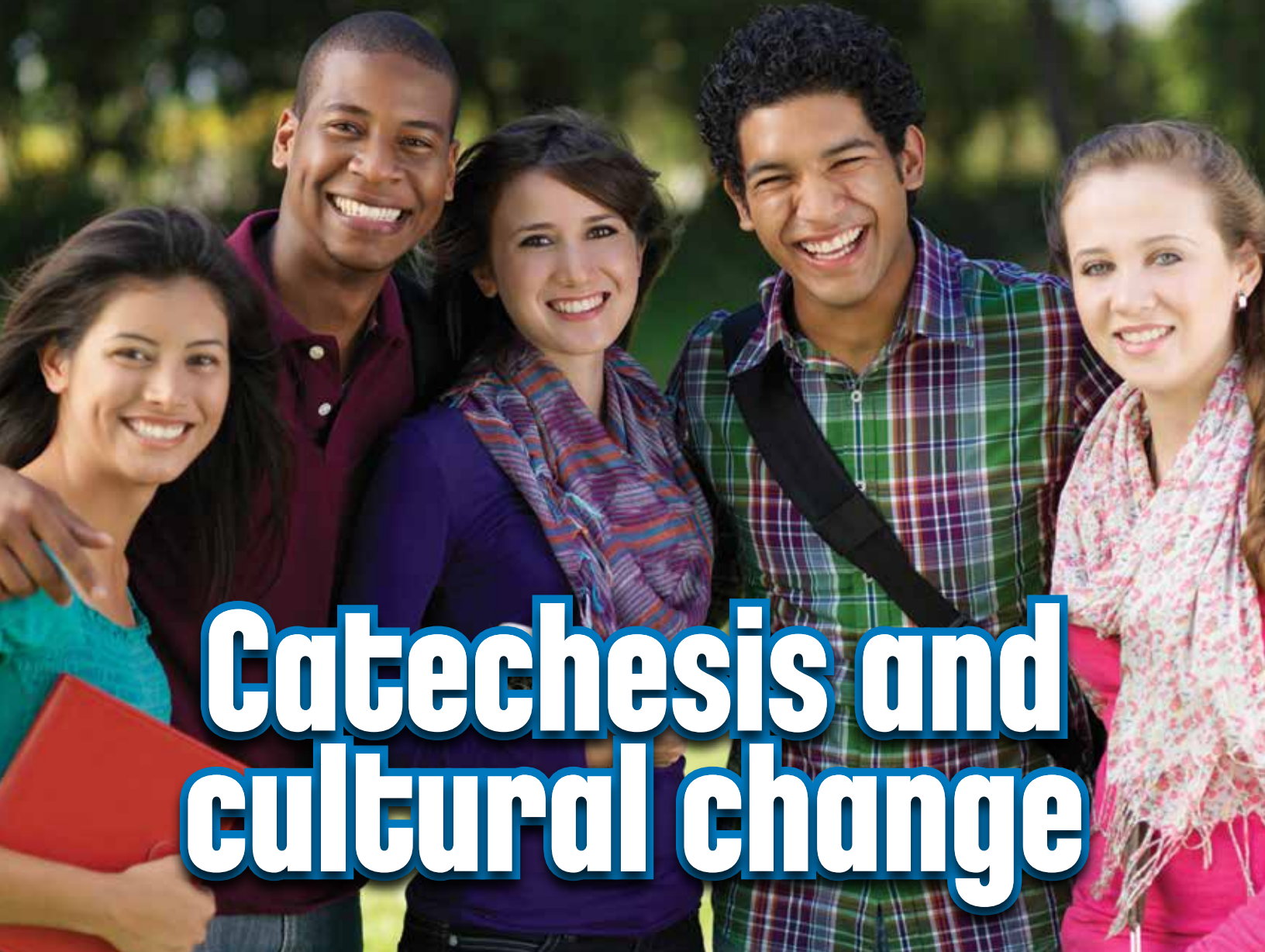


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CATECHETICAL  
LEADER



# Catechesis and cultural change

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of the Parish Catechetical Leader

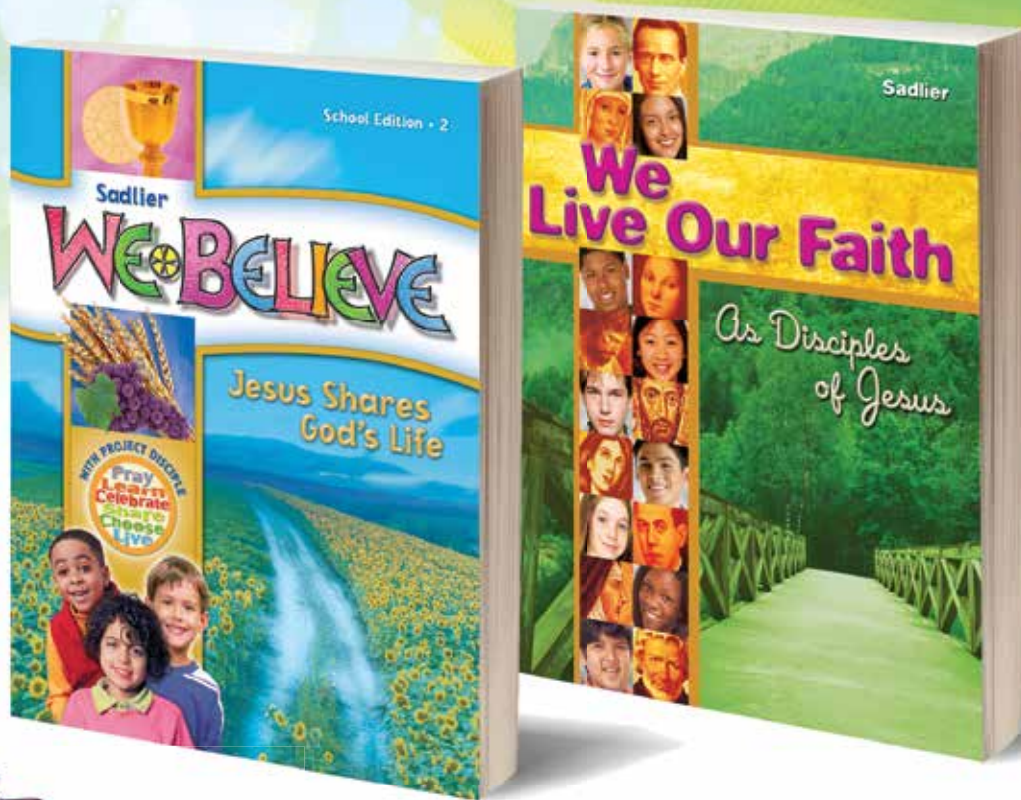
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# THREE DAYS OF INTENSE DISCUSSION

Anne Roat



## National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



Dear NCCL Members,

I always find our fall Representative Council meetings both energizing and exhausting. Our November 2011 Representative Council was especially exciting because of the networking and many in-depth discussions and that took place. The meeting was a success because of the

outstanding catechetical personnel in attendance. I was gratified that more than 50 very busy people could put their many duties and responsibilities on hold for three days to focus on the work and mission of NCCL. These dedicated members of your organization came together to conduct the business of the conference on your behalf.

Much of the representatives' time was spent creating action items for the new strategic plan. They divided into work groups that reflected their individual interests around six goal areas including, adult faith formation, evangelization, social media, grassroots of NCCL, financial planning, and multiculturalism. Each group utilized the input that was collected from the NCCL committees and provinces. I listened to their conversations and was pleased to witness the reflection and consideration they gave to writing each action item. When you read the new strategic plan you will be as excited as I was with their work!

One of the favorite activities that members of rep council look forward to is the member check-in. This is the time when the representatives call other members of NCCL in order to listen to their ideas and remind them about upcoming NCCL events. Because our meeting begins Thursday evening and ends Saturday afternoon, we make the telephone calls on Friday. We do this in the afternoon so that we have a better chance of reaching members on the west coast. Each representative took a list of members and spent about 30 minutes making 254 calls. This was

followed by a debriefing session during which time the reps reported back on what they heard from our members. Once again, it was obvious from the feedback that our members continue to look to NCCL to advocate and vision for our ministry.

Two significant discussions took place during this meeting. The first had to do with the NCCL mission statement. The statement was updated during NCCL 2000 and there has been some concern that it may not accurately reflect who we are today. The discussion that evolved centered on adding evangelization and the vision of the NDC to the mission statement. The insights from the discussion were sent to the Bylaws Committee to help them look at a revision of our current mission statement.

The other important discussion stemmed from questions that had been sent to our provinces regarding the existing province structure. If each province sent a diocesan and parish representative to the rep council meeting, there would be 92 representatives. Given this fact, our representative council meeting would have over 100 NCCL members in

attendance. We spent time talking about why there are fewer people making decisions for the organization and we will continue the discussion at our next meeting.

Your NCCL Representative Council articulates the values of the Conference, represents you, serves as a consultative body to the board of directors, and exercises all other responsibilities established for it in our policies. We are truly blessed to have such an outstanding group of men and women who serve our Conference. Be sure to thank your province representative for the work they do!

God bless,

Anne

President, NCCL

*One of the favorite activities that members of rep council look forward to is the member check-in.*

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# TRANSFORMING ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

Leland Nagel



Over the past decade, NCCL has been in partnership with the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) with support from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the Partnership on Adolescent Catechesis (PAC).

Over a two-year period, articles on the foundational elements were written, appeared in *Catechetical Leader* (CL), and became Volume I of the *Source Book on Adolescent Catechesis*.

Expanding on its commitment to collaborate, PAC created the National Initiative on Adolescent Catechesis and invited leaders representing the entire system of faith formation to a four-day national symposium to examine the current landscape. The presentations and processes resulted in Volume II of the *Source Book* and the creation of the website [adolescentcatechesis.org](http://adolescentcatechesis.org).

Since the end of the symposium, PAC has created a vision for adolescent catechesis with five foundational and interdependently connected elements in this process:

- Empowered Parents and Faith-filled Families
- Vibrant, Youth-friendly Parishes
- Fruitful Partnerships
- Comprehensive Ministry to Youth with Intentional and Systematic Faith Formation
- Inclusion, Trust, and Acceptance

With the vision of where we wanted to go, it was now important to delineate our outcomes for adolescent faith formation. With extensive collaboration, we determined that the effectiveness of parish, school, and family efforts in adolescent faith formation was best assessed by witnessing faith communities alive with young people demonstrate their love for God and their Catholic faith by:

1. Sustaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ supported through regular prayer, faith sharing, and Scripture reading.
2. Sharing the Good News through words and actions, through Christian stewardship, and working for peace, justice, and human dignity.
3. Participating fully, consciously, actively, and regularly in the celebrations of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church.
4. Articulating the fundamental teachings of the Catholic faith and demonstrating a commitment to learning and growing in this faith.

5. Applying Catholic ethics, virtues, principles, values, and social teaching to moral decision-making, life situations, and in interactions with the larger culture.
6. Discerning and using their gifts to actively belong to and participate in the life and mission of the parish, school, and larger community.
7. Celebrating cultural/racial and ethnic diversity as a gift from God, and pursuing the development of Christian community across cultural/racial and ethnic backgrounds in their parishes, schools, and broader communities.
8. Exploring God's call to vocation through prayer, reflection, and discernment.

Going one step further, indicators for each of these outcomes were established. These became the basis for our inventories, which meant we were one step closer to a new course for adolescent catechesis. It was not another program but rather a process of strategic planning that would lead a parish through a change management process for re-imagining their adolescent faith formation and pastoral ministry efforts with young people and their families.

We are excited to be entering the pilot phase of *Transforming Adolescent Catechesis*. During the next few months, pilot projects will be undertaken in Orlando, Washington, DC, Delaware, and Des Moines. Ela Milewski, Project Coordinator, will be conducting a workshop at the NCCL Conference and Exposition in San Diego. If you haven't signed up, be sure to do so. The dioceses who have agreed to be part of the pilot are ready to move beyond good intentions; they are ready to create a new roadmap.

The initial training is based on the example of Nehemiah and the understanding that to rebuild our catechetical and pastoral ministry efforts into a youth-friendly, disciple-making experience, our beginning, our middle, and our end is prayer. Needless to say, prayer might be the best place to begin.

In your prayer, you might ask yourselves:

- Do we have a concern for adolescent catechesis across our community?
- Do we have a commitment from leadership for a process of change?
- Do we have sufficient energy, time, and resources to engage in a change right now?

This is just one of the activities that NCCL participates in and for your behalf. We are here to serve you and hope this is one way we can grow together. ■

# The Changing Ministry of the Parish Catechetical Leader

Loyes M. Spayd



Our culture and methodologies for catechizing and communicating have changed rapidly and dramatically over the last several decades. Has parish leadership seriously asked the questions, “What is working?” in our current models of catechesis? And, “Why and why not?” Does our catechetical and parish leadership understand the changing culture in this country, in the world, and within the church?

Some recent surveys have examined American Catholic practice, attitudes, and culture in an effort to explore these questions. It is important for those of us in catechetical and pastoral ministry to study the results and what they are telling us. I will return to this issue later in the article.

I became interested in these questions when I was invited to attend a focus group sponsored by John Roberto and his Lifelong Faith Group who was researching the 2020 Faith Formation Project, now published as a book, *Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation* (Lifelong Faith Associates and Vibrant Faith Publishing). I was also running the Generations of Faith Program (an intergenerational and whole community catechetical program) in the parish where I served as Director of Faith Formation at the time. Because of these two experiences and my own observations and knowledge of what was happening in the field of catechesis, I decided to form, in the parish, a 2020 strategic planning committee for catechesis, or better phrased, lifelong faith formation.

We also need to look at how the field of catechesis itself has changed. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states, “The baptismal catechumenate...is the...inspiration for catechesis in the church” (90, 91). This document was published in 1997, and the genius and richness of what that statement means for catechesis has not yet been fully tapped. Intergenerational and

whole community catechetical programs have a decent success rate in parishes and dioceses that have committed to trying them. Gallop’s “Strengths Finder” (the Catholic version) is a wonderful tool for building engaged parishes, which includes parishioners committed to lifelong faith formation. There are online programs, with parish support, coaching parents how to catechize their own children. Faith formation now happens in classrooms, meeting rooms, living rooms, chat rooms, blogs, websites, on iPods, iPads, in virtual churches, in Starbucks, Panera, in some traditional and in some very innovative and creative ways. This list is not exhaustive.

## CATECHIST AS CURATOR

The new parish catechetical leader not only has to be savvy enough to handle all this technology, but also able to sift through, sort, and know what’s appropriate to recommend for a parish community. John Roberto refers to this person as a “curator of resources” (107). Researching and using the electronic resources does not mean that all the traditional means of providing catechesis are going to go away—not all, not initially. The catechetical leader’s role of managing programs is going to change and

greatly expand, especially if the catechetical leader, hopefully along with rest of the parish leadership, is going to reach out to all the church. Church, in this case, includes those folks not in pews and those not interested in being in the pews. Gone are the days when the catechetical leader can reach into the files and pull the program folder from last year, or open it up on the computer,

change the date, and run with it. We are a living, breathing, changing ministry, church, and culture, and as catechetical leaders we must change too.

Now that being said, I refer you to Maureen Gallagher’s article, *Transitions—A Transformational Journey* in the November 2011 issue of *Catechetical Leader*. Maureen raises some of the same issues and asks us to look at how we manage transitions.

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*The new parish catechetical leader not only has to be savvy enough to handle all this technology, but also able to sift through, sort, and know what’s appropriate to recommend for a parish community.*

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It's an excellent article, and I highly recommend it. As a church, our history of dealing with change has been less than stellar. As in all aspects of ministry, pastoral sensitivity to the needs of the people must come first.

### CURRENT TRENDS IN PARISHES

I have mentioned some of the changes happening in the field of catechesis. Over the past year, there have been some surveys that show a picture of American parish life and some catechetical practices. Tom Walters conducted a survey of parish catechetical leaders for NCCL and the results are available on the NCCL website. The *National Catholic Reporter* in the October 28–November 10, 2010 issue just released the results of a *Portrait of US Catholics in the Second Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (ncronline.org). Last spring, CARA, in Phase One of the Emerging Parish Model Project, released its results on the survey of parish life. These results are also available on the CARA website. (In Phase 2 the survey will interview parish ministers.) There are other studies available, some of which are in Roberto's book, which I mentioned previously.

After reading the results of these surveys, I would like to make some observations that are of concern to me and I think should be of concern to catechetical leaders and parish leadership.

1. As the cultural diversity of our church grows enormously (whites soon to become the minority), we must become more culturally diverse in our praxis.
2. Although the devotion to the practice of the sacraments (with the exception of marriage) is relatively high, the lived reality of the understanding of the sacramental life is not reflected in an attitude toward the gift of life lost in abortion and capital punishment.
3. A consistent low attendance at Mass says two things: liturgies are poorly celebrated and homilies are poorly prepared and preached and/or there is a lack of good catechesis on the essential need to be nurtured by the Word and Eucharist; to be supported by the community; to be strengthened and challenged by the Eucharist to go out and be Christ to the world. Had this catechesis happened, there might have been a consistently higher response of commitment to the poor.
4. The surveys seemed to show a predominance of catechesis being done for children; some for parents, especially about penance and Eucharist, but much less for the general adult population, and hardly anything for the church "not in the pews."
5. The use of technology seems to be primarily for administrative purposes and parish and religious education websites and not for catechesis itself.

Now I know this is a very cursory summary of very lengthy surveys, but I was somewhat dismayed at the similarities. And I do know of parishes where none of the above is applicable but, so far, not enough to make a difference in the national profile.

### SKILLS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

I retired as the catechetical leader in my parish last June. As I was helping my parish prepare for the transition, I did not think the parish leadership (both volunteer and staff) really understood these trends and the kind of planning that needed to happen for effective catechesis to be in place by the year 2020. As my parish and I searched for my replacement, I realized that training methods, job descriptions, and ministry expectations for parish catechetical leaders would also have to change. I knew I didn't have all the technological skills needed, but my replacement must. I had the vision but she would also have to have the youth, energy, and the skills to make it happen. I needed help to set up a website and links to good adult faith formation sites. Within her first month, my replacement (now hired) had vastly improved the website and created and maintained a Facebook page. A few of the future plans under the aegis of the 2020 committee are to put family retreat models online, set up chat rooms for adults to have conversations about their faith, and hold infant baptism parent training at the local Starbucks or Panera, convenient to the parents' neighborhood, among others.

Some parishes that I am aware of have programs that are too demanding of young parents and families. Many of these families are in survival mode and doing the best that they can, and parishes are not being pastoral when they add to the stress. Gone are the days when PCLs and pastors can tell parents "jump" and they respond by saying "how high?" The response to that approach is that parents walk, and statistics show they are walking in large numbers. Other parishes provide catechesis that is medieval and sloppy. Our families deserve better. Some parishes do a wonderful job ministering to their families. It can be done.

There are tried and true models of leadership and ministry and there are some new and inspiring ones. Once again, I refer you to the last section of Roberto's book for some of them.

I love a challenge and I see plenty ahead for parish catechetical leaders, their pastors, and bishops. But I am also full of hope because I, too, know to be true what Maureen Gallagher stated so well in her article:

Catechetical leaders are in a unique position to share insights and lead others through the wilderness zone because they are steeped in the life-death-resurrection mystery of Christ (22). |

*Loyes M. Spayd recently retired from 35 years of catechetical ministry at the parish and diocesan levels, and has been a presenter at many workshops and conferences. She now works part-time for Pflaum Publishing, does freelance writing, and writes for the Fashioning Faith website. She has published one book, co-authored another, and written for several publications, including Catechumenate, Living Light, Momentum, Liturgical Catechesis, Catechetical Sunday Materials (USCCB).*

# The New Framework for Adolescent Catechesis

Thomas H. Groome



## CONTEXT OF THE FRAMEWORK

For many years now, the United States Catholic bishops have exercised close oversight of the content of grade-school-age catechesis. This is especially true since the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) and their subsequent establishing of

the Subcommittee on the Catechism and its office to review curricula to insure conformity. Meanwhile, catechetical publishers of basal series and their authors have also drawn upon the best of contemporary catechesis, becoming attentive to developmental readiness, encouraging participative and reflective pedagogy, faith formation as well as information, the role of family, and so on. The church's publication of the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1998)—a fine document—was a catalyst in this regard, as was the previous *GDC* (1971).

The combination of the bishops' oversight, advances in catechesis, and the creativity of catechetical publishers, have lent the US Catholic community what is probably the finest array of kindergarten to eighth-grade religion curricula to be found anywhere in the world. We have at least a half dozen grade-school series that provide a comprehensive, age appropriate, and pedagogically effective scope and sequence curriculum in Catholic faith.

In the meantime, it would seem that neither the bishops nor the publishers, with a couple of notable exceptions, have been nearly as attentive to or invested in adolescent catechesis. The religious education/theology curriculum in Catholic high schools often ranges across a cafeteria of topics, without a scope and sequence that systematically teaches the "whole story" of Catholic Christian faith at an adolescent level. In most Catholic parishes, and apart occasionally from confirmation programs, the efforts to provide an intentional catechetical curriculum for adolescents has been replaced, if at all, by programs in youth ministry. The latter, while often effective in nurturing adolescents toward a "performative literacy" in their faith (e.g. commitment to social justice), are not as effective in encouraging a linguistic literacy, and, I contend, the two—living and knowing one's faith—need each other.

Though my data is purely anecdotal, from my almost 30 years of teaching theology to undergraduates at Boston College, I've

been generally disappointed by their initial lack of background in their Catholic faith, many of them bright young people coming from fine Catholic high schools. It would appear, however, that the US Catholic church has embarked on a sea change regarding adolescent catechesis.

First, note the recently launched National Initiative for Adolescent Catechesis (NIAC) whose stated aim is "to create a new paradigm for how the Catholic Church effectively forms the faith" of its young people today. It draws into a Partnership for Adolescent Catechesis (PAC) the three key stakeholder organizations: the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), and the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL). The overall intent, as I understand it, is to build upon the progress made in Catholic youth ministry over recent years and yet to infuse a much more concerted component of intentional catechesis into all parish-based programs, while also inviting Catholic schools to review the faith education of their students.

The second major catalyst toward more effective adolescent catechesis is the new curriculum Framework (FW) prescribed by the USCCB. Officially titled "Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age," it was approved and promulgated by the United States Catholic bishops at their meeting of November 2007. Clearly they intend it to be implemented throughout the religion curricula of Catholic high schools and parish programs. The Office of the Catechism states that the FW is now "the principal instrument for the review of secondary level catechetical texts to determine their conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*." It adds that the FW should be "employed to indicate the distribution of the *Catechism's* teachings over the four years of secondary instruction" (see the Secondary Level Protocols at <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/index.cfm>).

## WHAT'S IN THE FRAMEWORK

The FW's own stated intent is "to shape a four year, eight semester course of catechetical instruction. . . composed of six core semester-length subject themes with a diocese or school to choose two elective themes." Further, "it is strongly recom-





mended that the core courses be covered in the order in which they appear in this framework” because it “reflects a systematic point of view in which each course builds on a foundation laid by those which precede it” (4, 5; the full text of the FW can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/catechesis/upload/high-school-curriculum-framework.pdf>). Effectively, doing one core course per semester, the six would account for the first three years. Beyond the core courses, the FW offers “five possible elective themes.”

The six core courses in their sequence are: I, The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture; II, Who is Jesus Christ; III, The Mission of Jesus Christ (The Paschal Mystery); IV, Jesus Christ’s Mission Continues in the Church; V, Sacraments as Privileged Encounters with Jesus Christ; VI, Life in Jesus. Then, the five possible electives are: A, Sacred Scripture; B, History of the Catholic Church; C, Living as a Disciple of Jesus in Society; D, Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ; E, Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues.

The FW itself opens with the now classic quote from *Catechesi Tradendae*,

The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ.

(It adds,) the Christological centrality of this framework is designed to form the content of instruction as well as to be a vehicle for growth in one’s rela-

tionship with the Lord so that each may come to know him and live according to the truth he has given to us.

The Secondary Level Protocol—intended to implement the FW—adds explicitly that the overarching curriculum should in general be deeply Trinitarian. It describes this as constantly teaching “the creative and saving initiative of God the Father, the salvific mission of God the Son, and the sanctifying role of God the Holy Spirit.” At the end of each core course and the five electives, the FW adds a section on possible “challenges” to the faith content of each course, encouraging “an apologetic component” in the curriculum. This is to enable young people to explain and defend their faith, especially when challenged.

### A CREATIVE RESPONSE TO THE FRAMEWORK

First, let me make an understatement; the FW has not been greeted with widespread enthusiasm. Perhaps the most substantive critique is that the FW, with its relentless listing of dogmas and doctrines to be taught, presumes that young adolescents are already people of Christian faith and deeply interested in such symbols. Of course this is not the case; indeed, many seem scarcely at the pre-evangelization stage of faith development.

My response to this very valid concern is that much will depend on the pedagogy employed to teach the content prescribed by the FW. If the published curricula to implement it simply become theology manuals that “cover” what the FW

requires, this would be a serious setback. However, the FW itself states that it is “not a tool for direct instruction” and the Secondary Level Protocol explicitly says that its conformity review does not pertain to pedagogy—only to content. This, it seems to me, leaves open, in fact should encourage, a participative pedagogy that actively engages adolescents and encourages the integration of Catholic faith with the generative themes of their own lives; more below!

Another objection has been that the FW is an ultra conservative review of Catholic faith, reflecting only the *CCC*, and a very traditionalist reading of it at best (elective E would seem particularly problematic). Further, its primary source text *is* the *Catechism*, and not, for example, the Bible or the documents of Vatican II. The references to Scripture are very rare and those to the Council’s documents even rarer.

My response to this again valid concern, however, is that one cannot expect such an official church document, concerned with doctrinal and moral accuracy, to herald the cutting edge of theological and biblical scholarship. On the other hand, the bishops surely don’t want poor theology being taught to our adolescents, and, when appropriate and consistent with the FW’s intent, contemporary research can be reflected. For example, the FW does not mention the presence and leadership role of women in Jesus’ original community of disciples, but it need not exclude this important catechesis either, now well established in contemporary Catholic scholarship. Concomitantly, in the catechesis of the Resurrection, the FW does not require but also does not exclude from being taught the key witness of Mary Magdalene; as Mark 16:9 explicitly states, “he appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” Further, though the FW doesn’t frequently reference the Scriptures, the *Catechism* does often. It is surely preferably to quote the Bible—instead of the *Catechism* itself - when a scripture text makes the particular point that the FW wants taught.

Along the way, I’ve also met Catholic high school religion teachers who have developed very effective perennial courses, often over many years, e.g. on scripture, world religions, marriage, and so on. They worry that these tried and true courses must now be set aside. I empathize entirely with this concern, having a couple of such college level courses in my own repertoire. The response here is that some of those courses can be subsumed under the FW, e.g. on the Bible (elective A), or on social justice (elective C); or world religions (elective E—with a stretch), However, they will need to be subsumed within a comprehensive scope and sequence of Catholic faith.

I’ve also met catechists who are taking an attitude similar to how many handled the new translation of the Roman Missal; it is being imposed, so we have to go along. I’d hope, however, that we can take a more positive posture. I’m convinced that we can turn implementing the FW to the advantage of putting in place a comprehensive, systematic curriculum which is both age appropriate and inculcated to contemporary youth culture, and that teaches “the whole story” of Catholic faith to adolescents today. Which brings me back to the pedagogy that I believe is required in order to implement the FW effectively.

Vatican II made the fairly dramatic statement that “the split between the faith which many Christians profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (*GS*, #43). In other words, the Council considered the separation that we Christians make between life and faith to rank alongside, if not ahead of, communism, individualism, materialism consumerism, and all the other candidates for “error” in 1965. I believe, we can still say the same today. It is simply imperative, then, that education in Catholic faith employ a pedagogy that constantly encourages its participants to integrate their “life” and “the faith” into “lived faith.”



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Looking to the pedagogy of Jesus in his public ministry, I recognize a constant dynamic by which he encouraged people to bring their lives to the faith he was teaching, and this faith to their lives to be lived. His *life to faith to life* pedagogy is epitomized in the discourse of the Risen Stranger with the two lost disciples on the Road to Emmaus. He begins with their own lives and their reflections on it, gives them persuasive access to the faith of their community that would encourage their recognition of him, and yet waits for them to come to see for themselves and then choose to return to their faith commitment in Jerusalem (check out Lk 24:13-35). As many readers of *Catechetical Leader* will recognize, my own life-long effort has been to articulate and encourage such a *life to faith to life* approach to education in faith (see my most recent book, *Will There Be Faith: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*, HarperCollins, 2011).

The reader might wonder if it is possible to teach all the dogmas, doctrines and moral imperatives of Catholic faith—and yet to integrate them with the “generative themes” (Freire’s phrase) of adolescent lives. In other words, do all of the teachings of Catholic faith really correlate, resonate, and likely integrate with the lives of young people today. Here I reach confession time, and perhaps “truth in advertising.” For almost three years now, and with the help of some friends, I’ve been in the throes of writing a full curriculum according to the FW (published as the *Credo* series from Veritas). We’re currently completing Book VI, with five already written. I can honestly say that I’ve yet to find a core teaching in the FW, i.e. in Catholic faith, that cannot be approached from and brought back into some life-centered and deeply relevant theme in the lives of adolescents.

Further, as the pedagogy invites them to bring their faith back into their daily lives and to personally integrate and appropriate it, the learning outcome is not simply an academic knowledge of Catholic teachings.

Beyond religious knowledge, they are invited to “make their own” the spiritual wisdom of Catholic faith, and come to “decision” about what it means for their lives. Through this dynamic, the pedagogy reaches beyond theology toward a spirituality that encourages a lived, living, and life-giving Christian Faith for themselves and “for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51).

Further, I’m convinced that the Christological emphasis which the FW requires is the best strategy we have to mount a persuasive apologetic for Catholic faith for this age level (and likely for all ages). Jesus still has a tremendous attraction for young people today. The “way, truth, and life” (Jn 14:6) that Jesus taught and modeled, and the path of discipleship made possible by God’s abundant grace through Christ’s paschal mystery, can be constantly presented as an extraordinarily life-giving possibility for young people to embrace. There was a time, perhaps, when the church’s teaching authority was a sufficient apologetic for Catholic faith—simply because “the church said so” — but it is far less so in our day. However, we

can mount a far more persuasive one around Jesus the Christ to entice the commitment of adolescents.

This persuasive apologetic is certainly possible within the FW. Instead of a curriculum that has a course on Jesus and then a course on the sacraments, and then a course on morality, and then a course on the church, the FW encourages a course on Jesus, and then courses on Jesus and the sacraments, Jesus and morality, Jesus and the church, etc. Again, from my own efforts at crafting such a curriculum, fully faithful to the FW, I’m finding it very possible to maintain the “Christological centrality” that the FW demands, and to suffuse it with a Christ-centered and persuasive apologetic for Catholic faith.

## HOW ABOUT PARISH PROGRAMS?

Much of the conversation and curriculum writing efforts thus far have been focused on the religion/theology curriculum of Catholic high schools. However, the bishops clearly intend the FW to be implemented throughout all adolescent catechesis, including parish programs. Having worked so closely now with the FW, I see this as a daunting task if the curriculum for a once-a-week parish program is expected to cover all the details (often repetitious) as outlined in the FW. However, it is entirely feasible for a curriculum designed for parish programs to implement the major themes, truths, and values required by the FW.

In other words, a curriculum for parish programs can embrace “the spirit” if not the “letter” of the FW. This can still give young people an in-depth knowledge of their Catholic faith, albeit not an exhaustive one. Vatican II and the CCC (repeatedly) refer to “a hierarchy of truths” to our faith; a parish program can certainly honor the ones that are constitutive of Catholic identity.

This means that the Office on Conformity to the Catechism will have to be willing to approve texts for parish programs that don’t do all the details in the FW and yet teach clearly the great high truths of our faith. For example, such a program would certainly teach the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, but might not be able to review the Councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon, etc. that hammered out this doctrine—as the FW now proposes. We certainly intend the *Credo* series to have a FW complete curriculum for adolescent catechesis in parishes.

In conclusion, with a pedagogy that engages the lives of young people, with a Christ-centered and persuasive apologetic, I’m convinced that we can implement the FW in ways that presage a new day for adolescent catechesis in US Catholic high schools and parishes. Onward! ■

**Thomas H. Groome** is Professor of Theology and Religious Education at Boston College, and Chair of the Department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry. His most recent book is *Will There Be Faith* (HarperCollins, 2011). He is General Editor of the *Credo* series from Veritas, an adolescent catechetical curriculum based on the United States bishops’ Framework.



# CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

## ELECTING NEW NCCL OFFICERS

It has been almost three years since NCCL gathered in Detroit and elected the current slate of officers who have guided the organization since the closing of that event on April 30, 2009. At the upcoming 76<sup>th</sup> NCCL Annual Conference and Exposition, most of the members present will be voting for the new slate of officers that will be leading the organization from 2012 until 2015. If not present, you can vote by absentee ballot.

This is the second election when both professional and general members will be exercising their right to vote for a slate of officers. The first time two slates of officers were presented to the NCCL membership was in 2003. It was the result of NCCL 2000. Previously, the President held a one-year term but served the previous year as President-Elect and as Past President in the year following his or her Presidency. The constant turnover of leadership was one of several reasons that led to the change allowing an elected slate of officers to serve for three consecutive years.

As a member-driven organization, your participation in this election is necessary to ensure that the values and beliefs you hold regarding the mission of NCCL be vested in the slate of officers you feel can bring these principles and ideals of the catechetical ministry to fruition. To not participate and exercise your right to vote is to weaken the responsibility that has been accorded every professional and general member of NCCL.

If you are interested in the rights and responsibilities of the various types of membership, please consult the membership chart at the end of this article.

### VOTING CRITERIA

Since the last election was three years ago and we have many new members, it may be helpful to review the process and the criteria for voting.

- + Each *(Arch)Diocesan/Eparchial Member Office* may cast **one institutional vote**.
- + Each *Professional Member* may cast **one individual vote**.
- + Each *General Member* may cast **one individual vote**.

### ELECTION PROCESS

+ On May 7, the opening day of the Conference, members will be invited to hear from each of the two slates of officers during the 1:00 pm NCCL business meeting. The presentations will take place from 1:15 pm–2:00 pm, and include time for questions. All conference attendees are invited to both the business meeting and the slate presentations.

+ Any questions pertaining to membership category or vote status will be addressed by the Membership Committee as determined by the NCCL bylaws. If you believe there is

an error in your membership type, please contact Associate Director Gina Garroway (202) 884-9753 or [ggarroway@nccl.org](mailto:ggarroway@nccl.org) as soon as possible so that errors can be resolved prior to the conference and exposition.

+ In order for a slate to be elected, the slate must win a simple majority of **both** the individual votes cast and the institutional votes cast, including absentee ballots of both types.

+ **Individual** ballots may be picked up by all professional and general members at registration. Members will receive three color-coded ballots, marked **First Ballot**, **Second Ballot**, and **Third Ballot**.

+ **First** Ballot voting will take place immediately following the slate presentations on Monday, May 7, from 2:00 pm until 6:30 pm that evening and again on Tuesday morning, May 8, from 8:00 am to 9:30 am.

+ **Institutional** ballots for the **First** Ballot may be picked up at the registration desk until 1:00 pm on Monday, May 7. After that, institutional ballots may be picked up at the voting station. If a second ballot is needed, institutional ballots can be picked up on Tuesday, May 8, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and again from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm. If a third ballot is required, institutional ballots can be picked up Wednesday afternoon, May 9, from 2:15 pm to 6:00 pm.

+ If neither slate carries a majority of **both** the individual vote and the institutional vote, then a **Second** Ballot is required. This announcement will be made at the end of the Tuesday morning keynote presentations. Actual voting will be preceded by a 30 minute Q & A with the two slates from 5:00 pm to 5:30 pm on Tuesday, May 8. Ballots will be accepted on Tuesday from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm and again Wednesday morning, May 9 from 7:30 am to 9:30 am. Absentee ballots will not be counted in the second round of balloting.

+ If a **Third** Ballot is required because neither slate carries a majority of **both** the individual vote and the institutional vote, an announcement will be made at the 11:30 am NCCL business meeting on Wednesday, May 9. Ballots will be accepted immediately following the awards luncheon until 6:15 pm and again Thursday morning, May 10, from 7:30 am to 9:30 am. Absentee ballots will not be counted in the third round of balloting. The installation of officers will be conducted within the closing commissioning service at noon on Thursday, May 10.

### ABSENTEE VOTING

According to **Appendix I** of the NCCL Governance Policies:

Concerning Institutional and Individual votes, absentee ballots must be requested from the National Office no

less than twenty-one business days before the opening of the annual conference. Absentee ballots will be provided to those members eligible to vote. Any question concerning eligibility is to be determined by the Membership Committee. The Executive Director of NCCL must be in receipt of all absentee ballots at least ten business days before the opening of the annual meeting.

Therefore, the *last day* to request an absentee ballot is **Thursday, April 5, 2012**. Ballots received *after* the close of business on **Friday, April 20, 2012** will not be counted.

## PROXY VOTING

According to *Appendix I* of the NCCL Governance Policies, the proxy vote is only accorded to persons casting the **institutional** vote:

Concerning **Institutional** votes, each member Arch/Diocese is entitled to cast a single institutional vote in balloting for NCCL Officers. This vote is ordinarily cast by the director of the Arch/Diocesan Catechetical Office. For whatever reason, should the Arch/Diocesan Director be unable to be present to cast the Arch/Diocesan Institutional vote, s/he may designate another person who is a voting member of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership to cast the Institutional vote by proxy. The designated proxy must be a member of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, who is eligible to vote in her/his own right.

The Executive Director of NCCL must be in receipt of all proxy designations at least ten business days before the opening of the annual meeting. The Arch/Diocesan Director in question shall send signed written notification to the NCCL Executive Director if s/he will not be able to cast the Institutional Vote for Officers and shall designate a proxy for the purposes of the Institutional vote. The Executive Director shall confirm in writing receipt of the proxy designation and the eligibility of the proxy designate and make the necessary arrangements for authorization of the designated proxy to cast the Institutional proxy vote at the annual meeting.

Personal votes must be cast in person or by absentee ballot. They do not enjoy the benefit of proxy.

Ineligible for service as a proxy are board members, members of slates running for office, and members of the Leadership Discernment Committee.

All proxy designations deemed eligible to cast the Institutional vote must be received no later than the close of business on Friday, April 20, 2012.

If you have any questions regarding membership or voting, please contact Associate Director Gina Garroway at (202) 884-9753 or [ggarroway@nccl.org](mailto:ggarroway@nccl.org). She will be able to answer your questions and also assist you in registering for the conference.

There are three membership types: Professional, General, Associate.

Membership Type:	Professional	General	Associate
<b>Criteria:</b>			
1) Exercise catechetical leadership at national, diocesan/eparchial, parish, or academic level; <i>OR</i> , author of catechetical materials; <i>OR</i> , bear catechetical responsibilities in the publishing community.	Yes	Yes	Does not meet this criteria.
2) Have graduate degree in catechesis, religious studies, or a related field; <i>OR</i> , have an appointment to a diocesan/eparchial catechetical position by an appropriate ecclesiastical authority, <i>OR</i> , have been professionally certified by NCCL as a PCL; <i>OR</i> , have successfully completed a diocesan/eparchial or university catechetical formation process based on the <i>National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers</i> , including the specific standards for Parish Catechetical Leaders or Youth Ministers. (This includes processes accredited by the USCCB Committee on Certification and Accreditation or other processes approved by NCCL.)	Yes	Does not meet this criteria.	Does not meet this criteria.
<b>Rights:</b>			
May retain their membership type (by paying for an individual membership) when they retire from active catechetical leadership.	Yes	Yes	Yes
May serve on committees for which they are eligible (according to the Bylaws or Policies)	Yes	Yes	Yes
May hold office	Yes		
May vote, except on bylaw changes	Yes	Yes	
May vote on bylaw changes	Yes		

## IN OTHER WORDS:

**Diocesan directors and staff** paying institutional membership are Professional members if they exercise catechetical leadership or Associate members if they are support staff and not involved in catechetical leadership.

**PCLs** are either Professional or General (depending on Criteria #2).

**Academics** (college professors) are Professional.

**Corporate employees** and **authors** with catechetical responsibilities are either Professional or General (depending on Criteria #2). If they do not have catechetical responsibilities, they are Associate members.

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# NCCL Officer Slates

## SLATE: CHERYL J. FOURNIER AND COLLEAGUES

When we think about NCCL, we think of an organization that is dedicated to the mission of evangelization and catechesis in the church today. We think of an organization comprised of colleagues who care deeply about the work in which they have been called to be engaged. We are reminded of those who have gone before us and left a lasting legacy of advancing the gospel in this day so that tomorrow's generations will also know the good news. We are reminded that NCCL is *our organization*; it is member-driven, member-owned, and member-served. We are humbled and honored to present ourselves as a slate to serve you, our brothers and sisters in ministry to the gospel.

Our backgrounds are varied; yet we find strength in our diversity and unity in the faith we witness and profess. We come from various parts of the country with a variety of catechetical and ministerial experiences. We represent you and we are committed to fostering greater growth in ourselves, in our ministry, and in our organization. These are difficult times. We know well the financial issues that face parishes, dioceses, and institutions of higher learning, not to mention our own NCCL. We have seen the reorganization of offices and experienced the transitions that come with restructuring. We know the challenges of meeting the needs of ethnically diverse communities, as well as the reality of ministering in urban and rural settings alike. We are here to serve...with hearts, minds, and hands.

Our shared passion for catechesis keeps us grounded in the reality that the word of God needs to continue to be spoken and broken open for generations present and those yet to come. We realize that changing times call for changing methodologies, not only in catechesis, but in the way we conduct our business as an organization. The tools of our age need to be employed even greater than they are at present so that what we do can be done not only with greater efficiency, but also with wider nets being cast to all who share in this ministry of the word.

As a whole, our slate is very committed to NCCL. Each of us singly and the four of us collectively have given a great deal

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## SLATE: BILL MILLER AND COLLEAGUES

We are very committed to the current goals and objectives of NCCL. Each member of this slate has played an active role in creating them as a member of the Representative Council.

One of our most important challenges is to find ways to work together within our own organization, in order to be as effective as possible in living our mission. Before he passed away, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin launched an effort to find common ground within our faith tradition and build on it. He proposed bringing together groups of people who do not always see things "eye to eye," for the purpose of determining how we can all work together to best realize what we all desire; that is, the construction of the Reign of God right here on earth. We believe that, as an organization, we are making progress in doing just that. However, we still have more work to do so that every member of NCCL feels a part of an organization that is dedicated to excellence in catechesis and respect for one another, within a context of faith, hope, and love; thereby modeling within our organization, that which we desire for those we serve.

We believe in helping to equip people to "do their part" to contribute to building God's kingdom. This involves helping them to integrate the intellectual (thinking) as well as the emotional (feeling) aspects of faith development. We are all "People of the Story." We have significant stories to tell, and those stories are all, in various ways, connected to "The Greatest Story" as presented in Sacred Scripture and the teachings of our church. We must strive to motivate all of God's people to begin to make the connections between their stories and the paschal mystery. This involves using every tool at our disposal: our knowledge, our faith, our strength of will, and every ounce of creativity that we can muster in order to evangelize and catechize. It means using the very best tools that technology has to offer, and it also means raising the necessary funds to do these things while exercising prudent stewardship. Our slate brings considerable knowledge and experience to every aspect of the mission of NCCL. Working in conjunction with the Board, the Representative Council, and the Executive Director, we will serve you (our constitu-

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of our time, talent, and treasure to support and enhance the work of our organization. We have all engaged in the work of a variety of committees and have assumed numerous roles in service to our common good. We know how important the voice of NCCL is in shaping the catechetical agenda of the country not only for today, but for tomorrow as well and we pledge ourselves to enhancing that voice in any way that we can.

We are concerned about the financial stability of NCCL. Our organization needs us all to be good stewards of our resources and, at the same time, we need to be creative in bolstering revenue. We believe that good stewardship of all of our resources, including our service to and for our membership, will enhance our bottom line. We will actively seek to enhance both our financial well-being and the well-being of our organization as a whole by giving due attention to all of the strategic initiatives of NCCL.

As a slate, we will do our best to serve you. We are humbled to have been called to consider leadership in this organization. As we move forward, we promise our continued prayer for each of you and for NCCL as a whole; we ask for your prayer for us as well. Together may we further the kingdom.

## CHERYL J. FOURNIER, DMIN, FOR PRESIDENT



I have been engaged in catechetical ministry my entire adult life. I began as a parish catechist right out of high school and find myself serving as a parish catechist still. (I serve as a third grade catechist at St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish in Des Moines, Iowa, which is a very ethnically diverse community comprised of many refugee peoples.) My life's work has led me to serve as a liturgical music teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio, a teacher of theology in Catholic secondary schools, a parish catechetical leader and parish life coordinator in rural communities in Southern Illinois, a retreat minister in St. Louis, Missouri, diocesan director of catechetical ministries in Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, and diocesan director of evangelization, adult faith formation, and lay ecclesial ministry in Des Moines, Iowa. It has also been my privilege to facilitate a great number of courses for the University of Dayton and the *Institute for Pastoral Initiatives* through the *Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)* as well as teach for Wheeling Jesuit University and Creighton University. Through the years, the ministerial and catechetical experiences I have had have shaped my person and my prayer. I am changed and called to constant conversion of heart through the work of my head, heart, and hands.

Since becoming a member of NCCL, I have actively served the organization in a variety of ways: as a member of the rep-

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ents) so that all of us, working together, can continue to build a vibrant NCCL—an organization that will help shape the future of catechesis.

As members of NCCL, we must work diligently to recruit and train those who will follow us in this endeavor. Moreover, we must never forget that we are called to be “advocates” for the ministry of catechesis. The catechetical documents are filled with excellent rationale and sound theological concepts that support us in our ministry. We must effectively proclaim these principles, as we dialogue with bishops, pastors, and other church leaders to make sure that catechesis is given the place of prominence that it deserves in our church. Furthermore, we have a duty and a responsibility, as members of this organization, to continually invite catechetical leaders to join NCCL, by demonstrating to them that NCCL, guided by the Holy Spirit, represents catechesis at its best. Together, we will become an even stronger voice for effective catechetical ministry.

In this process, we will make sure that no one is forgotten. Our church in this country includes people of many different languages, many different cultures, and many different levels of physical, emotional, and intellectual ability. All must be welcomed and embraced, and all must be given the same opportunities to hear the word of God proclaimed and explained by the church.

NCCL today stands upon the shoulders of thousands of dedicated people of faith who have championed the cause of catechesis in our church for over 75 years; now, this is our time. As disciples of our Lord we must never forget God's words, delivered to the prophet Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you...” (Jer. 1:5). We have been “consecrated” for a wonderful, challenging, and grace-filled task. Let us move forward together.

## BILL MILLER FOR PRESIDENT



I am honored to be running for President of NCCL, an organization that is, in my opinion, one of the most important in our church.

I began my ministry in 1971, as a Chaplain's Assistant in the United States Air Force. After four years of service, I joined an ecumenical Christian theatre company called Covenant Players, where I met my wife to be, Marilyn. We were married three years later, shortly after I had enrolled in the Master's program for Religious Education at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Since receiving my Master's in 1981, I have worked in a number of catechetical positions in three different diocesan offices as well as serving as a Parish Catechetical Leader for a three-parish cooperative ministry cluster near Des Moines, Iowa.

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representative council representing the Baltimore-Washington Province and the Province of Dubuque; as a member of a variety of committees including, Recruitment and Retention, Communications, Technology, Adult Faith Formation, and the *Catechetical Leader* Editorial Board. Additionally, I serve as a member of the Advocacy and Marketing Committee for the *Alliance for Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers* representing NCCL on that task group. And, it was my pleasure last May to assist with the production of the video, *The Initiative*, which debuted at NCCL's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner and celebrated our history as an organization.

Clearly, I care deeply about our organization and the potential we share. We need to be a voice for the work of catechesis in the church. We need to continue to strive for excellence in resources of all kinds – web based, print, and people. NCCL has done a great deal to raise the professionalism of our profession and I believe there is still more to be done. I look forward to blending my voice with all of yours and leading a clarion charge built on the shoulders of those who have gone before us to continue to bring to the heart of us all the mission and vision of evangelization and catechesis. May we echo the living word of God together!

## JOSÉ M. AMAYA FOR VICE PRESIDENT



In 2002, I joined the ranks of catechetical leadership as Director of Religious Education in a very multicultural parish with a school ministry. I lead St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church bilingual religious education program with a vision of unity through diversity. The program has grown exponentially from a couple of hundred participants to over 500 in my five-year tenure.

In 2007, I joined the Archdiocese of Washington Office for Religious Education. As Coordinator for Hispanic Catechesis and Catechist Formation, I have had the opportunity to serve as a bridge for leaders from the various cultures. I strengthened the professional and spiritual skills of Hispanic catechetical leaders and increased catechist certification working in partnership with lay leaders and clergy.

I was elected as one of six Animators for the Forum on Catechesis with Hispanics on May 2011. This opportunity has moved me to reflect on the face of the church in the United States and how this church supports the leadership to be effective disciples and evangelists in light of the new evangelization.

As Vice President of NCCL, I will seek to work with the leadership team to further strengthen the vision and mission of the member-driven organization. I will promote a catechetical ministry that is culturally competent to collaborate with

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I am currently the Secretary for Catechesis for the Diocese of Cleveland (Cincinnati Province). I have served in this position for the past four-and-a-half years. In my current role, I have responsibility for overseeing parish religious education for people of all ages in the diocese. I also supervise Newman Center campus ministers at seven institutions of higher learning in the greater Cleveland area.

My career, which spans 40 years, has afforded me the opportunity to actually perform every type of catechetical ministry that I now supervise. I am currently responsible for 15 full and part-time staff members and a budget of approximately one million dollars.

One of the greatest blessings of my career has been the opportunity to minister in three very different dioceses: Des Moines (Iowa), Toledo (Ohio), and Cleveland (Ohio). These range in size from very small and predominantly rural to large and primarily urban/suburban. I am thankful to have such a broad range of experience in various manifestations of the “diocesan church.”

I consider myself to be a person of integrity with great passion for and considerable experience in catechetics. I believe that gratitude is one of the greatest virtues and, in that regard, I am most thankful for the gift of faith that I have received from our God, and the many ways in which Catholicism has helped me to nurture and strengthen that faith.

Over the years, I have discovered that my personality and temperament are well-suited for collaboration. Thus, I have become known as a person who builds bridges across the spaces which often divide people who are involved in similar ministries in our church. For example, in my current ministry with the Diocese of Cleveland, I have worked hard to facilitate dialogue and action involving such diverse departments as: Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Marriage and Family Life Ministry, Evangelization, and Protection of Children and Youth. Our Office of Catechetical Services is now actively engaged in projects that involve working with each of these departments, among others.

These are challenging times in our world, in our nation, and in our church. However, challenging times often present great opportunities for those who do not allow themselves to become paralyzed by fear. I believe that this is our time – a time to move forward with a passionate commitment to sound catechesis, in a spirit of faith, hope, and love.

## ENEDINA SAUCEDO FOR VICE PRESIDENT

Last year, we celebrated NCCL's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a catechetical organization. The goals and objectives proposed in the Strategic Plan of 1936 have borne fruit and we see the fruit of that labor in the structure and accomplishments of

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bishops and organizations, both national and international, through a spirit of unity through diversity in the context of the new evangelization in the United States. I will join NCCL's team in the effort to use the certification standards effectively to nurture the spiritual, professional, and personal development of our diocesan and parish catechetical leaders.

I envision a National Conference for Catechetical Leadership that is competent to gather the best leaders from the tapestry of cultures in the church of today that challenges and strengthens the vision of catechesis, fostering unity through diversity and engaging in collaborative conversation to find the best ways to serve the needs of the catechetical leadership in the Catholic Church in the United States.

## MARY JO WAGGONER FOR TREASURER



I am the Director of the Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry for the Diocese of San Diego. I have a BA in Spanish, an MEd in Education, and an MA in Pastoral Theology. I have been involved in NCCL since the summer of 2000 when

I became aware of the organization as the Associate Director for Hispanic Catechesis for the Diocese of San Diego.

I was the Representative for the Hispanic Voice on Representative Council for Region XI for six years and then voted on the NCCL Board of Directors as a Board Member-at-Large two years ago. I am the current hostess for the 76th annual conference for NCCL for San Diego 2012. I have served on the Multicultural Committee; I am currently on the Planning Committee for the 2012 Annual Meeting and the Standards and Certification Committee. I have been a member of NOCH since 2000 and on its Executive Board. I am also one of the founders of the Forum of Catechesis with Hispanics, and was on the Animators team for three years.

I am committed to NCCL as a national catechetical organization because I believe that all diocesan directors, diocesan staff, and especially parish catechetical leaders need to have a professional venue to learn together, to share best practices, and dream new visions for catechesis and evangelization. I am honored to be on the slate with Cheryl Fournier and appreciate the opportunity to serve as the treasurer. I was the bookkeeper for a school and parish for nine years before I came to the diocese. I will work diligently to keep NCCL members informed as to the solvency of NCCL and its plans to create financial security.

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the NCCL today. Once a dream for the Catholic Church in the United States, it is now a reality; an organization dedicated to evangelization and the catechetical mission and supported by its members.

As a professional member of NCCL, I have been invited to serve NCCL and the Catholic Church by participating in a slate for election to the executive board of NCCL for the next three years. I bring the gifts that God has given me to share with the members of NCCL, to develop them and make them shine for the benefit of the church.

My first catechetical experience was with my own children and those at my local church. My formal training began in 1994 at the local Diocesan Institute where I became a religious educator. In 1999, I was advised by my pastor to get a formal education by pursuing a degree. In 2000, I became a Parish Catechetical Leader in the Diocese of San Diego while working on my education. After receiving a BA in Telecommunications in 2003, I began a Master's in Education, which eventually became a Master's in Religious Education. I was awarded that degree in 2007. I became Associate Director for the Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry for the Diocese of San Diego in 2008.

I have been a member of NCCL since 2005, and have participated in numerous NCCL projects. One such project was translating into Spanish "Knowing Jesus and His Message" (a resource for catechetical leaders) and presenting that product at NCCL. I also have translated the CL weekly, written by Lee Nagel, into Spanish. Moreover, I have been an Animator for the Forum for Catechesis with Hispanics (FCH) and an Animator for the NCCL Diocesan Staff Forum. For the past three years, I have represented Spanish-speaking individuals from California at the NCCL Representative Council.

The 2009-2011 executive committee has challenged the upcoming 2012-2015 executive committee to carry on their work, setting forth a strategic plan that responds to the challenges of the new evangelization. I am particularly interested in developing programs that apply to Goal Six of the Strategic Plan. It seeks to empower catechetical leaders to more effectively minister in a multicultural and multilingual church, and provide intentional opportunities for people of diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds to interact under the auspices of NCCL. Our country has become a land of various cultural backgrounds and languages, and I see the need to interact with those cultures, find the riches they bring to the evangelization and catechetical mission, and make those a part of NCCL. I wish to help make the beauty of our Catholic faith welcome in the hearts and minds of all God's people.

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## MARY FRAN CASSIDY FOR SECRETARY



I have more than 35 years of professional experience as an educator and musician, including 23 years as Director of Religious Education for St. Brigid of Kildare Parish in Dublin, Ohio. My daily responsibilities include organizing and directing programs within the parish for preschoolers through adults, developing resources for teachers, implementing adult faith enrichment classes, workshops, and retreats, instructing sacramental classes for parents and collaborating with the pastor, deacons, school principal, and other members of the parish staff. In addition, as a part of the liturgy team of the parish, I collaborate in liturgy planning, share responsibilities as an organist, am a member of the adult choir, and cantor. My passion is handing on the faith to all the generations.

Music is a big part of my life. I founded and direct *The Dublin Singers*, the community chorus of Dublin. I also present annual choral and choreography workshops for the singers, and plan and direct an annual Christmas concert and spring show. Music feeds my soul and strengthens me for the work of the gospel.

I value the work of NCCL and I look forward to the many ways we serve the church together. As a catechetical leader, I strive to share theological insights and practical ways to bring the practice of our faith to life in the lives of those whose lives I touch. I envision NCCL as THE organization for all levels of catechetical leadership in the United States. NCCL should be the leader in innovation as well as the preserver of catechetical ministry in conjunction with the USCCB. I try to lead by example, giving my best effort to every duty and responsibility. I also try to allow those whom I lead to exercise their own gifts and talents for the goal at hand.

I am married to Tom Cassidy, who up until this year was one of my catechists, completing 15 years of service in that role. He is also a member of St. Brigid Choir and *The Dublin singers*. (He and I sing together.) We have three children: a son who lives in San Francisco with his wife and sons, a daughter who is deceased, and another daughter who lives in Dublin. We also have three cats that remind us to “slow down, stretch, find a place in the sun, stay calm, and take a nap.” I have not quite caught on to the first and last, but do the rest rather well!

## JOANIE MCKEOWN FOR TREASURER



Our experiences shape us. They influence how we see the present and envision the future. Born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, with two Catholic colleges and five Catholic parishes within walking distance, gave me a foundational experience of what it means to be Catholic. Earning a BA in Mathematics and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Catholic universities and teaching math at a Catholic college-prep high school, I was living the Catholic values that were integral to my life.

When I moved to the Diocese of Superior, I witnessed a different way of being Catholic, one that was more relational and less educational. As the parish bookkeeper and administrative assistant in a three-parish cluster, I learned the intricacies of working with individual parish budgets and combined cluster budgets. It was heartening to see the most financially stable parish willing to pay more than its “fair share” of the cluster expenses and to have individuals donating thousands of dollars to the other parishes when one parish wanted to add indoor plumbing and the other needed a new furnace. How individuals and an organization manage their budgets can be a ministry in itself.

After earning an MA in Pastoral Ministry, I began ministering in clustered parishes in a new way. As the only professional staff member, I served as the DRE/ Youth Minister/ Liturgist/ Lay Leader of Prayer. As one of the few PCLs in the diocese with an MA, I led adult faith formation sessions in other parishes and mentored their CREs. Decreasing budgets have led more parishes to hire dedicated parents to be their CREs, so my ministry as a Parish Catechetical Leader has shifted to being an educator, mentor, consultant, and adviser to CREs, and to assisting with adult faith formation. This is slightly different from the typical role of a rural PCL, but in rural dioceses a “one-size fits all” approach rarely works.

All of these experiences have shaped my vision of the catechetical ministry and NCCL’s role. NCCL needs to remain financially stable so that it can become a stronger voice for catechetical leadership in this country. Over the last two years, NCCL has taken positive steps into social media; this needs to continue so that members can gather electronically when they are unable to gather in person. And, as a certifying agent for PCLs, NCCL is in a position to promote solid formation of all catechetical leaders – formation that increases our knowledge about our Catholic faith and leads us to develop a deeper relationship with our Lord, living as faith-filled people of God.

*continued on page 17*



BILL MILLER SLATE *continued from page 16*

## LINDA STRYKER FOR SECRETARY



As a member of the NCCL Representative Council for the past five years, Co-Chairman of the Communications Committee, and past member of the Membership Committee, I am well aware of and grateful for the passion we all have as catechetical ministers. I would like to continue to work as a member of NCCL to make each catechetical leader, at every level, more effective in our ministries by helping to develop and/or “spread the good word” concerning the very best resources available to us. Moreover, I feel strongly that we must work together as an organization to advocate for the importance of catechesis as a vital ministry in the church. Because I believe that NCCL is particularly important to the ministry of catechesis, I would enjoy using my creativity, my energy, and my passion to help make NCCL an organization that is indispensable to catechetical leaders, something they simply “can’t do without!”

I live in Omaha, Nebraska, have been married to my husband for 34 years, and have three adult daughters who are all active in our Catholic faith. I received my BS and MS degrees in elementary education from the University of Nebraska. In 2001, I became the catechetical leader at St. Margaret Mary Parish, in the Archdiocese of Omaha, where I continue to minister today. Shortly after beginning that position, I decided to pursue a Master’s Degree in Pastoral Ministry at Creighton University, which I completed in 2007. I have been a volunteer for a number of organizations, including our church, for over 40 years, serving on boards and actively working in a variety of capacities. These experiences have taught me numerous ways to think creatively, establish goals and implement them effectively. I believe that as members of NCCL we must work together, assisting one another, as we strive to help all members of our church grow in the faith.

I am delighted to be able to serve on the NCCL Representative Council, representing Parish Catechetical Leaders in the Archdiocese of Omaha (and nationally). I would be equally happy to serve as the next Secretary for the organization, and I pledge to use my pastoral gifts in order to perform that ministry well. NCCL is a leader in assisting parish and diocesan staff members as we evangelize and catechize; however, we can do even more to support individuals and families everywhere as they strive to live lives of faith.

# Invitations to Growth: Ways to Promote Adult Christian Formation

Joseph P. Sinwell



After attending a challenging Scripture course, parish members in a suburban area asked for more. Members were inspired by a half-day retreat, including Bible meditations, shared discussions, time for silence, and group prayer.

Members of both a small parish and a large suburban parish were reflecting on the Sunday readings in small groups.

Members of another parish promoted a spiritual book club; the success of this program motivated their choices.

How were the people attracted to these particular faith events? What types of publicity were used to attract them?

A wide variety of reasons, including personal ones, attracted them, with a key reason being that the programs were zealously promoted. Effective promotion is a fundamental element in planning a successful and well-attended event.

This article will explore the promotion of adult faith formation and discuss the following:

1. Promote adult catechesis because it is important.
2. Promotion cannot be done alone.
3. Avoid church language.
4. Use a variety of methods
  - a. Print media
  - b. Technology
5. Resources

## PROMOTE ADULT CATECHESIS BECAUSE IT IS IMPORTANT

The church in the United States has consistently restated the importance of adult Christian formation several times in documents and efforts since 1968 with the publication of *To Teach as Jesus Did*. *The National Catechetical Directory* (NCD) explicitly states:

The catechesis of adults is the principal form of catechesis because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibility and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fullest form (48A).

*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (OHWB) emphasizes that

adult catechesis virtually supports the mission of the church both in society and within the church. “Adult faith formation is essential to who we are and what we do as church and must be situated, not at periphery of the church’s educational mission, but at its center” (42).

Thus adult catechesis stresses that catechesis is a lifelong process of spiritual growth and vital for action.

## PROMOTION CANNOT BE DONE ALONE

The whole adult formation process needs many people from the parish to serve on a committee. Including planning persons with a background in advertising, promotions, and/or graphic design is wise. Their skills and knowledge can be utilized as decisions are made throughout the process.

Personal contact works best, and parishioners who are willing to call and personally invite or encourage others to participate are one of the best resources available. If eight people are on the committee, just think what the results would be if each one contacted five or six friends or acquaintances to personally invite them. The committee will then divide tasks: news releases, brochures, e-mail messages, etc. Information also needs to be placed on websites.

## AVOID CHURCH LANGUAGE

The language and symbols of the church are theological in discourse and usually do not lend themselves to clarity. Often members of a parish do not recognize the symbols and language used today, so simple and direct word choice works best for advertising.

Scriptural words, phrases, and theological terms may not precisely communicate the topics or programs being promoted. We fall into the church language like *RCIA*, *dogmas*, *spiritual vision*, *incarnation*, *paschal*, and *exegesis*. Instead, simpler words need to be used like *living spiritually*, and *the presence of God*, and *Easter*.

To reemphasize, promotional materials need to make sense, be clear, precise, and concrete to those who regularly attend church as well as those who do not. If the language of promotion and publicity aims over the people’s heads, it will not be attractive or effective.

## USE A VARIETY OF METHODS

Using a variety of media is the best way to achieve the maximum amount of attention from your audience—young adults, middle aged, seniors, youth, etc. Depending on which group you are trying to reach, you can modify the way you advertise. A simple press release can be prepared for each group, which includes the topic, process, date, time, length, and location.

Technology for young adults: use e-mail, ask to set up a Facebook page, and provide information on your parish website. Be a little different each week. Young adult programs work best if they are promoted electronically, such as through e-mail or social networking sites. E-mail lists need to be obtained, retained, and updated. If a flyer is sent via e-mail, be sure to use bright colors and font to spark interest.

The parish bulletin can be used as well. Other options include placing notices in eateries and grocery stores; sending notices to neighboring newspapers; using cable TV for public access for events and announcements. Be sure to find out when deadlines are and the time cable access begins.

Hopefully, the parish has a website. A link can be added so parishioners can access the event being offered. Other parishes can be asked to access and can be connected to the website. With a committee that has more technology, a short podcast describing the program or interview can also be made available.

The committee can divide the tasks.

These annotated resources will be helpful in promoting adult faith formation:

*Faith Formation: A National Study* by David Riley and Jack McBride. Washington, D.C.: National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, 2006, (\$8.95).

This study provides best practices from parishes and emphasizes that promotion and publicity are keys to success and offers lists of effective methods. Publicity and promotion must be multi-faceted and organized.

*Guide to Adult Faith Formation* by Neil Parent, Notre Dame, Ave Maria Press, 2009.

The book describes ways to choose a team, process for training, principles of adult faith formation, and practical tips on planning, including promotion. This book is a practical pastoral work and provides multiple resources.

*A Whole New Mind: Why The Right Brainers Will Rule The Future* by Daniel H. Pink, NY: Riverhead Press, 2006.

This *New York Times* best seller offers different strategies to solve problems like promotion and publicity: “Create inspiration board.” “Put publicity

timeline and designs on table.”

*Technology Tools for Ministry: No Mousing Around* by Tim Welch, New London, CT.: Twenty Third Publications, 2006.

This work for beginners provides a variety of ways of reaching people with technology including tips for e-mail, Internet and podcasts.

“The Church’s Way of Speaking” by Robert Louis Wilken. *Handing on the Faith: The Church’s Mission and Challenge* by Robert P. Imbello (ed.), NY: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2006.

This article points out the difficult use of church language for attracting persons to adult faith formation opportunities. The promotional language in promotion needs to be relevant and simple, thought provoking, and practically concise.

Adults will come to opportunities if they are informed, warmly invited, and comfortably allowed time to fit into their schedule. The more ways employed facilitates this invitation and opportunity. Promote. Adult religious formation is lifelong. The invitation should be attractive, precise, and timely. Every means possible for publicity will promote participation for growth in faith. ■

**Joseph P. Sinwell**, DMin, has more than 40 years of experience in adult faith formation. He is an author and former diocesan director of religious education.

*Adults will come to opportunities if they are informed, warmly invited, and comfortably allowed time to fit into their schedule.*

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# The Development of Catechesis in 20th Century America

Jonathan Morse



*The following article is the conclusion of a two-part series explaining the history of catechesis in the United States. Part one can be read in the September 2011 issue.*

The United States has never existed in isolation, thus developments in catechesis throughout the world have always brought new influence to the church in America.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group of catechists gathered together in Munich and formed the Munich Catechetical Society; its goal was to improve catechesis. The belief was that subject matter should not only be imprinted on a child's memory, but also grasped by understanding. This was accomplished by changing methodology. No longer would the catechist begin with the Catechism and explain question by question with illustrative Bible stories, followed by memorization, which was called *text explanation*. Instead, the movement was to *text development*. It was important to proceed from what was known to unknown as common in the rules of pedagogy. All the senses (imagination, intellect, will, affect, and the body of the child) were to be involved in this new learning. Since children learn in stages, the shared belief was that catechesis should also occur in stages. The steps of the lesson were presentation – presenting the topic through a story or pictures – and then deduction; the idea being that one can deduce the abstract elements of the doctrine. This was followed by a summarization of the main points. Instead of concluding with memorization, the lesson concluded with “How do I apply this to my life?”

This Munich group led to the first catechetical congress in Vienna in 1903. From 1905 to 1971, congresses were held regularly. These weeks brought together the best Catholic and Protestant minds to discuss methodology.

In the 1930s, Josef A. Jungmann, SJ, came to the forefront and stated that a true herald of the Good News needed more than orthodoxy of doctrine. If catechists were to be effective, they had to be witnesses of God's love and have a clear understanding of the core of the Christian message, the *kerygma*. Jungman perceived a unity to scripture, liturgy, doctrine, and the totality of Christian life.

In 1935, a Catechetical Documentary Centre (*Lumen Vitae*), an international library and documentary service, was opened by the Jesuit faculty at Louvain, Belgium. From here, the *four source theories of catechesis* developed: scripture, liturgy, doctrine, and Christian life. When combined, these four elements make up true catechesis, which not only asks the participants to comprehend, but also to integrate into daily living.

Into this scene came Sr. Maria De La Cruz Aymes, a member of the Society of Helpers. She had lived through the persecution of Catholics in Mexico and was taught catechism by Archbishop Ruiz y Flores. Sr. Maria became a catechist in the underground Mexican church. Her contributions came to world-wide nature in 1954 when she arrived in the United States on a temporary assignment as Supervisor of Catechetics in the Archdiocesan Department of Education. She was to replace a Helper in San Francisco. Her duty was to evaluate the quality of the weekly religion classes offered to Catholic children attending public schools. She began visiting parishes, then listed her observations which included the catechist was not well prepared, class often was reduced to the drilling of prayers, too many children of different ages were crowded into one class, attendance and discipline fluctuated, and no attractive catechetical material suited to the age of the children was available.

Sr. Maria reported her findings and was asked for suggestions. She started evening classes to train catechists and developed weekly lessons for children. Her texts for classes were produced on black and white mimeographs or purple ditto sheets. As the costs expanded, the director suggested she find a publisher.

One day a man came to her office and asked to see her works, so she gave him a copy. He wrote back, “So much work, so poorly done.” Those words caused Sr. Maria to ask the superintendent, “Who did this man think he was?” Monsignor Brown replied, “He's Johannes Hofinger, the most important theoretician in catechetics today. That is what he is teaching at the University of Notre Dame. You might actually learn something from him.” Sr. Maria agreed and invited Fr. Hofinger to San Francisco. He mentored her to outline the goals and content of a book for catechists and a book for students in grades one through six. This became the *On Our Way* series.



Fr. Hofinger read and critiqued every lesson. She also accepted the personal advice of Fr. Josef Jungmann, SJ, the founder of the kerygmatic approach into the series. This graded series was published by Sadlier from 1957 to 1962, and translated into more than a dozen languages.

After the Second Vatican Council, *On Our Way* needed to be rewritten. Fr. Hofinger now lived in Manila and Fr. Huesman had died. Following a retreat in Rome, Sr. Maria discovered a newly doctored Jesuit from the Pontifical Biblical, Fr. Francis J. Buckley, SJ. She asked him to help her revise her program in the light of the Council. He had never read her material, but remembered the *Baltimore Catechism* he had studied as a child and felt certain it needed revision. Prior to Vatican II, the *Baltimore Catechism* defined who Catholics in America were and what they believed. The U.S. bishops were united behind this text, and so it was the face of catechesis in the United States well into the 1960s.

Fr. Buckley thought it might take a few months to update; then he could get back to other projects at the University of San Francisco where he was teaching theology. Sr. Maria set up a team, adding Fr. Cyr Miller, a diocesan priest, and Sr. Laetitia Bordes, another Helper in San Francisco.

With Fr. Buckley, Sr. Maria produced several series for parish religious education: *On Our Way, Vatican II* (1966-70); *New Life* (1972-75); *Jesus Nos Dice* (1976). From 1976–1981, Sr. Maria and Fr. Buckley co-authored the *Lord of Life* series for

Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. From 1982–1985 they worked with Thomas Groome on the *God With Us* program. All of their works were published by Sadlier. In total, Sr. Maria has written more than one hundred texts on her own and with others.

After the production of the two Catechetical Directories, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), the bishops insisted that all catechesis be in conformity with the CCC. In a way, like the original desire of the bishops who wanted uniformity, the bishops of our time created a system that publishers must follow in order to ensure that the content is approved by this bishops' committee. All series follow the scope and sequence created by Sr. Maria in her original Sadlier series. This allows a person or family to move across the country or change parishes in the same town, and pick up where they left off. The material that everyone learns will be the same wherever they reside. Methodology will vary, but it is uniformly based upon the works of Jungmann and Hofinger.

The Catholic Church in the United States today follows the vision of Cardinal Gibbons as a universal catechesis has been created and is practiced in parishes throughout the country. ■

*CH (MAJ) Jonathan Morse is a priest of the Eparchy of St. Nicholas in Chicago. He presently serves as the Garrison Catholic Priest at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. He was formerly a diocesan director of religious education and served on the board of MCCW.*

# Should We Scrap the Word “Evangelization?”

John J. Boucher

Why not scrap the word “evangelization” and call it something else? With all the American cultural baggage hanging on this word (for example, TV evangelists, street corner preaching, in-your-face confrontational challenges, financial fraud, attacks on Catholicism, and proselytizing), it just confuses people. Catholics don’t understand difficult theological and scriptural words like “evangelization” which is Greek for “proclaim the good news”. After all, we got along fine without this word in the Catholic Church before Vatican Council II (1965). Couldn’t we best counter all negative images—by total disuse of the word “evangelization?”

But, if we give up on the word evangelization — if we decide to only use something simpler or user-friendly — what are some important things that we might lose?

Evangelization is scriptural. It comes to us from key passages of the New Testament that reveal who Jesus Christ is, what his mission is, what he has done for us, and what he will do for others (Mt 28:18-19; Lk 4:43; Mk 16:15; 1 Cor 9:16).

Evangelization is at the heart of Catholic Church teaching. “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church” (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, 14. See *General Directory for Catechesis* and *National Directory for Catechesis*).

Evangelization is the primary mission of the laity. They “fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life. For lay people, this evangelization acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 905).

Evangelization is an ecumenical necessity. All Christians share a common mission and commission from Christ. Evangelization gives us opportunities to dialogue about proclaiming the gospel of Jesus. It has brought many Christians (mainline Protestant, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Catholics) to work together across denominational lines in a common witness to Jesus Christ in parts of the world. And in some places, Catholic evangelization has been a bridge between differ-

ent Christian denominations that don’t usually talk to one another.

Is disuse of the word evangelization our best way to handle misunderstandings, misuses, or abuses? If we give up on evangelization, what other misunderstood, misused, or abused Greek words should we stop using? Will we surrender the word “Bible” (Greek for “many books”) because reading Scripture within the original historical context takes too much extra study, or because at times we interpret passages incorrectly? What about ditching “catechesis” (meaning “to echo the word”) because Catholics don’t want to learn

how to live faith in an active and conscious way as adults? Shall we also cease using the word “Eucharist” (Greek for “thanksgiving”), because the majority of Catholics don’t seem to get what it means, and as many as 75 percent of us don’t go to Mass in a regular way? Do we stop using the title “Jesus Christ” (“the Lord saves through the anointed one”) because new age spirituality

has co-opted this title, redefining the savior as “not God,” but just as a god among gods, a “spirit-guide,” or a highly evolved human being who can lead us to individual or group enlightenment?

Can the misunderstanding, misuse, or abuse of the word evangelization in our culture(s) only be cured by disuse of it? Would not a better approach be to help our people grasp the depth and critical necessity of a Catholic understanding of evangelization, in season and out of season, whether it is convenient or inconvenient? (cf. 2 Tim 4:1-5) ■

**John J. Boucher** is Associate Director of Evangelization, Ministry of Catechesis and Evangelization, Diocese of Trenton, NJ. He has authored/co-authored over 300 religious articles and more than 20 books/booklets. He and his wife, Therese, are 2010 recipients of NCCL’s “New Wineskins Award,” and authors of the new book, *Praying for Our Adult Sons and Daughters (The Word Among Us, 2012)*.

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*But, if we give up on the word evangelization — if we decide to only use something simpler or user-friendly — what are some important things that we might lose?*

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# Raised Right: How I Untangled My Faith from Politics

by Alisa Harris

# Healing the Heart of Democracy

by Parker Palmer

Reviewed by Daniel Thomas



One of our calls as Catholic Christians and religious educators is to speak to our culture about the reign of God in a way that both attracts and challenges that culture (and, of course, ourselves as well). How can we present a vision that is both of this world and beyond it? Here is a description of that reign found in an article “The Difference Nothing

Makes” (TS, Sept 2011, 556-7).

Taking Jesus’ resurrection from the dead as primordially disclosive of God’s character, we can say that divine activity is found in extending reconciliation

where there is conflict, healing where there is violence, and eschatological fulfillment where there is death.

The following two books reviewed capture elements of this description that are worth exploring for our work of visioning God’s reign for our day.

### *RAISED RIGHT*

This book, a memoir by Alisa Harris, begins in 1997 with her travels to the Republican state convention to support an evangelical Christian candidate for Congress; it continues with her journeys of marches as a child and adolescent against abortion, her defense of Ronald Reagan as the greatest president

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ever, and follows her through the questions raised by experiences at Hillsdale College (in a chapter called “Holes”) onto a conversion to a social justice and personal charity that lives on today in her work as a fundraiser for National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, a non-profit that works to build a broad movement for economic and social rights, including health, housing, education, and work with dignity.

I came upon this book by accident in a list of the most recent 100 books at the local library, intrigued by its title and description. I experienced a powerful story of a young woman’s struggle with her upbringing, her faith, and her personal commitments. As she puts it:

For nearly all my childhood and adolescence, on into early adulthood, politics expressed my faith... So when I ventured out into the complicated world and found it shaking my confidence in the goodness of culture-war politics, my faith shook too.... this book was born out of my search for a faith that’s more than the sum of my political convictions and for a meaningful way of living it out (5-6).

Beginning with a concern for her rights as a woman, challenged by the leaders of her evangelical congregation, experiencing the plight of the poor in New York City, and accepting the insights of those who disagreed with her, she tells the story of her faith journey, which I find mirrors that of many young adults. She faced the contradictions and questions honestly and stood up for her beliefs becoming a person of deep, earned faith.

Here are some of the more interesting quotes in her journey:

The only way to defeat the politics of *ressentiment* is to remember that the kingdom of God is here but not yet realized: we still live in the earth’s darkness, but we hold on to the heavenly promise. Instead of seeking power, I want to work for the kingdom’s picture of peace. I want to be delivered from selfishness, find release from envy, and prepare for the day when ‘they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain’ by giving up my own power to hurt and destroy. And I want to remember that the world’s redemption begins every day with a battle to recover hope and love in my own soul (44-45).

When my parents took me to pro-life rallies and quoted, ‘Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter,’ they were preparing me for the theatrical clashes of justice and injustice. They opened my eyes to right and wrong, justice and injustice. They taught me that God always hears the cry of the trampled and that [God] will hold the rest of us to account. Did we weep for the weak? (200-01)

What did my parents teach me that I will hand on to my children?

*To care...*

*To love...*

*To take heart...* I want to live with the kind of love and optimism that is only possible when I hold a vision of the world’s ultimate redemption from injustice and suffering... Jesus urged His followers, ‘Take heart! I have overcome the world—not through a show of power but a picture of love’ (218-19).

Thus we discover that this young woman was raised right, not only in the political sense, but also in the values her parents gave her. Isn’t this often true with our own children? They live our values in ways we do not always understand. This book captures the journey of one young adult but is so typical of many young adults I have met. I don’t always agree with what I see but I know there is much more than what I see.

### **HEALING THE HEART OF DEMOCRACY: THE COURAGE TO CREATE A POLITICS WORTHY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

This book by one of the great thinkers and explorers of the human spirit, Parker Palmer, deals with some of the same issues as the book above, but looks at our failing, failed, and flailing politics. “What can we realistically do?” He discovers some practical solutions that came out of his work at the Center for Courage and Renewal. It is also a book that presents a way to bring the signs of the reign of God—“extending reconciliation where there is conflict, healing where there is violence, and eschatological fulfillment where there is death”—to our present reality.

“Heart” is the term that guides the processes that this book explores.

Heart reaches far beyond our feelings. It points to a larger way of knowing—of receiving and reflecting on our experience—that goes deeper than the mind alone can take us. The heart is where we integrate the intellect with the rest of our faculties, such as emotion, imagination, and intuition. It is where we can learn how to ‘think the world together,’ not apart, and find the courage to act on what we know (17-18).

Palmer calls us to develop the habits of the heart that are essential to each of us as citizens (“trust holders of democracy”) and as political animals. Politics is “the ancient and honorable human endeavor of creating a community in which the weak as well as the strong can flourish, love and power can collaborate, and justice and mercy can have their day.”

An essential distinction he makes is that in facing the difficulties of our lives we can become “broken-hearted” or have “a

heart broken open.” “If it breaks *apart* into a thousand pieces, the result may be anger, depression, and disengagement. If it breaks *open* into greater capacity to hold the complexities and contradictions of human experience, the result may be new life.”

There are five interlocking habits of the heart:

- ✳ Understand that we are all in this together.
- ✳ Appreciate the value of ‘otherness.’
- ✳ Hold tension in life-giving ways.
- ✳ Generate a sense of personal voice and agency.
- ✳ Strengthen our capacity to create community.

It is in public life that we meet the stranger whom we can treat as the enemy or embrace hospitably. “As long as we equate the stranger with the enemy, there can be no civil society. Let alone a democracy where much depends on holding the tension of our differences without fearing or demonizing the other” (96). I love the term that he uses for this process, calling it “a company of strangers.”

In *Classrooms and Congregations*, Palmer has written a wonderful chapter that all religious educators need to explore dealing with ways schools and churches can create the grounds for democracy. Regarding congregations, he discusses the importance of the parishioners being given and taking responsibility

for their parish and faith life. Potluck suppers and consensus decision-making are essential elements of this endeavor, as well as the ability to explore the meaning of church teachings for everyday life.

I would like to highlight one final insight that is a key ingredient to true democracy: being in touch with the voice of the inner teacher. “We need safe places, silent and solitary places where we can get the news from within” (158). “[A]ll of us have an inner teacher who wants to tell us the truth” (160). And “[w]e need community to evoke the voice of the inner teacher” (161). Here is another challenge for our schools and congregations.

This book is a profound yet practical resource for bringing the values of the Reign of God into the realities of the democratic process in our individual and communal lives. It searches the signs of our time for ways to respect diversity and work for the common good, two much needed values for life in our world today. |

*Daniel Thomas* was a director of religious education for 30 years in four different parishes in the Dayton area of the Cincinnati archdiocese. He retired in 2010. He has been married to Eileen for 35 years, and they have two adult sons. Contact him at [dantlthomas@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dantlthomas@sbcglobal.net).

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# Be clear about your expectations

Leisa Anslinger



I am blessed to be the mother of two young adult children. I have to be really honest and tell you, I am *truly* blessed. We did not experience the trauma or difficulties many families know during their children's adolescence or young adulthood. Still, I remember saying a few times, "You know what is expected here. Now just go do it!" I did not realize it at the time, but knowing what is expected is not only important for family members of a household, but clarifying expectations with love is also important for family members of a faith community.

The Gallup research on engagement describes four questions people ask as they come to a deep sense of belonging within a parish. Remember that this research helps us understand the importance of the community in the process of building spiritual commitment. We will explore the questions and underlying principles that accompany them in this column and in future issues. The research helps us understand the importance of belonging, and it also details the factors that contribute to building engagement within our communities.

The first question people ask on their way to engagement, either implicitly or explicitly, is, "What do I get?" On the surface, this sounds self-serving, as though the person is thinking, "What's in it for me?" But the underlying principles help us understand that "What do I get?" is an appropriate question. Within this question are two deeper ones: "What is expected of me here?" and "Will my spiritual needs be met?"

A few years ago, my parish completed the survey that measures engagement. We had been speaking of discipleship for many years; we had offered a regular rhythm of adult and intergenerational faith formation opportunities; we had taught stewardship as a way of life and held an annual stewardship renewal process. Still, the majority of our members gave the statement "I know what is expected of me at my parish" a 3 or 4 on a scale of 1-5 (5 being strongly agree). So, as we entered into our annual stewardship renewal, our parish leaders decided we needed to be more specific with each other about our expectations.

One weekend, our pastor spoke at all of the Masses. "You will recall that survey we all completed a few months ago,"

he began. "You might be surprised to find that most of you said you're not quite sure what is expected of you here." I knew he was planning to talk about this, so I stood in the back of the church, waiting. As you can imagine, at first the shoulders of the assembly seemed to tense in unison, and the church became very quiet. And then he talked from his heart about how he knew he was preaching to the choir, because the people present at Mass already live their faith in some manner. "However," he continued, "we all know that not everyone is here every week, and it is important that you do all you can to be here, as a community who comes together to worship, every Sunday. I can guarantee that if you put God first, everything else will fall into place," he said. He spoke of the need for all of us to grow through participation in faith formation and to live as a steward who shares his or her gifts with others in love and justice.

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*"I can guarantee that if you put God first, everything else will fall into place," he said.*

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As people came out of church that weekend, I heard many remark, "Thank you. We know that wasn't easy, but it was important." I will always remember one young dad with two small children. He said, "You know, Father, in our family when we have something

important to talk about at home, we gather around the table and have a family meeting. I feel that's what we did tonight. We gathered around the table and we had a family meeting."

That is a sign of deep belonging. When we grow into a community that sees itself as a family, we begin to be formed. As Pope John Paul II guided in his pastoral letter at the turn of the century, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: "To make the church the home and school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and to meet the world's deepest yearnings" (43).

What do you expect of members of your community?

Could you succinctly summarize these expectations so that every member was clear about them?

How do you communicate your hopes and expectations for one another? ■

*Leisa Anslinger is the director of Catholic Life & Faith, an online resource for helping leaders engage real people in real faith, catholiclifeandfaith.net. Contact her at leisaanslinger@gmail.com.*

# “Can you hear me now?”

Jeanne D. Schrempf



The catechetical theme chosen for this year is taken from some of the most memorable words ever spoken by Jesus — and like a song that plays forever in your head, I cannot let them go. “Do this in memory of me!” These words are the compelling directive prayed after the consecration. Words that I have heard over and over since I was a child. Words that are printed on a poster on my office door. Words with which I have struggled, prayed, and pondered. Words that I do not fully comprehend. Words from which I cannot walk away. Words that I am trying to live.

I keep asking, “Do this ... What is the *this* Lord?” In the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine, are you asking me to lay down my own life? Are you asking me to wash the feet, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty? Are you asking me to love, to live, to serve as you did because you showed us how. Is the “this” in your face, or can it be elusive? Can we miss it, refuse to see it, hit the delete button, mute the sound of your voice? Can we sometimes not hear you Lord — intentionally? Is this optional Lord? Can we do the “*this*” when we have the time, have room on our agendas once we get our own act together?

Have you noticed that Jesus and the writers of the gospels are very directive? They don’t waste words or time on something that is not essential. Jesus does not ask us to gather in a small group and discuss this. He tells us simply, directly, straightforwardly: *Do this in memory of me!* Not when we can fit it in. Not when our life is finally in some kind of order. Not tomorrow, but today—right now—“*Do this in memory of me!*”

These are the words of evangelization. This is the playbook, the manual, the script for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. It is inviting those who do not feel welcome back to the table. It is speaking with truth, charity, and civility in a world of harsh voices. It is protecting the most vulnerable in

all stages of life. It is seeking and giving forgiveness. It never tires from speaking out against injustice and working for what is right. It is being the heart, eyes, hands, and feet of Jesus. It is never losing sight that the purpose of catechesis is to help each child, youth, and adult to know, love, and follow Jesus as disciples. There is a mission and the mission has a church.

On the night before Jesus died, he gathered with his friends for a sacred and celebratory meal; speaking with authority, deliberation, and urgency, he gave those gathered with him the essence of those three years of teaching, witness, and ministry when he said, “*Do this in memory of me!*” Do it all, give it your best shot, do not make excuses, just do it! And while we were not at that table, we are at the table in these times.

The words prayed at that last meal are repeated some 40 days later, after the denial, betrayal, judgment, suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, when Jesus gathers his disciples and commissions them to “*go make disciples.*” The words at the close of Matthew’s Gospel are not up for discussion. They are the directive of Jesus to live and love and serve in memory of him. These words call each of us to bring the person of Jesus to those in our faith communities who know of him but do not know him, who once gathered around the table but are now missing, and who are searching and wandering in the endless deserts of life.

At a conference some years ago, I heard these words proclaimed with passion from a well-known speaker. Like the words proclaimed at liturgy, I have never forgotten the challenge in “*Do this in memory of me!*” and “*Go make disciples!*” and the speaker’s question: “Which word do we not understand?” Catechesis means to echo the word of God in this place and in this time. Our task has never been more urgent. Two thousand years later is Jesus not saying, “Can you hear me now?” ■

*Jeanne D. Schrempf is the director of the Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Family Life for the Diocese of Albany.*



# Where is the Diocese?

Russell Peterson

Recently I worked on the draft of a section of the quinquennial report for my bishop's *Ad Limina Apostolorum* to Rome. It was interesting for me to consider questions that are deemed relevant for bishops to address with the Holy Father and the various Vatican offices.

I was particularly struck by the number of items that do not regularly appear on my radar as I fulfill my primary ministry responsibilities, especially when I was asked to "describe the extent of theoretical and practical atheism in the diocese, its causes, and pastoral remedies."

I sat and I pondered. My diocese is located in a rural area, and the people are quite religious. Towns often have Christian symbols in their public Christmas displays. The public high schools have large groups of students who gather at the flagpole for prayer. Prayer is often included in public meetings—without complaint. I know of many agnostics and a large number of people who believe in a spiritual realm but are opposed to any organized church. However, I do not know many atheists, and I am not aware of many gatherings of atheists within the boundaries of my diocese. One secular/atheist group meets at the large state university, but it has fewer than 100 members.

## ATHEISM IN MY DIOCESE

From a traditional understanding of "in the diocese" it was easy for me to articulate that atheism was not extensive. I could also address some causes and pastoral remedies. However, as I reflected, I realized that the Internet was a significant factor in the communication of Darwinian atheism. It also became apparent that this Darwinian atheism was in a reactionary relationship with Creationism, the Christian fundamentalist/literalist interpretation of the creation stories in the holy Bible.

This Biblical literalist understanding of science was not being preached in Catholic parishes nor taught in the Catholic schools, but it was being spoken of within many Catholic families throughout the diocese. I knew that because of phone calls I had received regarding evolution and related topics. The literalism came from many sources: family members, other churches in the town, television, radio, and Internet sites. The Darwinian atheism did not seem to have sources directly "in the diocese," but rather through media – television, radio, and the Internet. Atheism, whether theoretical or practical, did not appear to be extensive or organized in the diocese. Using the map on my office wall as a guide, I moved forward with my understanding of atheism in my diocese.

## "IN THE DIOCESE"

The television was being watched, the radio was being heard, and the Internet being viewed in the diocese. Suddenly, the geographic line between "in" and "outside of" was being thrown asunder. Although the mass media was not being generated in the diocese, it was being consumed in the diocese.

As I reflected more, I realized that social media was being consumed and generated within my diocese as well as in hundreds of other dioceses throughout the world. Catholics living in the diocese were being challenged virtually by atheists on blogs and social networking sites. Atheists living in my diocese were uniting in community with fellow atheists around the world. The fact that the local phone book does not have an atheist society does not mean that atheism is not present in the diocese. The ability to connect with like-minded people is vastly different on the digital continent.

## ATHEISM ONLINE

Atheism is in my diocese every time a Catholic goes to an online paper and reads the comments posted to an article about religion. As a poster using the name Hadenufyet wrote on December 5, 2011,

Why even offer posts to these articles; it's just a magnet for non-believers and critics. Why are you even drawn to the article? Your opinion won't sway anyone. Why even bother?

The reality is that a significant number of non-believers, critics of religion, and atheists are actively posting comments and blogging. They are sometimes insightful, occasionally on topic, and often ranting against religion and God without any focus or coherency. Here is where Catholics in my diocese are interacting with atheists. Here is where atheism is present in my diocese in its strongest, most consistent form. And here the diocesan office of catechesis has no plan or program or strategy, nor does any parish in my diocese.

What would a diocesan program for effectively engaging online atheism include? It should probably be available through an online format. The content needs to be focused on the most common arguments against the existence of God, and it needs to be grounded in love and generosity, assuming the good of the other and hoping for reconciliation. Perhaps I will create such a program before the annual conference and discuss it at a roundtable! ■

*Russell Peterson is the associate director of catechesis for the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois, and the vice president of NCCL. Contact him at [RPeterson@diobelle.org](mailto:RPeterson@diobelle.org).*

## Books, websites, and media for the enrichment of the parish catechetical leader

Compiled by Dan Pierson

### Common English Bible

In the summer of 2011, the Common English Bible Committee, an alliance of five publishers that serve the general and Christian markets, released the *Common English Bible*. Paul N. Franklyn, associate publisher and project director of the *Common English Bible* explained,

The *Common English Bible* is not simply a revision or update of an existing translation. It's a bold new translation designed to meet the needs of Christians as they work to build a strong and meaningful relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A key goal of the translation team is to make the Bible accessible to a broad range of people; it's written at a comfortable level (similar to *USA TODAY*) for most people who read English.

Combining scholarly accuracy with vivid language, the Common English Bible is the work of 120 biblical scholars from 24 denominations in American, African, Asian, European, and Latino communities, representing a variety of academic institutions.

A few of the Catholic translators include: Raymond F. Collins, STD, The Catholic University of America; Carol J. Dempsey, OP, PhD, University of Portland, Portland, OR; Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, BD, PhD, Boston College School of Theology & Ministry, Chestnut Hill, MA; Luke Timothy Johnson, MDiv, PhD, Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, GA; PHEME PERKINS, PhD, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA.

(A complete list is available on the website.)

"It's an honor and a pleasure to be associated with this good project," says Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, translator of Maccabees. "Based on the best modern biblical scholarship, the Common English Bible conveys the message of the Bible in a clear, accurate, and inspiring way."

In my interview with Fr. Harrington he noted that it "is a great translation and fine to use. It uses simple American English and is a great resource for catechetical settings."

Paul Franklyn said, "The *Common English Bible* is committed to the whole church of Jesus Christ. That's reflected in the dedicated work of a diverse team with broad biblical scholarship. As a result, the English translation of ancient words has an uncommon relevance for a broad audience of Bible readers—from children to scholars."

The *Common English Bible* translation is available in multiple print and electronic editions, with and without the Apocrypha. Reference books supporting the translation are also available. See [commonenglish-bible.org](http://commonenglish-bible.org) for the entire list.

A limited number of complimentary review copies of the *Common English Bible* with Apocrypha ThinLine Edition are available for members of NCCL for \$34.95. To request a copy, please e-mail me at [pierson.dj@gmail.com](mailto:pierson.dj@gmail.com).

My wife, Margaret, and I have given each of our fourth graders in faith formation a personal copy of the *Everyday Softcover Outreach New Testament* (\$1.99). We see this as a great opportunity to help children actively engage with the Bible - highlighting favorite stories, underlining verses, and making notes. We can see that the children and their families are beginning to make Bible reading an ongoing prayer and faith practice at home.

### DRE Connect

In 2011, Loyola Press launched a new online community for faith formation leaders – **DREConnect** -<http://dreconnect.loyola-press.com/>

Besides expert resources for DREs and faith formation leaders, DRE Connect allows these parish faith leaders to connect and share with each other. They can mentor their peers and gain knowledge through the experiences of the whole community. They can post articles and maintain a blog.

New content is added to DRE Connect weekly. There are articles such as "Recruiting and Preparing New Catechists" and "10 Guidelines for Effective Adult Faith Formation." DRE Connect features the work of

many of Loyola Press' best authors such as Tom McGrath.

DRE Connect also provides opportunities for joining groups on various topics and connects to a corresponding Facebook page.

Kathy Henry, director of religious education at St. Leonard Faith Community in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, has been a member of DRE Connect since April 2011. In that time she has found it "a wonderful way for DREs to stay connected, share insights and grow spiritually."

### National Society for Volunteer Catechists

In the summer of 2011, *Catechist Magazine* launched the National Society for Volunteer Catechists. The creation of this society has been Peter Li's vision for many years. Peter Li is Chairman and CEO of the Peter Li Education Group, which includes Pflaum Publishing and the *Catechist Magazine*.

This new society, a service of *Catechist Magazine*, is a community providing support for volunteer catechists and all those who share and support their mission.

Charter membership brings with it the wealth of timeless articles, valuable tips, and spiritual insights. Here is just a sampling:

Access to a portfolio of personal and classroom resources.

Network with other catechists for personal support, encouragement, and inspiration.

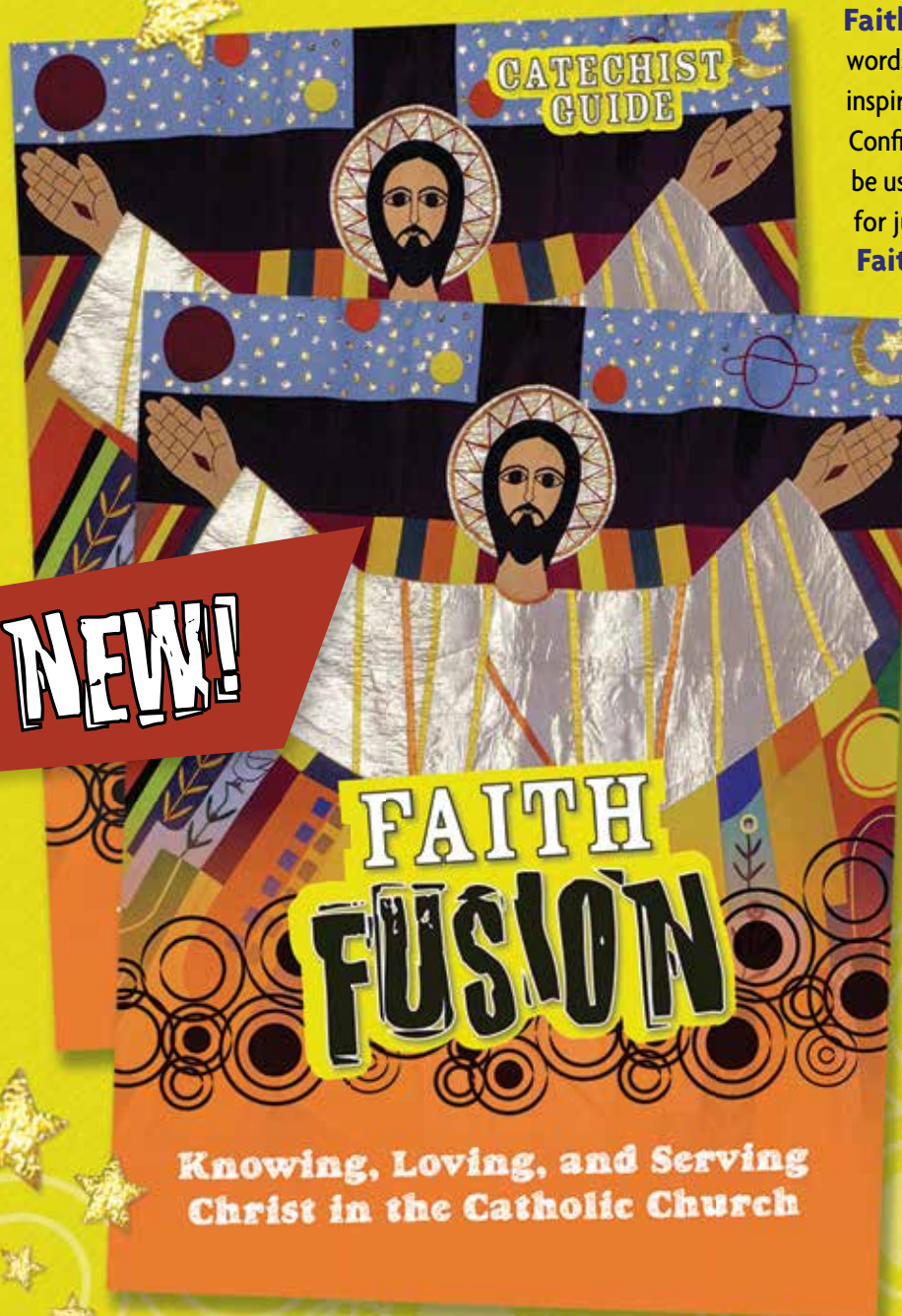
Grade-level groups for lesson preparation ideas.

Links to catechist-members in your own parish and diocese.

Membership is free for subscribers to *Catechist Magazine*. For additional information and to register go to [www.mynsvc.net](http://www.mynsvc.net). ■

*Dan Pierson served as director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for 17 years and is the founder of faithAlivebooks.com and eCatechist.com. He is co-author with Susan Stark of What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist (Pflaum Publishing). Please send suggestions and recommendations to [pierson.dj@gmail.com](mailto:pierson.dj@gmail.com).*

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