our preparation and participation in the Mass.

Our Lord is the generous host of the eternal meal. He invites us weekly to come to the banquet of the Eucharist to give us the food that will nourish us as we make our journey through the desert of life and in the times of doubt.

Let us remember the words of John Paul II in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: "The path itself is long and strewn with obstacles greater than our human resources alone can overcome, yet we have the Eucharist, and in its presence we can hear in the depths of our hearts, as if they were addressed to us, the same words heard by the prophet Elijah: 'Get up and eat, else the journey will be too great for you.'" ■

Christopher Vaccaro is a deacon in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. He is presently studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland.



SHOULDERS OF GIANTS *continued from page 15*

who had not attended Mass or received the sacraments for years. The fisher submitted a written report. In almost every instance, the fisher's report resulted in the decision to establish a mission."

As the M CCD grew, it became necessary for catechists in some instances to double as fishers—fishing on a continued basis before classes and often following up with absentees. Also, fishing was not limited to mining areas. As an example of an urban area that benefited from fishing efforts, consider Bloomfield, a proudly German and Italian neighborhood slightly northwest of downtown Pittsburgh. "For many years, the Missionary Confraternity fished...in Bloomfield...particularly for attendance at Sunday Mass. Men workers fished on Saturday night for Sunday Mass and Sunday School. The women called for the children on Sunday morning. Sometimes they went into the homes, got the children out of bed, washed and dressed them! They made sure they got to church!"

THE 50s AND 60s

Like women and men in their fifties and sixties, the M CCD in the 1950s and 1960s underwent changes making it ripe for renewal. The efforts described above had gone so well for so long that many missions were no longer missions; rather, they were now parishes in their own right. "In the first 25 years of its existence," writes James "the

M CCD supplied the motivation and leadership for the establishment of 27 diocesan parishes."

So what does an organization do—what does a person do—when a plateau is reached and the future seems uncertain? Like an older adult realizing that continued growth in faith is the key to ongoing renewal, the M CCD in merging with the parish Confraternity of Christian Doctrine did so in a way that made adult education in the form of catechist formation a fundamental area of focus. The 1950s saw the beginnings of this merging process. Catechist formation—helped greatly by collaboration with the women's religious community Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart—expanded thanks to increasingly well-structured training courses.

Through the 1960s as scores of new catechists were needed to staff growing parish programs, more structures emerged. Bishop John Wright (later a cardinal and Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy—issuer of the General Directory for Catechesis) designated priests to be Deanery Directors of CCD. Soon after, each deanery was assigned a lay Associate Director. A corps of Master Catechists was recruited and formed so that growing numbers of training courses would continue being well staffed. Television pro-

continued on next page

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grams and radio broadcasts began spreading the faith through the airwaves. Pastors were encouraged to hire professional religious educators to head parish programs. Interestingly, the lived experience of the priority given to adult faith formation was confirmed by the General Directory for Catechesis as well as our National Directory for Catechesis. In the 1950s and 1960s, then, mechanisms for adult faith formation took shape in appearances that are still recognizable.

To summarize the changes of the 1950s and 1960s, then, catechist formation and an emerging profession for administrators of parish programs blossomed and bloomed thanks largely to the good seed sown by the MCCD coupled with the growing needs of expanding parishes. While structures have changed somewhat since this era, their functions continue being addressed one way or another. The needs of God's People increased, and by proclaiming the Gospel in ways honed on experience, the Confraternity vision somewhat prophetically saw ways to address these needs—ways that remain effective in the present day.

Other noteworthy developments in the 1950s and 1960s include enhanced efforts at special religious education and increased use of audio-visual equipment. In 1960, for example, a catechetical program for people with mental retardation was initiated by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Within two years, nine children with mental retardation celebrated their first holy Communion—all in their home parishes.

CHRIST THE KING PARISH

As we move toward closing these reflections on the MCCD specifically, we pause to consider the priestly career of the late Father Edward R. Farina. Father Farina was taught by MCCD catechists as a boy. As pastor of Christ the King, rather than building a school (there were several Catholic schools in his area), he saw to the construction of a catechetical center; known as the School of Religion, it was a site of faith formation for teens and parents as well as children. Many of these parents were young adults by today's standards.

While Father Farina acknowledged the great value of Catholic schools, he felt compelled to help develop the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine to its fullest potential. In 1984, to honor four of his brothers who were also priests—and to advance the ministry of catechesis—he endowed the Fathers Farina Fund. Nearly 10% of parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh have benefited by having a catechetical administrator pursue further formation as a Farina Fund scholarship recipient. Individual contributors continually add to the fund, and candidates are chosen by committee based on fulfilling requirements such as serving at least three years as a parish catechetical program manager. Program managers with no college degree or one in a field entirely unrelated to catechetics use Farina Fund dollars to obtain approved undergraduate credits at any Catholic college or university in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Several Farina Fund beneficiaries have

gone on to become Coordinators and even Directors for Religious Education—the highest level of parish catechetical administrator in our diocese. Thus what started in 1903—the MCCD—led to a man of faith eighty years later establishing an effort that connects directly to present-day catechetical administration.

CONNECTIONS TO THE PRESENT

In the years immediately prior to the Great Jubilee 2000, a synod process unfolded in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In the remotest corners of the diocese, listening sessions were convened at which representatives from every parish—some former missions of the MCCD—had a chance to weigh in on future directions for the Church in southwestern Pennsylvania. One of six strategic goals to emerge from the entire synod process is that of cultivating leadership. The MCCD clearly demonstrated the power of courageous leadership: from ordained, consecrated and lay leaders working together.

Nearly eighty years after the first Adopt-a-Sunday-School efforts, parish representatives to the diocesan synod also communicated that stewardship must number among these strategic goals as should, of course, the Eucharist. And what the fishers described earlier were about, largely, is evangelization. Evangelization is another area of strategic focus resulting from the diocesan synod.

Synod representatives decades after the MCCD catechist certification strategies first appeared made it clear that they wanted another strategic goal in the diocese to be adult faith formation. These representatives (some of them perhaps descendants of those originally served by the MCCD) knew that, like this confraternity which both formed adult catechists and taught adults in mission fields, a diocese must see to the ongoing formation needs of all adults—particularly parents, who are the primary educators of their children.

Because Father Farina was so concerned that the catechetical needs of youth and young adults be met, he would perhaps also be pleased that along with leadership, adult catechesis, evangelization, stewardship and the Eucharist, the sixth diocesan strategic initiative resulting from the recent synod process is youth and young adult ministry. Like the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, who both involved and served so many youth and young adults, the Diocese of Pittsburgh attempts to carry on the legacy of leaders like Father Edward Farina by focusing in ever more effective ways on people within these two age groups.

THE PRESENT SECRETARIAT FOR EDUCATION STRUCTURE

The Department for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, one of six major branches of the diocesan Secretariat for Education, is one way this secretariat cultivates leadership in ways somewhat reminiscent of the Missionary Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. MCCD catechists tended to be on the young side. They were entrusted with a very real responsibility, guided, formed and shepherded in ways that

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an opportunity to reflect on what was being conveyed, and thus no possibility of changing their minds, regardless of how meaningful the message was.

To use a more divinely driven example, Jesus always communicated the Way and the Truth in a way and with truth that others could comprehend. He cited the laws and rules of Judaism when engaging the Pharisees and he recited parables and stories when preaching to the masses. In every situation, he ensured that the people listening could completely grasp his declaration of the Good News. Some did choose not to change their ways and convert their lives, but that was not due to Christ's proclamations being too complex.

This same blueprint needs to be drawn upon when building on the cornerstone of the church today. The Catholic faith ought not be announced and proclaimed in a language the laity needs to have translated. It should be promulgated in a style that is simple, straightforward and ascertainable to all who hear it. If the church vocabulary used is repeatedly too highbrow, it runs the risk of soaring right over the heads of the intended audience.

RELEVANT

During my conversation with my children, they were open to our discussion because it became significant to them. Because I could relate it to a topic they had an interest in, they were willing to continue the conversation. I was successful at taking something reverent and referencing it to something relevant because I have a relationship with my children and know them intimately.

Jesus practiced this method in his preaching and made things meaningful because he not only loved his neighbors, but he learned about his neighbor as well. He spoke to what was significant to them and applied it to what was noteworthy in their lives. He referred to farming and fishing and lectured about lepers and being unclean because those were aspects of their existence. He addressed issues already important to his listeners, rather than trying to convince them to care about concepts they considered inconsequential.

Catholicism must remain relevant if it is to impact people's lives. Too often the focus is on scholarly theological puzzles that have little relevance to the person in the pew. Faith needs to challenge our intellect; however, it has to move beyond the head and involve ideas of the heart for it to flourish within the individual.

*Catechesis cannot limit itself to a tidy classroom,
but must get down in the dirt.*

ESSENTIAL

In the exchange with my children, things centered on what they deemed were essential. There was attention given to their needs and there existed a forum for them to share their voices. They were able to assert their concerns and reservations as well as their convictions and resolve.

Christ excelled at drawing out from others the central core of who they were. As people approached Jesus, it was clear he knew what they needed, and yet still he inquired about what they were searching for.

How often in today's world are the faithful followers asked about the obstacles blocking their spiritual journey? Is there ample opportunity for them to bring up questions concerning the essence of their faith? People are looking at the needs in their lives and are longing to find out how to fill them. It is only when their fundamental being is touched that transformation occurs.

EFFECTIVE

Forming and transforming frequently occur in an environment rich in benefits. My children, for example, opted to adhere to my advice because they came to the conclusion it was worthwhile for them to do so. They recognized that changing their course of action could provide them with something they needed in life.

Our Savior spoke about value when sharing the saving grace of God. Jesus explained that being a Christian would be a difficult balance; however, he was certain to add that the positives of doing so far outweigh the negatives. Living a life filled with love from the Creator was something to covet and work at because of the preciousness of the gift itself.

In recent years though, the Catholic faith has frequently been presented without a thorough enough explanation. Rather than speaking to the advantages of a deep spirituality, the presenter typically raises the disadvantages of shame to the surface. Instead of expounding on what useful traditions prayer, meditation and reading the Bible can be, the presenter pounds guilt onto the listener. A more convincing and caring practice would be to point out how aspects of our faith can be beneficial and even dramatically enhance our existence. In other words, we should create programs that highlight the highs of embracing the Eucharist, receiving reconciliation and living a sacramental lifestyle, rather than programs that shine a light on the lows of sinfulness.

DOABLE

Even if a person hears comprehensible and compelling words and as a result becomes convinced to act, merely wanting to do something is not always enough to move a person forward. People need a plan to lead them to a fresh path. In my children's case, once they desired to do things differently, we plotted simple steps for them to climb so they could arrive at their new goals. Had the plan been too difficult for them to do, their will alone would not have enabled them to accomplish it.

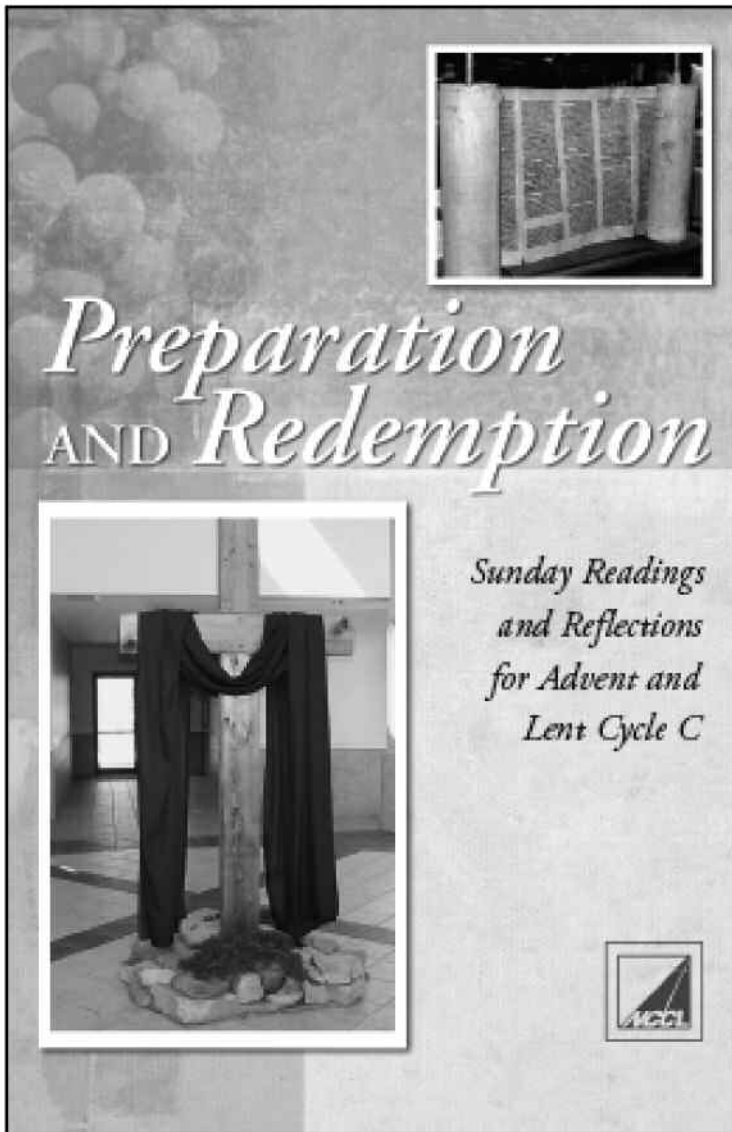
When conversions occurred in Christ's midst, he provided clear and concise directives: forgive another seventy times seven times; pray to God at all times. He pushed people further than they thought they could stretch, but it was never farther than he knew they could go.

As people continue down their journey of faith, they first must be allowed to crawl before they are encouraged to walk. Many times the church demands that her members do too much too early in their spiritual development. Daily reading of the Scriptures is insisted upon, but no instruction in how to do so correctly is offered. Evangelizing others is encouraged, however a refresher on the what and why of our traditions is not provided. The need to safeguard family time together is emphasized, and yet parish meetings and sacramental preparation workshops are scheduled at hours that separate parents from their children.

The world today is filled with fear, anxiety and doubt. We have more violent machinery today than at any other point in human history. Some say we have more decadence and declining morals than ever before. Yet the one constant that still remains is the truth of our faith. God loves each one of us. This certainty is what the church could and should be sharing more often, more clearly and more directly. To catechize using this simple and yet profound creed will free people from their fears.

Catechesis cannot limit itself to a lofty but tidy classroom, but must get down in the dirt and into people's homes. Conversion occurs at the ordinary moments of life when we are ridding ourselves of old diapers and of worn out ideas and beliefs. It is exactly in this everyday messiness of life that catechesis needs to be happening. ■

Scott Mussari is the director of educational ministries at Good Shepherd Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is married with four children and can be reached at scott.mussari@good-shepherd.org.



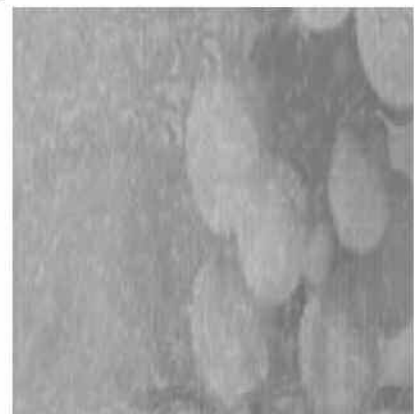
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*The debt of gratitude owed to these catechetical pioneers
grows more apparent with each passing season.*

made effectiveness more likely, and sent to serve as disciples of Jesus. The above-mentioned department today calls forth leaders from middle school age, through high school, to young adulthood, challenging them and equipping them to serve as disciples, as evangelizers—as cultural missionaries. The Diocesan Youth Council, for example, consists of at least one high school age representative from each deanery and Catholic high school in the diocese. DYC representatives are vital links in the mutual, intergenerational lines of communication that need to function well in the Body of Christ. Filled with courage from experiences like World Youth Day, many young people in the Church today are guiding lights in sharing faith and evangelizing others.

In the Secretariat for Education, the Office for Budget and Planning makes stewardship manifest in many ways. Every three years, for example, this secretariat sponsors the Total Catholic Education Conference. For a fraction of the cost of many national conferences, TCEC brings many of the best speakers in the catechetical world to the heart of Pittsburgh. Without excellent stewardship guided by the Office for Budget and Planning, this formational opportunity for catechists throughout the diocese (and beyond) would not be feasible; with resourcefulness reminiscent of the MCCD's Adopt-a-Sunday-School initiative it is made possible every three years.

Another way stewardship manifests itself in the tradition of the MCCD is the Kids-Share-a-Lunch program through which elementary school children on designated days forego their usual lunch, contributing the money they save to help the diocesan mission in Chimbote, Peru. Over the years thousands of dollars have been generated as these young people develop stewardship and missionary zeal by reaching out to those in need of catechesis and many other resources in Chimbote.

Today, the Department for Persons with Disabilities helps the Secretariat for Education serve children and adults with varying abilities: physical, mental and emotional. Through its Opening Doors effort, for instance, this Department raises awareness regarding persons with disabilities, profoundly affecting young people in parish schools of religion as well as Catholic elementary and high schools. The effort to create a Church that is welcoming and inclusive of all God's people remains a critical priority. Changing attitudes and eliminating

prejudice requires conversion of heart. Access to the sacraments—especially the most holy Eucharist—is a priority for this department's staff in terms of their service to people in our diocese; this is fitting for many reasons, not the least of which is that people need to know what, or rather, Who the Eucharist is and they should be able to celebrate it fittingly. Bringing people to the Sacrament of sacraments—people of all abilities—has been a priority since the days of the missionary confraternity. It continues to this day.

One way that fishing occurs today is through the Education secretariat's Department for Educational Media. Fishing the airwaves and Internet, this department produces a weekly television series that presents the complete teachings of the Church from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The program enters living rooms in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and beyond on Sunday mornings—much like the fishers of old. A worldwide web presence is also maintained by the Department for Educational Media so that net surfers and those with more focused goals may find catechetical resources proclaiming the Gospel and, hopefully, drawing them deeper into the community of faith.

The branch of the Secretariat for Education charged with adult faith formation most directly is the Department for Religious Education. Through certification and enrichment courses developed with the benefit of MCCD/CCD experience, along with helping parishes directly reach out to proclaim the Gospel comprehensively and systematically to all adults, this department continually applies lessons learned from the great Missionary Confraternity to current parish realities. A recent highlight is an adult methodology course to enhance catechesis as well as other ministries. Incorporating and modeling the best current practices in adult education techniques, this course is already enhancing parish-level efforts to reach parents and other adults.

The diocesan Department for Catholic Schools strives persistently so that parents who choose this educational option for their children enjoy the total quality to which they're entitled. In the spirit of Total Catholic Education, school personnel often work closely with religious education staff so that both of these options are as good as they can be. As one who appreciated the value of educational choice, Father Farina would be proud.

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Recently Mary Downey James offered a few thoughts in retrospect on the MCCD. An enduring impression for James is the fact that so many mission catechists whom she interviewed echoed a resounding theme: they felt privileged to bring Christ to the people in these missions. Privileged. Privileged to rise before dawn on what was for many the only day off from work for the week. Privileged to travel miles over terrain that often wouldn't accommodate a motor vehicle. Privileged to put in more than a twelve-hour day nearly every Sunday traveling and teaching—plus time in between these Sundays working on their own formation as catechists. They felt privileged, and Mary's personal conclusion is that the MCCD truly was a gift from God to each family in every mission. It had to be God's work, concludes Mary James; otherwise how could it have occurred and endured in the first place, let alone be so phenomenally, objectively successful?

It's been over twenty years since Mary's lovingly compiled history of the MCCD and CCD in the Diocese of Pittsburgh was published. In that time the debt of gratitude owed to these catechetical pioneers by our current Secretariat for Education—the Departments of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Persons with Disabilities, Educational Media, Catholic Schools, and Religious Education (along with the

Office for Budget and Planning)—this tremendous debt of gratitude grows more apparent with each passing season.

Along with Mary James' book, several other sources of information on the MCCD are available (many of which she drew from) including a dissertation by Brother Leo Lanham published in 1945 by the Catholic University of America Press. The Missionary Confraternity's classic approach to evangelization and catechesis still has lessons to teach us all.

A passage from Mary Downey James' epilogue seems a fitting way to close these reflections on the MCCD and its wisdom for today:

"All who 'put on Christ' in Baptism are called to be bearers of the Word. The high-born and the humble, the famous and the forgotten—all are gifted for this mission. ... Each time a Christian accepts the invitation, his 'Yes!' brings the Kingdom a little closer, and the world becomes a little more what God intended it to be." ■

Kenneth Ogorek is the director of the Office of Catechesis for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

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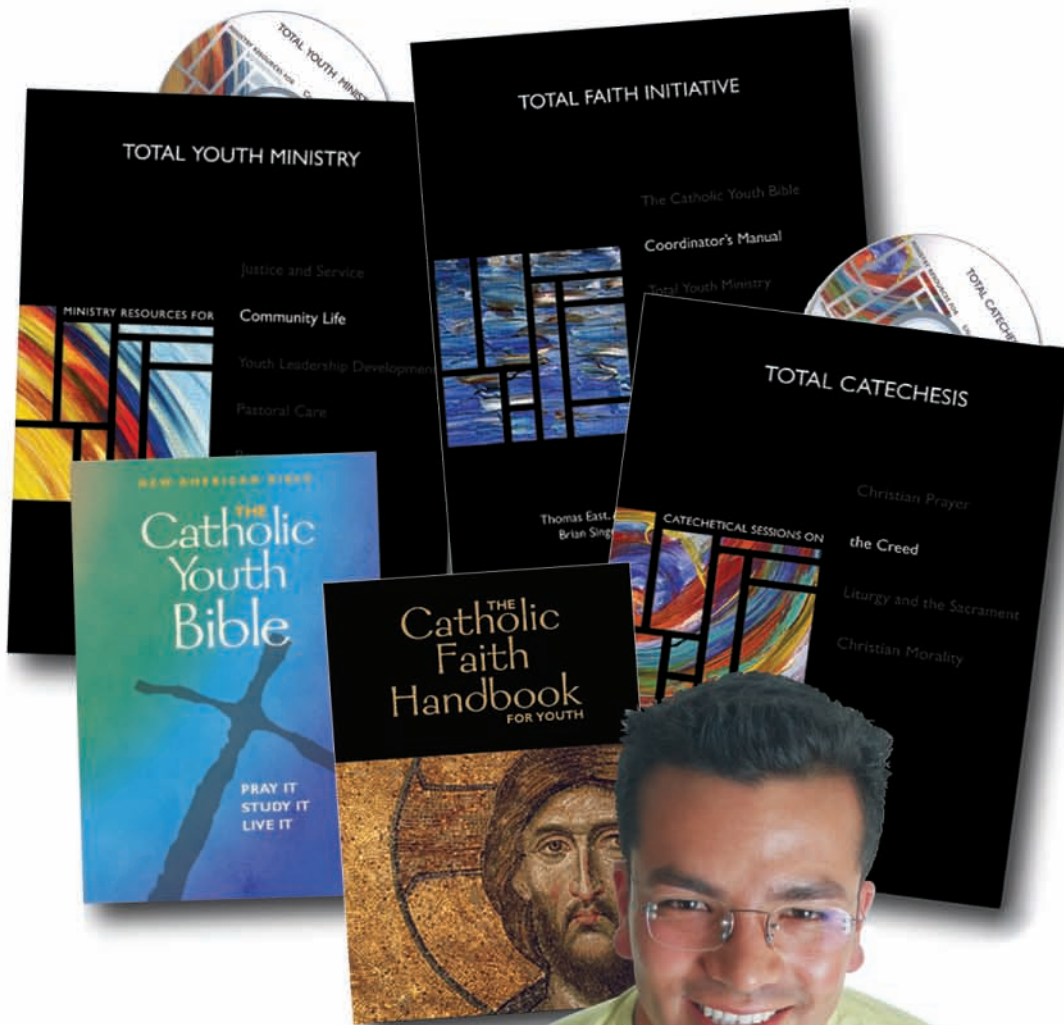


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