

March/April 2008 | Volume 19, Number 2 | \$6.00

cl CATECHETICAL LEADER



THE
2008

NCCL CONFERENCE ISSUE

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Conference Preview

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CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

Spiritual Development of Catechetical Leaders



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CATECHETICAL LEADER Table of Contents

March/April 2008

Cover: The Resurrection Window in Houston's Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was created by Mellini Art Glass and Mosaics of Florence, Italy.

IN EVERY ISSUE

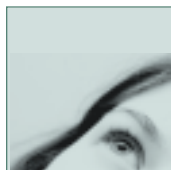
- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2 | From the President
Stewardship and Gratitude | Mary Ann Ronan |
| 3 | From the Executive Director
A Spiritual Life Is Natural | Leland Nagel |
| 13 | Books in the News
<i>Spiritlinking Leadership</i> | Reviewed by
Janet Schaeffler, OP |
| 15 | Diocesan Directors' Forum
Forging a New Frontier | Dorothy Giloley, SSJ |
| 18 | Echoes of Faith
Building Competent, Confident,
and Committed Catechists | Jo Rotunno |
| 24 | Crossword
Spiritual Development | Megan Anechiarico |



Bienvenios/Welcome
page 5



Following Jesus' Lead
page U4



Towards An Anamnetic Catechesis
page 10

FEATURES

Transforming Catechesis

- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|
| 4 | NCCL Conference 2008:
A Unique Opportunity | Barbara Romanello-Wichtman |
| 5 | Bienvenios a Houston !
Welcome to Houston ! | Anne Comeaux |
| 6 | Doctrinal Formation from
the Liturgical Year | Jim Schellman |
| 8 | Just Live the Liturgy | Anne Koester |
| 10 | Towards an Anamnetic Catechesis | Michael Warren |

CATECHETICAL UPDATE

Spiritual Development of Catechetical Leaders

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|------------------|
| U1 | Growth in the Spirit | Robert Morneau |
| U4 | Following Jesus' Lead | Barbara Campbell |

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STEWARDSHIP AND GRATITUDE

Mary Ann Ronan



Thank you for your participation in Echo the Promise, our inaugural campaign for the professional development fund. Reaching this goal to empower you, our members, in catechesis and leadership development is a great achievement. In saying that, I am struck with a deepening

sense of stewardship. I know we hear this word from our bishops and pastors when it comes to the annual diocesan and parish appeals. I also receive appeals as alumni of the colleges/universities I have graduated from as well as all the charity organizations that send me medals or address labels seeking help for their ministries.

The U.S. Catholic bishops say in *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, "A Christian steward is one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others and returns them with increase to the Lord."

Stewardship begins with an "attitude of gratitude." That all I am is a gift from God. I am so grateful for family, friends, coworkers in the vineyard and the people of the parish...all gifts. What a difference it makes to live life in thanksgiving.

Stewardship is giving of our time, our talent and treasure at various times in our lives. A truism of stewardship is "do what you can." Different situations in our lives, families, communities call us to different applications of time, talent and treasure.

As I reflect on stewardship and membership in NCCL I am struck that good stewards are happy to take their place in a vast chorus of goodness, with all our gifts making a joyful noise.

We are so grateful for all the talents and time that are shared. Without these, NCCL would be very poor and I realize how rich we are. Sharing treasure (big or small) speaks volumes as well. I remember, when I was treasurer of NCCL, reporting at a business meeting that if each member would give \$25 we would have \$75,000.

*A truism of stewardship is
"do what you can."*

If we are to seek grants and establish a foundation, we need each member giving us something. It is not the final amount that matters but the fact that the members believe in the organization and contribute treasure for its well-being. Your treasure of \$5, \$10, \$25, \$100, or more will make a difference to NCCL. If you give it in memory of someone, a family member, a religious educator, a friend, we will acknowledge that to whomever you wish. Remember your gift is tax deductible.

I learned about stewardship from my parents. I had my children's envelope and when I received my allowance, my dad taught me to calculate my stewardship...some weeks it was painful...I wanted to keep more...Dad would say, "You have so much; be grateful." My parents lived stewardship; some years it was time and talent they gave and other years they could give more treasure. They didn't use those words but, more powerfully, they acted in gratitude. As president, I ask you to share your treasure to build NCCL. ■

A SPIRITUAL LIFE IS NATURAL

Leland Nagel



What about the spiritual life of a catechetical leader? How natural is it to take time out of your life and pray? Does prayer have to be a “time out”? While our Catholic tradition offers a variety of ways of prayer, the *National Directory for Catechesis*, in chapter five, emphasizes the following prayer forms:

- communal
- private
- traditional
- spontaneous
- gesture
- song
- meditation
- contemplation

While it may be valuable to evaluate whether every person in every systematic program that you offer has the opportunity to engage in each of these on an annual basis, my purpose is to invite you to examine your own prayer life. You can do this by yourself or with a spiritual companion who accompanies you on this journey.

- Where is the experience of praying together so profound that you actually experience what it means to be one body of Christ?
- What calls you to go off and pray by yourself? Do you have a special place where you feel safe, as if you are resting in the arms of God?
- When has the reciting of traditional prayers turned into prayer itself? Has it happened both in private and communally? On what occasions have you found the official liturgical prayer of the church to fulfill your needs?
- Under what circumstances have you felt the urge to spontaneously pray what is on your heart and in your mind? Did you do it? If not, what held you back?
- What gestures have given deeper meaning to your prayer? You can include the sign of the cross, genuflecting, bowing, kneeling, sign of peace...even the way you hold your fingers when you *make* the sign of the cross.
- When do you break into song and sing as if you are “praying twice.” What song comes to mind right now? Is it a psalm?
- What do you need to nourish your mind in order to meditate? A favorite author, a piece of art, something that makes you cry, something that makes you laugh, or nothing?
- Where do you go when you wish to be alone and just sit and listen and sit and listen and...?

While these questions are for all of us who are called to catechize, more is expected of those who respond to the call of leadership. In particular one could ask, “What are the standards by which the spiritual dimension of lay ecclesial leaders is evaluated?” We find our answer in two documents, the *National Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers and Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

The *National Standards* document combines *Personal and Spiritual Maturity*. It provides seven core competencies. A lay ecclesial minister shall:

- 1.1 Discern and respond to the call of the Holy Spirit to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- 1.2 Identify personal gifts and challenges through self-reflection and spiritual companionship.
- 1.3 Reflect commitment to the Gospel through regular prayer, ongoing study and theological reflection, action on behalf of justice, and fulfillment of ministerial responsibilities
- 1.4 Discern and address current realities in the church and the world in light of the Gospel.
- 1.5 Give witness to an integrated spirituality formed by Scripture, theological reflection, prayer, and communal worship.
- 1.6 Relate respectfully with a diversity of persons, age groups, and cultures.
- 1.7 Engage in personal, life-long faith formation and continuing education.

Three of these depend heavily on Scripture with an emphasis on the Gospels. There is an expectation that our companions be of different nationalities and various ages. Our lives are not to be homogenized or stale. Although others may be accused of being cafeteria Catholics, our souls are to be a smorgasbord of spirituality, rich in grace, satisfying of hunger and appealing to the inner eye. It is the leader who understands how God “satisfies the hungry heart.”

The goal of spiritual formation as outlined in *Co-Workers* is to arouse and animate true hunger for holiness, desire for union with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, daily growing in love of God and neighbor in life and ministry, and the practices of prayer and spirituality that foster these attitudes and dispositions, as well as promote and strengthen that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one’s life.

continued on page 14

Transforming Catechesis: A Unique Opportunity

by Barbara Romanello-Wichtman



In April, you have a unique opportunity to gather with those who share the ministry of catechesis throughout the United States. I use the words “unique opportunity” intentionally. I believe that this Houston Conference is one of the strongest list (and combination) of presenters that the NCCL Conference has had in recent years. It is extraordinary to have so many good presenters at one conference.

Bishop Daniel Flores brings his experience in various settings as priest, and now bishop, to the conversation about apologetics and catechesis. Both a writer and lecturer, Oblate Father Ronald Rolheiser illuminates the connection of life and spirituality in the world for us in our leadership role of passing on faith to our children in the culture today. Dominican Sister Donna Markham has a unique viewpoint and many insights to share with us about leadership and spirituality. Jeanette Rodriguez brings the perspective of her experience as a U.S. Hispanic/Latina theologian to give us insights in our changing cultural realities. John Allen looks at the mega-trends in the Catholic Church from his particular perspective as a Vatican analyst for the *National Catholic Reporter* and will address what these trends mean for catechetical leadership today.

Each presenter has a specific twist that they add to the conversation in the church today. It will be a privilege for us to enter into that conversation with them.

CONVERSATIONS

Conversation is the appropriate word for another part of the conference. Father Eugene Lauer will initiate a unique conversation on Wednesday afternoon. He will give us insights and practical suggestions on how we communicate with the various constituencies we lead in the Catholic Church today. Adding their particular perspective and experience to this conversation will be Zeni Fox, regarding collaboration among the ministries; Mike Hayes, representing the voice of the young adults; and Jose

Amaya, adding his particular cultural voice and experience. Additionally, each of these people will offer more insights in learning sessions they will lead on Thursday morning.

Another unique way of entering into conversation will be our new and exciting Poster Presentations. While this methodology is common in some fields, it is rather new to us in catechetical ministry. Poster Presentations are a way of facilitating informal discussions between presenters and their audience using a visual medium. The visual does the “talking.” Posters demonstrate clearly and concisely information to be shared. This leaves open more time for follow-up interaction between the presenter and a larger audience of participants who gather in the exhibit hall.

The Forums will offer opportunities for unique conversations between participants who do like ministry. Parish catechetical leaders, diocesan staff, and diocesan directors each have their own forum in which to share the challenges and opportunities of the ministry through the lens of their particular responsibilities in catechetical ministry.

TOOLS AND EXPERTISE

Ever faithful, ever present and supportive of all of us are our exhibitors, who share wonderful resources and tools for doing this ministry. Over the years they have been behind us and in front of us in helping to communicate the Word of God in unique and exciting ways. We appreciate their presence and their support. Our work is so much better because of our working together!

Besides providing tools for our work, many publishers also sponsor people who are well known and experts in the field. Two such people are Carole Eipers and Bill Huebsch. If you have not heard them (and even if you have!) put them on your not-to-be-missed list. Their years of experience and wisdom and their talent for sharing both are the best! Many other good learning sessions will be offered both in English and Spanish. Please check the NCCL.org website for the listing and the descriptions.

It does not take long working in this ministry to come to the conclusion that none of us can do this alone.

CELEBRATION

Not to be missed is our “Fiesta for the Faithful.” This will be an exciting celebration of people who have contributed so greatly to our ministry. Not only will we share food and festivities, but we will also share our passion for this ministry and our relationships.

This conference will also be a time for sharing our relationship with other national organizations. Check the website to see the many other national organizations that will be present. Don't miss the chance to connect with them and benefit from what they have to offer.

CONNECTIONS

Last—but definitely not least—an important reason to join us in Houston is relationships. It does not take long working in this ministry to come to the conclusion that none of us can do this alone. We need the presence, insights, wisdom and support of others to do this well. Houston will offer the unique, “one of a kind” opportunity to share all of this and more. The people and prayer experiences will nurture your spirit and energize you for the work/ministry. You will have ideas, skills and resources to take home with you. You will have a wonderful setting in which to do this. Houston offers much to do . . . before, during and after the conference days.

Please decide today to join us for *THE* professional development conference for catechetical leaders in Houston, April 6–10, 2008. See you there! ■

Dr. Barbara Romanello-Wichtman is director of the Office of Religious Education and Catechesis for the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, and the chairperson of the NCCL Conference Planning Committee.

Bienvenios/Welcome!

By Anne Comeaux



We are busy getting ready for you to visit us in Houston! The conference will be outstanding (biased opinion) and there will be many opportunities for you to experience art, music, theatre, great restaurants, NASA, Galveston Island and other nearby attractions before, during and after the conference. Our hotel, the Hyatt Regency in Downtown, is within walking distance of Minute Maid Park, the Theatre District and other interesting places to spend a day or evening.

Many who know me are aware that I am a great Major League Baseball fan. I will even have some tickets to give away for a ballgame. The Astros will be in town for their home opener against St. Louis on Tuesday, April 7 and have games on April 8 and 9 also. (www.Astros.com). The Houston Rockets basketball team is playing the Seattle Supersonics on Tuesday night (www.nba.com/rockets). Our newest sports team is the Houston Dynamo Major League Soccer team and they are also in town (www.mls.com/Dynamo).

Houston has wonderful museums including the Museum of Fine Arts (www.hmfa.org) and the Houston Museum of Natural Science (www.hmns.org). Both are accessible via the Light Rail Transit. The Bayou Bend Collection, the Menil Collection, and the University of Houston, Blaffer Gallery are also wonderful; some of these offer free admission. The major museums are free on Thursdays.

The NCCL brochure has listings of tours on Sunday and Thursday to Galveston and to visit the Space Center at NASA. We know you'll love going to those places.

Our Texas hospitality is awaiting you. If you have specific questions about things that are available, feel free to contact me or a member of the archdiocesan catechetical staff.

Anne Comeaux is the director of continuing Christian education for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and co-chair of the NCCL Conference Planning Committee. She is chair of the Catechesis Committee for the dedication of the new co-cathedral of Galveston-Houston.



Doctrinal Formation from the Liturgical Year

by Jim Schellman

The church's liturgical year was forged by our ancestors in faith learning how to make Christians in the image of the Lord through the sacramental cycle of seasons and feasts that celebrate the Lord's dying and rising.



In the spring 2007 issue of the Forum Newsletter, I offered some thoughts under the heading “Catechumenate—Where Is the Content?” These brief reflections were intended to revisit the basic principles for formation in the Catechumenate as a basis for ongoing conversation about implementing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

As I mentioned then and summarize now, some of our church leaders express a lack of confidence in how we are passing on the faith to others. These *others* are variously children, youth, young adults, or adults. Included in this conversation is the formation being offered newcomers to the faith, our catechumens, as well as other Christians being prepared for reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Are we passing on the fullness of our faith to them? Are they exposed to and immersed in the indispensable teachings of Jesus Christ as taught through the Catholic faith tradition? Where does the *Catechism* fit in all this?

PRINCIPLES

Last spring I offered a synopsis of the principles necessary to address these questions faithfully and well. These principles are enunciated in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and in the church's related liturgical and catechetical documents, not least the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad gentes*, Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae*, the Congregation for the Clergy's *General Directory for Catechesis*, and, in the United States, the U.S. bishops' *National Directory for Catechesis*.

These fundamental principles offer a vision of the Catechumenate as apprenticeship in a whole way of life, with four foundational elements to that apprenticeship: word, liturgy, the life of the Catholic faith community, and that communi-

ty's apostolic witness and service. The formation of newcomers to the faith is incomplete without all four of these ancient, time-tested, and now newly articulated ways of bringing these beloved apprentices to full discipleship in the Lord and the Lord's body. This is where the church's liturgical year came from, forged as it was by our ancestors in faith out of their experience of learning how to make Christians in the image of the Lord through the sacramental cycle of seasons and feasts that celebrate the Lord's dying and rising. This is why the Rite insists that catechesis in the Catechumenate is “accommodated to the liturgical year” (RCIA, no. 75).

We now have resources that should encourage us to think that it is possible to learn again the ways of liturgical catechesis.

There are those who question the strength of our annual liturgical cycle of prayers and ordered reading of the Scriptures as the organizing principle and basis for such formation in the Catechumenate. They doubt that this more ancient “systematic” teaching in the context of apprenticeship within the community of faith can convey the necessary doctrine and achieve the mature Christian discipleship that the Rite calls for.

RESOURCES

We now have available a number of resources that should encourage us to think that it is possible to learn again the ways of such liturgical catechesis. Such resources illustrate that: (1) the church's liturgical cycle is full of doctrinal content; (2) a full liturgical year is more than adequate for solid formation in all the central doctrines of our faith; (3) this cycle can provide the structure for a living and organic correlation of formation with the *Catechism*;



(4) this sacramental, mystagogical formation is all about inserting believers into living, intimate relationship and communion with Jesus Christ, within the Body of Christ.

Just consider the following overview of possible doctrinal material through the cycle of the seasons and feasts of the year:

- Advent and Christmas: Fall and Redemption; Eschatology; Prophets; Incarnation, Jesus Fully Divine and Human; Mary, Mother of God, Model of Discipleship; Holy Family; Jesus' Mission to all People; Repentance; Social Justice
- Lent and Easter: Covenant; Paschal Mystery; Sin and Grace; Conversion; Moral Life; Penance; Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving; Baptism; Eucharist; Forgiveness; Priesthood; Jesus' Resurrection and Ours; Ascension; Spirit; Church's Foundation and Mission; Reconciliation; Evangelization; God's Humility/Power
- Ordinary Time: Trinity; Eucharist; Jesus' Miracles; Commandments; Discipleship; Witness to Faith; Personal and Social Morality; Heaven and Hell; Suffering; Sacraments and Sacramental Life; Creed; End of Time; Last Judgment

- Feastdays: Virtues; God's Mercy and Justice; Beatitudes; Vocation; Witness; Justice and Peacemaking; Sacrificial Living; Martyrdom; Communion of Saints

The possibilities are rich and breathtaking in scope. The great virtue of such doctrinal formation in the context of the cycle of the church's prayer and life is that it is a living, breathing reality that invites initiation ministers and those they serve constantly to make the connections between liturgy, doctrine, and the Christian way of life. After all, this is the way our newcomers to faith will in fact live the rest of their Christian discipleship—in the living communion we share in the sacramentally present Lord whose mission we are privileged to bear. ■

Jim Schellman is executive director of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, an international network of people dedicated to the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

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Just Live the Liturgy

by Anne Koester

Virgil Michel held fast to his conviction that the church's liturgy and contemporary social issues had to be constantly placed in dialogue with one another.



On a bulletin board near my desk at the Georgetown Center for Liturgy hangs a photograph of Virgil Michel, Benedictine friend of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and one of the founders of the modern liturgical movement. His writings in the 1930s anticipated and influenced the liturgical reforms of Vatican II.

I keep his photo there for inspiration, especially on those days when it seems that I am whistling in the wind when talking about liturgy and justice as inseparable dimensions of the Christian life. I quickly discovered that not all people are as immediately taken by the topic as I am. The reactions vary widely. Some are simply disinterested; others are so bewildered by the two words appearing together that they dismiss it without finding out more. Because the word “justice” carries so many connotations in society, some people are uncomfortable with thinking that Christian prayer has any bearing upon or is influenced by the various brands of “justice” (social, legal, distributive, and so on). Others react with “The church should stay out of politics” before hearing that the liturgy-justice relationship is about so much more.

I have witnessed the sudden openness to the idea that liturgy and justice are inseparable once people hear more about it.

Some professional liturgists are preoccupied these days with new rubrics and other liturgical minutia, so they do not have the time or energy to devote to deeper consideration of the liturgy-justice relationship. Some social activists might dismiss the topic because they are uninspired by the church's liturgy. Still other people question whether in the celebration of the liturgy itself the church is an authentic model for justice.

At the same time, I have also witnessed the sudden openness to the idea that liturgy and justice are inseparable once people hear more. Initial impressions that might cause hesitation fall away; people begin to get a glimpse of the tremendous potential there is for seeing anew the liturgy and our mission in the world.

Virgil Michel can be a source of inspiration for all us, because he also encountered resistance and opposition to his message. Yet, he was undaunted by the negative voices. His convictions were powerful, so much so that he could not help but be vigilant

about calling the faithful to see the liturgy as a source for the work of justice.

How he went about his mission of spreading the word is in itself something at which to marvel. But first, let's look at what his message was — just what did he see in the liturgy that led him to point to it as the source for social renewal, a school for servants of justice?

SEEING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Key to Dom Virgil's insight that the formation of a social consciousness for Christians is dependent on the renewal of the liturgical spirit is the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. (Let me note here that the descriptor “mystical” is typically not part of today's vocabulary when talking about the Body of Christ. While there are all sorts of theological nuances that have emerged since Michel's day about the “Mystical Body of Christ” versus “Body of Christ,” we need not go down that path to appreciate Dom Virgil's insights.) He was introduced to the doctrine by his European mentor, Lambert Beauduin, OSB, a prominent figure in the modern liturgical movement of the twentieth century. That introduction was an “ah-ah” experience for Michel — a rush of insight, a moment of conversion.

It might be difficult for us today, when we are very familiar with the Body of Christ metaphor expressed in the writings of St. Paul, to appreciate that in Dom Virgil's day, this metaphor and its implications for our understandings about church, liturgy, sacraments, social mission and much more had to be retrieved, even defended at times. So for Michel and other liturgical reformers, the Body of Christ image generated new and exciting ideas (many of which were adopted by the Second Vatican Council).

The Body of Christ — Christ as the head and the baptized as the members. For Michel, as he writes in *Our Life in Christ* (1939), this is not simply a “dream-image,” but a “real living organism.” It is the means by which Christ actively continues his saving work in the world. In other words, Christ acts in and through all of us who are baptized. We each become “another Christ” because we are filled with and moved by the Spirit of Christ. As sharers in the Incarnation then, we are to manifest to the world the divine life. We do this each and every time we strive to bring about justice and harmony in the world, because the God in whose image we are made and in whose life we share is a God of justice.

Further, when we become members of the Body of Christ through baptism, Michel said in *Orate Fratres* 9 (1935), “we are

no longer to ourselves alone but above all to Christ and his cause.” With our baptism—our membership in the Body of Christ—come responsibilities. We become co-responsible for one another and for all of humanity and the created world, because we are, as he says in *The Christian in the World* (1939), “intimately united with Christ and through Christ with [one another].” We therefore cannot act and live in isolation, because the life lived by Christians is “the same life possessed by Christ and all the other members of Christ.” (This notion, of course, aided Michel in fighting the rugged individualism that was emerging in society and even in Catholic worship.)

To carry out our role as “another Christ” in the world, we must continuously be tutored in and rehearse the Christian ways of being and doing. For Michel, our school—the source of our call to mission and ministry in the world—is the liturgy.

Dom Virgil described the liturgy as the “pulse-beat of the church,” which makes our worship together an indispensable source of learning and nourishment for us as the Body of Christ. This led Michel to insist that the revitalization of the Christian spirit and responsiveness to social needs are utterly dependent on the renewal of the liturgical spirit.

For Michel, our school—the source of our call to mission and ministry in the world—is the liturgy.

In *The Liturgy of the Church* (1937), Michel was able to point out, in a nutshell, the inherent relationship between liturgy and the Christian responsibility for justice in the world in this way. Our membership in the Body of Christ (that network of relationships that we are baptized into) and the inherent call to building right and just relationships that comes with this membership are formed and visibly expressed in the liturgy.

A SOCIAL ACT

Michel recognized liturgy as a profoundly *social act*, because it is where the network of relationships and the union in the Body of Christ are concrete. He explained that through active participation in the liturgy, we become conscious of our intimate union with Christ and one another. The liturgy, and especially, the Eucharist, should remind us again and again of the social implications of being a member of the Body of Christ. If we were to ask Dom Virgil what the right structure of society should be, he would answer, as he did in *The Christian in the World*, “You need only point to the Mystical Body of Christ, for there is the model that we should try to follow in our human relations.”

Keep in mind that Michel’s experience of Catholic liturgy was pre-Vatican II, which for me, makes his insights that much more remarkable. He was able to see underneath a fossilized liturgy and raise up the fundamental truths that comprise the Christian life. He also realized that for the Catholic faithful to understand and live what he saw as the critical relationship between the church’s

He was able to see underneath a fossilized liturgy and raise up the fundamental truths that comprise the Christian life.

worship and its mission of justice in the world, *participation in the liturgy was a must*. In fact, we find in Dom Virgil’s writings the words “full, conscious, and active participation” in the same sentence — a phraseology and more importantly, a fundamental shift in thinking about and doing liturgy that was adopted by the Second Vatican Council. Before his death in 1938, Michel even came to support the use of common languages in the liturgy, because he recognized the incentive it would give people to really participate in the liturgy and hopefully, in the liturgy that continues as we as “other Christs” live out our role as servants of justice and peace.

PUBLISHING FOR CATECHESIS

Michel’s concern for catechizing Catholics about the liturgy and its importance to the doing of justice was so great that he took concrete steps to ensure this would happen. First, upon his return from Europe in 1926, he started The Liturgical Press in Collegeville, Minnesota, which more than seventy-five years later remains a key publisher of both academic and pastoral resources. When Michel founded the Press, he did so in order to publish and disseminate materials about liturgy in order to help educate and form all the faithful in the liturgy. (Among the publications was a *Life in Christ* series for children in grades 1-8.)

In the same year, he began *Orate Fratres*, the journal now known as *Worship*. The early issues of *Orate Fratres* were striking in that Dom Virgil made certain that the articles of each issue concerned not only the church’s liturgy but contemporary social issues as well. Michel held fast to his conviction that the two dimensions of Christian life had to be constantly placed in dialogue with one another. Also notable is that the readership for *Orate Fratres* was wide and included laity, clergy, and religious. Michel even included in the journal essays and comments from the readers — which he invited them to submit. One of his letters to the readers made this appeal: “*Just live the liturgy*, as I am sure you do, and you will realize the need of sharing in Christ’s Calvaries to have a share also in His resurrections. As soon as you get a few good ideas on liturgy and sociology [a word used then to speak of social issues] in relation with your work, put them down on paper and let us here have a look at them. A hearty God bless you!”

As a teacher at St. John’s University, Michel invited the students to join him on Saturday afternoons for conversation about the liturgy-justice relationship. As a pastor to the Native Americans of northern Minnesota, he became even more committed to spreading the message that what we do in liturgy has everything to do with how we carry out our social responsibilities.

continued on page 23



*Through him,
with him,
in him...*

Towards an Anamnestic Catechesis

by Michael Warren

The use of memory is essential to handing on tradition and, when it is properly nurtured, is the basis for “unforgettable” catechesis. Embodied memory is closely associated with the Eucharistic anamnesis. More than an act of the mind, it is an effective re-presentation of reality.

Psychologist Shoshanna Felman makes an interesting point about *knowing* that might be applied to memory and the place of memory in catechesis. Felman notes that all learning situations are marked by two contradictory desires. One is the desire to know; the other is the desire not to know. The first desire is obvious. When the learners have not been shoved into the so-called “learning situation” but have entered it willingly, they bring interests about what they want to know. They may well have selected the learning situation specifically because of their interests. The second desire is more complex. The desire not to know may be active while at the same time unrecognized and unconscious. In a learning situation, any of us could find ourselves, on occasion, desperately resisting things we dare not let ourselves know or remember. Catechists are not exceptions to those who have had this experience.

Parish life may believe most of the messages communicated in sessions of explicit catechesis.

We can identify several forms of memory with special emphasis on embodied memory, ecstatic memory, and rote memory. Each in its own way, when nurtured and developed, contributes to “unforgettable” catechesis.

EMBODIED MEMORY

People often encode and carry forward in their lives behaviors and habits that shape their attitudes and ways of living. We might call these “embodied memories.” This concept was illustrated for me by a restaurateur in Fiji who sought to explain to me why tips were not the custom in that part of the South Pacific. For his people, hospitality is a fundamental value. A customer’s leaving a tip for service might actually be taken as an insult by the restaurant server. As the restaurateur told me, “The food you eat and the upkeep of this restaurant are things I must pay for, and so I must

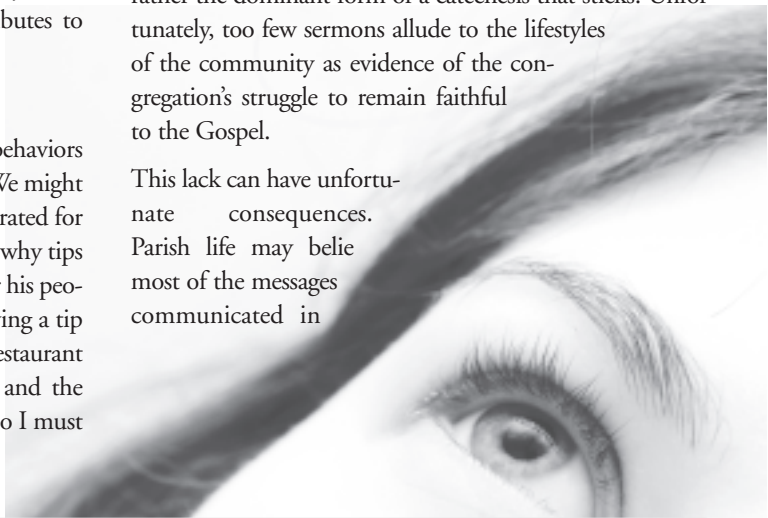
charge you accordingly for this food. But hospitality is not for sale. That is something between you and me as human persons. It is basically a gift we are able to offer one another. You do not charge for gifts; they are free.”

Catechists who are aware of the importance of embodied memories will be better able to understand and use the cluster of embodied memories that is the parish. From a catechetical and sacramental point of view, embodied memory should be a central matter of concern. For better or worse, the history and tradition of parish life shapes the attitudes and beliefs of present parishioners.

Although specific nuances might be lacking in Edward Schillebeeckx’s groundbreaking 1960 book *Christ: the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, its enduring importance cannot be denied. According to Schillebeeckx, the man Jesus embodied God’s imagination of what it means to be human. The second part of Schillebeeckx’s thesis—that the church is (or is meant to be) the sacrament of the encounter with the Spirit of Jesus—remains the ever-present challenge to local churches. How can the local church be a means of encounter with the spirit of Jesus here in our midst? Certainly the answer is not for churches to use slogans and claims unsupported by evidence. The corporate way of life of a congregation represents not a “kind of” lived catechesis, but rather the dominant form of a catechesis that sticks. Unfortunately, too few sermons allude to the lifestyles of the community as evidence of the congregation’s struggle to remain faithful to the Gospel.

This lack can have unfortunate consequences.

Parish life may believe most of the messages communicated in



If anamnesis is a possibility, its opposite is also a possibility: perfunctory, mindless repetition of formulas that have lost significance for the individual.

sessions of explicit catechesis. Those being formally catechized do not always immediately “get” the disconnect between a particular verbal catechesis and the lived catechesis of the community—if it in fact exists—but many eventually do. In teaching undergraduates about the Catholic tradition of peace and nonviolence, I have been asked by students why, in their many years of Catholic schooling and/or catechesis, they never before heard of the Gospel-based tradition of nonviolence. My answer is this: “Maybe your teachers could not afford for you to hear it, or maybe they themselves had never heard it. There may have been too many parishioners with military backgrounds or with investments in the weapons industries for the parish priest to preach about it.”

ECSTATIC MEMORY/ANAMNESIS

“Ecstatic memory” is a term I use to name the things we cannot forget even though we have made no conscious attempt to memorize them. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann describe the

procedures and condition under which new realities can be effectively reproduced. The process needs deep emotional contexts for it to be successful. Thought and understanding alone are insufficient. In a similar vein, Emmanuel Levinas explains why, in Jewish thinking, reflection alone on the meanings of the oral and written tradition is insufficient for handing them on. The Jewish practices of halakhah and hagadah are ways of dealing with religious tradition that demand reflection on actual practices and a struggle with the meanings in the here and now.

Another term for ecstatic memory is *anamnesis*. Literally it means “without forgetting.” But its connotation includes a sense that what is being remembered is “unforgettable.” In its religious use, anamnesis also seems to connote a hint of ecstasy, i.e., the things one could not possibly forget because they made all the difference in one’s life. The religious meaning of anamnesis was set out well by Karl Rahner. He opted for the biblical sense of anamnesis, which is not only an act of the remembering mind, but more an effective presence of one reality (say a past event or action) in a new situation where it becomes real again in the here and now. The specific “here and now” Rahner cited as creating this possibility is liturgical worship. For Rahner, the Eucharist is no ho-hum matter. The danger of distortive analogy notwithstanding, one might think of a crowd of enthusiastic sports fans hoping for and then actually seeing unfold before their eyes a miraculous victory in the ninth inning of the seventh game of the

continued on page 16

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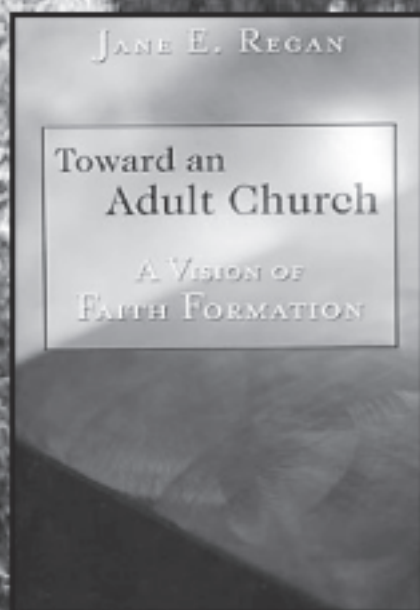
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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

GROWTH IN THE SPIRIT

by Robert Morneau



An old adage tells us: “Growth demands participation.” That rings as true in the spiritual life where we, as stewards, are called to develop our gifts and help others develop theirs.

In his book *Growth in the Spirit*, Father Francois Roustang, S.J., maintained that the spiritual life, as opposed to the Christian life, requires an awareness of the Spirit’s activity in the soul, an appreciation of experiences of grace, and a deep desire to make progress in our relationship with God. Whether or not this distinction is accurate, there is a difference between a casual, unreflective embrace of Christian discipleship and a serious commitment to the way of Jesus. As catechetical leaders, called to ponder and communicate the mysteries of our faith, we have the privilege and the duty to grow in the Spirit by nurturing our spiritual development as best we can.

One framework for understanding spirituality is that of Father Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), founder of the Society of St. Sulpice. He lists three essential components of the Christian spiritual life: adoration (Jesus before our eyes); communion (Jesus in our hearts); and co-operation (Jesus in our hands). Thus, spiritual development would mean a maturation in each of these areas: a deepening of our contemplative life as we ponder and become conversant with the life of Jesus; an increased intimacy and affection for the Lord and his body, the church; and, a commitment to work alongside Jesus in serving others and doing the will of the Father. Although such growth is not

easy to measure, there are ways to tell if we are moving in a positive direction or falling short of the mark. The most basic and fundamental one is an increase or decrease in love, joy, and peace.

In reading the classics of our Christian tradition, works such as *The Confessions of St. Augustine* or Therese of Lisieux’s *Story of a Soul*, we witness how God gradually, yet unerringly calls and challenges the human soul to full maturity. It’s a rough passage, with many bumps and false turns. Yet God is ever there prodding, nudging, whispering, drawing us into fullness of life (John 10:10). In the end, St. Augustine and St. Therese grew in love, joy, and peace.

In his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis commented that he hated the word *interference*. He then went on to say that in both the Old and New Testaments, it is precisely that word which has central place. This led Lewis to declare God “a transcendental Interferer.” Why? Because God wants us to reach the fullness of our potential. We need but read Jesus’ parable about the sower and the seeds to become aware of God’s desire for us and God’s graced interference in our lives. In the end, God interferes for the sake of an increase in our love, joy, and peace.

ADORATION, COMMUNION, COOPERATION

There are many other ways to define and describe spirituality, but Fr. Olier’s perspective serves us well, however limited. Within this framework, here are a set of principles or guide-

continued on page U2



continued from page U1

lines that, if assimilated and put into practice, might help us to grow in the Spirit, in this life of love, joy, and peace.

We grow when we make and keep contact with holy things!

St. Therese of Lisieux maintained that she grew in her spiritual life by keeping in contact with holy things. Primarily, this was her contact and love for the Eucharist and sacred scripture. In sacrament and word, experienced deep within, she deepened her prayer life of adoration, her intimacy with the Lord, and her ministry as a contemplative religious.

As catechetical leaders, we are people of word and sacrament. Keeping in personal contact with the Bible and the table provides us with an unlimited source of growth. One danger though is “over-familiarity” to the point where we may lack reverence. We must invoke the Holy Spirit to continue to give us a sense of wonder and awe as we handle God’s word and receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

As catechetical leaders we are intimately involved with people. When we have a deep sense of the dignity of our co-workers and those who come to us to be formed in the faith, we are in “contact with holy things,” indeed, with holy beings. Our call is to see Jesus in everyone we meet, and to share with them the Lord who is within us. This mutual contact will lead to much growth in the Spirit.

Various cultures have the custom of bowing when meeting a fellow pilgrim. In that gesture there is an awareness of greeting God within the other. This simple act brings a profoundly significant intentionality to our lives. We are constantly in contact with “holy things” and are called to respond with gentle sensitivity and respect.

Desire is so foundational to the spiritual life.

We grow traveling in the company of friends who are faith-filled disciples.

The American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson claimed that we can measure growth and development in our lives by “the successive choirs” of our friends. The old adage, “Birds of a feather, flock together,” plays true. When we are surrounded by people, living or “dead” [the communion of saints], who treasure adoration, communion, and co-operation, we are in an environment that fosters a life of faith, hope, and love. Their example and support foster spiritual development. Their

challenge and admonition call us to on-going conversion of heart and mind.

St. Augustine lived this principle. He treasured and needed friendship. He yearned to be around people who shared a vision of faith and who would pray and study together. This company enriched his life and those with whom he lived. Without that social interchange, his spiritual growth and development would have been truncated.

Joining the company of people whose value system is contrary to the Gospel obviously places us in dangerous waters.

As catechetical leaders we have the marvelous opportunities of working with many faith-filled people. Their witness to Gospel values, their affirmation of our work, their encouragement in times of difficulty, are priceless. As they enrich us, we too are to enrich them. This mutuality fosters incredible growth and development. And let us not forget the influence of the company of saints who live in communion with God and with us. The example of their lives and writings are resources that present ideals of grace to our minds and hearts. Their friendship and companionship is real and active. Because we are social in nature, we cannot grow in isolation.

Patience is of utmost importance in our spiritual development!

Our age, as perhaps most ages, is one of great impatience. Unlike the giant redwood trees that are supreme artists in patience, we demand immediate growth. We would hurry the seasons of growth and thereby destroy any possibility of mature development. Hurriedness is destructive. Shortcuts mean an abortive life. Gardeners know the nature of time and are models for us of a holy waiting that respects the nature of things.

Yet, there is the danger of procrastination. Our growth in the Spirit has an element of urgency. Let us strike at the moment that the fiery iron of the Holy Spirit is at hand and respond with our whole being. However, we still must realize and respect the gradual evolution in the life cycles of adoration, communion, and co-operation. Consultation with a spiritual director is most helpful in discerning our level of patience or impatience.

The stages of spiritual growth and development also include plateaus and fallow times. St. John of the Cross reminds us that there will also be dark nights when our faith will seem empty and life will appear absurd. The temptation then can be to leave these dry pastures for greener fields. These periods of dryness and acedia are often the work of grace, purifying us and

Because we are social in nature, we cannot grow in isolation.

creating an emptiness to be filled by God's life and love. Patience is the order of the day. God, though quiet, is faithful to the divine promises of presence. God is present even in our darkest days.

A passion for growth disposes us to the effectiveness of grace!

Desire is so foundational to the spiritual life. Do we really want to contemplate the mystery of Jesus in fostering a life of adoration? Is communion and intimacy with the Lord and the Body of Christ high on our priority list? How firm is our commitment to collaborate with the Lord in the furthering of the Kingdom? Fr. Thomas Green maintains that spiritual growth is hindered because "we don't really want badly enough to discover God in our lives."

Authentic desire is followed by discipline. Though spiritual development is essentially the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we must also put forth great effort if we are to respond to our baptismal call to maturity. When desire is lacking, growth is stifled. The result is devastating. The German poet Goethe, in *Faust*, puts it this way: "Those who have ceased to grow find nothing right." When people find nothing right, it creates a sour atmosphere in the home, parish, or work place.

Fr. Ron Rolheiser writes about holy longings. These longings energize us toward full spiritual development. One can almost feel in a package of spring seeds, be it carrots, cucumbers, or radishes, a deep yearning for the darkness of the dank soil where full potential might be achieved. Would that our souls had such a passion to be what we can be.

Suffering, disruption, and crises can be the doorway into spiritual development!

Our catechetical work is all about the paschal mystery. We are bound for the glory of eternal life. We must never lose sight of our eschatological goal. Our participation in the Resurrection is linked to our participation in our Lord's life, suffering, and death. Spiritual development involves that ancient paradox of the grain of wheat falling to the ground. Would that we were as wise as the acorn and caterpillar that die unto themselves so the oak tree may flourish and the butterfly might take wing. The grain of wheat, the acorn, and the caterpillar know suffering, disruption, and pain. But there is no other door to growth than dying to oneself, this graced self-giving.

Such self-giving love is the heart of the matter. Since we are made to the image and likeness of God, to the extent that we



emulate our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier by total self-giving, we will grow and develop. Again this life of sacrifice and surrender is made possible through the gift of grace. We have first been loved. The presence of that Love within us makes our own self-giving possible. Grace upon grace; a life of glory, peace, and joy.

Realism demands that we recognize that suffering, disruption, and crises can also be non-redemptive. A theory of spiritual development must not attempt to justify destructive behavior. Though God can and does bring good out of evil, we must condemn any evil in our own thoughts and actions, as well as these of others.

STEWARDSHIP

Common wisdom tells us, as mentioned above, that growth demands participation. It is not enough for catechetical leaders to have diplomas on the wall, to attend countless workshops and conferences, or to lecture and write on our responsibility to have a systematic understanding of our faith. Spiritual development demands that we enter into the poverty of Jesus, experience his paschal mystery, feel the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer and discernment, and be about the works of social justice. Such participation is filled with deep joys and much suffering. One temptation we must resist is to be simply a professional, keeping our hands clean of the messiness of the historical condition.

Common sense tells us spiritual development is difficult when one's culture is characterized by blatant consumerism, radical individualism, and a self-assertive pragmatism. In such an environment we struggle to keep first things first. Spiritual development in the end is about relationships. It is not about accumulating things, or about embracing a philosophy that "it's all about me," or about thinking that if I don't do it, it won't get done. The Holy Spirit has been given to us. Our trust and confidence in God's pervasive presence assures us that we can be true to our call to discipleship and live that call by being good stewards.

Perhaps this is the secret of spiritual maturity and development: being good stewards. When we receive God's gift gratefully; when we nourish, treasure, and cherish those gifts responsibly; and when we share God's gifts generously and sacrificially, we are on the road to sanctity. Stewardship is a telltale sign that we are disciples. If we respond to this call, then one day we may hear those glorious words: "Well done, good and faithful steward." ■

Bishop Robert Morneau is the retired auxiliary bishop of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and a prolific writer and poet.

FOLLOWING JESUS' LEAD

THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF CATECHETICAL LEADERS

by Barbara Campbell

"I HAVE GIVEN YOU A MODEL TO FOLLOW, SO THAT AS I HAVE DONE FOR YOU,
YOU SHOULD ALSO DO."

(John 13:15)



A very unfortunate yet popularly assumed image of the early church is that Jesus' disciples were a ragtag group of poor, uneducated fishermen who left everything to follow a teacher with a captivating message. This image, which I encountered again in a recent commentary on the Scripture readings of the day, gives the impression that Jesus gathered people with little or no formation as his early disciples. By the sheer grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit, these "simple" men spread the Gospel and in 300 years the entire Roman Mediterranean world was Christian. No small feat!

These early disciples were the first to proclaim and teach the meaning of Jesus. They were the catechetical leaders of their

time. This inaccurate image of them as poor and uneducated has seeped into our ecclesial consciousness over time and has negatively influenced the recruitment and ongoing formation of catechetical leaders today. The image risks giving the impression that adequate spiritual and intellectual formation is not really that necessary.

Imagine a scenario like this: a person is asked to apply for a position in catechetical leadership. The person, recognizing her or his need for further background and formation, brings this up in the interview and is told that such training is really not necessary. All that is needed is to trust the Holy Spirit. After all, Jesus recruited a number of uneducated men and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they changed the world.

Life with Jesus was an intensive seminar on the meaning of the Kingdom, the love of the Father, and salvation for all who accept Jesus.

THE JEWISH MILIEU

A closer examination of the process by which Jesus chose and trained his disciples shows that the image of men who were not really ready for the task is greatly exaggerated. Jesus chose his disciples from the population of Jewish men who were most prepared to understand and proclaim his message. Jewish children were schooled in the synagogue from the ages of five to thirteen. From the age of thirteen they were apprenticed to the tasks they would perform for the rest of their lives. Their religious formation also continued through regular meetings in the local synagogue where they studied the Scriptures. They celebrated Passover each year and at least one time in their lives were probably among the 130,000 visitors to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover at the Temple. So the first disciples were in fact men who were well versed in the story of God's revelation in the Torah. Even if they could not read or write, they had the stories memorized. Jesus clearly chose men who were educated in their Jewish faith, and he carefully built on that foundation.

JESUS AS MASTER TEACHER

When Jesus chose the first disciples, he did not do so randomly. The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus took time and

care in selecting his disciples and training them for mission. In the Gospel of Luke we see that Jesus recruited seventy-two disciples, taught them, and sent them out two by two to proclaim the Kingdom of God (Luke 10:1-12). Jesus gave them specific instructions on how to behave when they arrived, how to accept whatever hospitality was offered, and how to detach themselves from those who rejected their message.

CHOOSING THE APOSTLES

When it came time to choose his closest associates, Jesus went alone to the mountain and spent a night in prayer (Luke 6:12-16). He then gathered the disciples together and chose twelve men to be his apostles. These were the men with whom Jesus spent the most time in formation. They not only heard Jesus' general proclamation to the crowds, but he also taught them privately (Mark 9:34). At the appropriate time he sent them out, giving them the power and authority to heal the sick and cast out demons. These Twelve also received specific instruction on what to take with them, how to receive hospitality, and how to detach themselves from those who rejected their message (Matthew 10:5-14; Luke 9:1-6). Upon their return, Jesus debriefed them, answered their questions and gave them an opportunity to rest (Mark 6:30-32).

Finally, we see Jesus giving special attention to an even smaller number within the group of Twelve, James, John, Peter, and Andrew. Of these James, John, and Peter would be eyewitnesses to the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-31, Mark 9:1-4, and Luke 9:28-30). Paul would later refer to them as the pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9).

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

In the Gospel of Luke, the disciples ask Jesus for additional formation. They want Jesus to teach them how to pray, just as

The inaccurate image of the early disciples as poor and uneducated has negatively influenced the recruitment and formation of leaders today.

continued on page U6



continued from page U5

John the Baptist taught his disciples. Jesus responds by teaching them the Lord's Prayer. The disciples are to pray for the glorification of God's name on earth and the establishment of the Kingdom. They are to ask for God's continual protection day by day. When the final test comes, they are to pray for God's continuing support (Luke 11:1-4).

Jesus goes on to assure the disciples that their prayers are heard by God. In the story of the midnight visitor who knocks on his neighbor's door asking for bread, Jesus calls for perseverance in prayer. In another vivid example he reminds his disciples of God's responsiveness to their prayer. Would a good father ever give his children a snake instead of a fish, or a scorpion instead of an egg? "If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Luke 11:9-13). God always responds to prayer — we ourselves must continually discern how our prayer is being answered.

READY TO PROCLAIM JESUS

In his three years in active ministry, Jesus recruited and trained his cadre of apostles and disciples and prepared them for the days that lay ahead. Life with Jesus was an intensive seminar on the meaning of the Kingdom, the love of the Father, and salvation for all who accept Jesus.

When we read the Gospels we find honest stories of these first disciples misunderstanding the message. They hoped Jesus would be a political messiah and they would ride on his coat-tails to earthly glory. In times of crisis, they sometimes failed to trust in Jesus and ran away. However, in experiencing the risen Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit, all that they had been taught by Jesus began to make sense in a new way. The Twelve recognized their call to proclaim what Jesus had accomplished for all through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

These first disciples responsible for the initial proclamation of the Gospel were well trained and spiritually prepared for the task. Who could be a better teacher and spiritual guide than Jesus? When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost it was to disciples who were prepared to understand the salvation won for us by Jesus and to proclaim it to the world.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERSHIP TODAY

Spiritual and intellectual formation for catechetical leaders is as important today as it was in Jesus' time. Jesus was able to train his disciples by building on the foundation of faith and learning that was central to the Jewish tradition. Today the challenges to catechetical leaders are those of a more complex and literate world. Catechetical leaders help catechists share the Gospel with an audience that is increasingly distracted and fragmented. In a world of demands on our time and attention we recognize and rely on our own center in Jesus Christ. By reflecting on how Jesus accomplished his task of training his disciples we can extract three basic principles for catechetical leadership formation today.

A FAITHFUL FOUNDATION

Jesus chose as his disciples those who had the foundation and vocabulary to understand the message he was proclaiming (and misunderstand and be corrected). In the same way, today's catechetical leaders need an integrated and systematic knowledge of the Catholic faith. Catechetical leaders have the opportunity to build a sure foundation for their ministry by learning from wise mentors and immersing themselves in the tradition and writings of our Catholic faith. Resources such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* are invaluable companions that we can return to again and again for inspiration and a deepening of our faith and understanding.

SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP

When Jesus sent his disciples on mission, he did not send them alone. Jesus realized that for the mission to move forward, the leaders needed companionship and mutual assistance. Catechetical leadership today can be a lonely experience. Tight budgets, lack of appreciation, and unrealistic expectations are ingredients in a recipe for spiritual desolation and burnout. It is essential that catechetical leaders participate in local and national groups as a source of ongoing support and companionship on the journey.

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

The Gospel of Luke especially notes that Jesus was a man of prayer (see Luke 5:16). When Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray, Jesus taught them the ultimate prayer of trust in God, the Lord's Prayer. He also counseled them to persevere in their prayer, as God is always ready to respond. Their ministry could only continue to flourish as they continued to pray and to grow in relationship with God. Catechetical leaders today are also called to persevere in prayer as the early disciples did. The foundation for their ministry is trust in God who is always ready to respond to their needs.

SUPPORTING CATECHETICAL LEADERS

In addition to observing these three basic principles, it is essential that the parish and the church as a whole continue to support catechetical leaders and provide opportunities for ongoing formation. The *National Directory for Catechesis* emphasizes the need for ongoing formation for catechists, and their words apply equally to catechetical leaders.

Like all Christians, catechists [and leaders] are called to continual conversion and growth in their faith and, for this reason, are called to ongoing spiritual formation. The catechist [and leader] should continue his or her own spiritual formation through frequent reception of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation, through spiritual direction, and through continued study of the faith. The catechist [and catechetical leader] should also be provided with opportunities for spiritual growth as retreats, conferences, etc. In addition to spiritual formation, the catechist [and catechetical leader] is also in need of pedagogical formation, especially as society, teaching methods and culture change (*National Directory*, pp. 236-237).

It is essential that catechetical leaders participate in local and national groups as a source of companionship on the journey.

FOLLOWING THE LEADER

As Jesus called his disciples together, he knew that they needed instruction, spiritual support, and a deeper understanding of their mission. He chose disciples who, through their formation in and understanding of the principles of the Jewish faith, could grow into being the evangelizers he needed to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Jesus spent time teaching, encouraging, growing into relationship with his disciples to prepare them for their calling. In like manner today catechetical leaders need to actively pursue — and be supported in receiving — the intellectual and spiritual formation necessary to effectively proclaim and administer the Gospel today. ■

Barbara Campbell is vice president for apostolic initiatives at Loyola Press, a Jesuit ministry. She is co-author of Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts.

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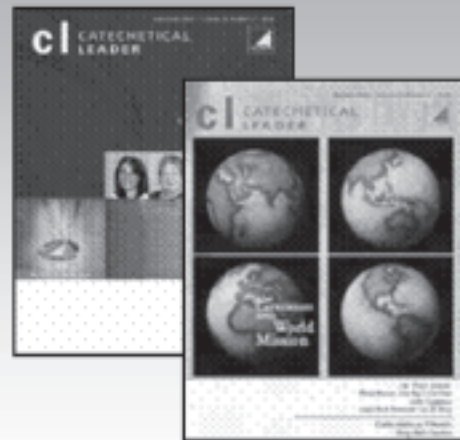
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Conferences



and

The Magazine



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We love having non-members attend the NCCL Conference because it gives you an opportunity to experience our organization firsthand. We invite you to become a member of NCCL during this Conference. Please register for membership at the NCCL exhibit booth.

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Spiritlinking Leadership: Working through Resistance to Organizational Change by Donna J. Markham. New York, Paulist Press, 1999. 143 pages, \$18.95.

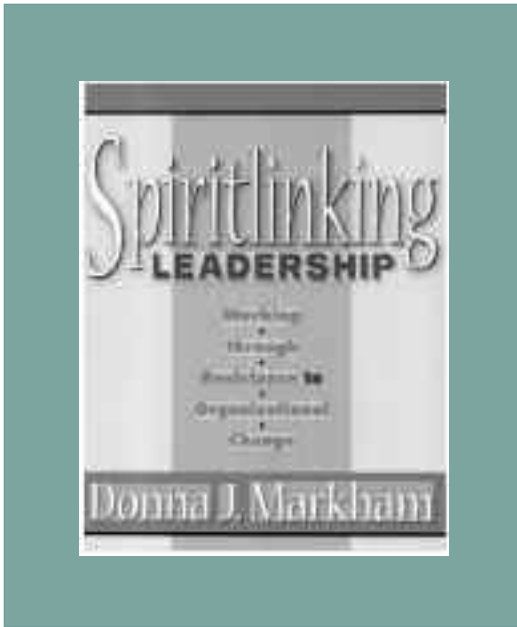
Reviewed by Janet Schaeffler, OP

Truth telling encompasses both good news and difficult insights. Leaders err when they fail to acknowledge directly individual and corporate successes and focus primarily on problems. All groups need to celebrate achievements. ... Excellent communication and its contribution toward the establishment of an atmosphere of mutual trust is far better grounded in affirmation than it is in negative criticism. This is equally true for individual relationships and corporate relationships.

Does that sound like something you need? Is it something your staff—whether a parish catechetical team, a parish pastoral staff, or a diocesan catechetical staff—could profit from? It's just the beginning of a "Your Turn Exercise" in Donna J. Markham's *Spiritlinking Leadership: Working through Resistance to Organizational Change*.

Markham, a clinical psychologist, is currently prioress of the Adrian Dominican Sisters, Adrian, Minnesota, and past president and CEO of Southdown Institute in Ontario, Canada. Having held a number of leadership positions in the health care field, she has served on boards of directors for not-for-profit organizations and corporations in the fields of education, health care and social service. She lectures widely on topics pertaining to organizational transformation, resistance to change, leadership for mission, and community building. Markham will be one of the keynote presenters for the NCCL Annual Conference and Expo in Houston in April.

Spiritlinking Leadership can be found on the shelves of executives of major corporations, leaders of religious organizations, university presidents, social justice organizations, community organizers, journalists, hospital administrators and mental health organization administrators, and environmentalists.



What does it have to do with catechetics? What *doesn't* it have to do with catechetics and with us as leaders in catechetics?

As catechetical leaders, we empower and encourage others on the journey of faith, all people of all types, the various people with whom we work and minister. This continually involves change. Change is the only constant. I found in this book an invaluable resource for

- understanding myself better
- understanding those with whom I work and minister in various circumstances
- finding indispensable tools and resources for engaging others to look at the journey together of leadership
- examining, in fascinating and helpful ways, the resistance that inevitably surfaces when change happens—or is just suggested

Spiritlinking leadership is what *we're* all about; it's what we're called to engender in this world, in and through our ministry. It might not be a theological or ministerial term that we find in church documents; yet for me it resonates with my understanding of theology and ministry. Markham says:

The key to addressing the challenges that face those who are, or who will become, our excellent leaders is spiritlinking—the deliberate and untiring act of working through resistance to

continued on page 14

organizational transformation by building the circle of friends, fostering networks of human compassion and interweaving teams of relationships through which new ideas are born and new ways of responding to the mission take form and find expression. Spiritlinking describes the basis for actualizing the living covenant between the human community and the world matrix in which humankind lives and works.

The book may not be written by a catechetical leader according to the strict definitions we find in the various documents and standards, but the book is composed by a person with the heart and vision of a catechetical leader par excellence.

The values we hold, the journey we are on, the mission we believe in—bridging disunity, promoting community, deepening a sense of meaning, creative visioning, working through grief and resistance, truth telling, collaboration, wonder in the midst of the mess, holding the common good, healthy servant leadership—form the essence, the examples, and the resources of this book.

Speaking from the heart of a catechetical leader, Markham begins each chapter not by moving right into the concept and subject matter, but with a story—a human story that touches the heart and soul and opens the reader, readying the reader for the truth that is to come. This technique is, for me, just one more illustration that this is no textbook, no psychological book, nor just an organizational change book, but a book about humanity and our innate desire to deepen, grow, change, and be leaders in that path of conversion.

Extremely helpful features of the book are the various charts and summary boxes interspersed throughout, such as one entitled “Working Through Resistance” and filled with questions for the four areas: The Mode, The Motive, Implications, The Action. Another chart, entitled “The Resistances to Collaboration,”

names the most common resistances people naturally cling to and then suggests positive responses to each of the resistances.

The books I find the most helpful are those that offer not just explanations of a concept, a new idea, someone’s theory, but those which provide questions and exercises for personal and/or group reflection, discussion and activities to put the concepts into practical use and application for one’s own particular situation. This is the genius and richness of *Spiritlinking Leadership*.

Each chapter ends with a substantial “Your Turn” section that includes some brief commentary to continue to make the ideas practical and then suggests many questions and activities. These sections are designed in such a way that an individual could reflect upon his or her own ministerial situation and style of spiritlinking leadership. Working through these exercises could serve as a significant self-reflection time for an individual catechetical leader.

At the same time, a staff, committee, or board group that is working together—especially one that might be experiencing resistance to some change—could use the questions and suggestions for activities together to help them better understand each other as well as how they work together as a group.

Spiritlinking Leadership is an invaluable tool: for prayer, for reflection, for discussion, for new ideas, for transformative change on the road to being a more effective spirit-filled leader linked with all God’s People. ■

Janet Schaeffler, OP, is associate director for adult faith formation in the Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Spiritlinking Leadership is featured as the book of the month at NCCL’s online bookstore.

Openness to this ongoing conversion is a prerequisite for fruitful spiritual formation.

If we are not awakened and stimulated, provoked and stirred up, it will be impossible for us to enliven another’s faith, let alone breathe the spirit of God into their life. This is one of the reasons we gather together at an annual conference and meeting. We desire to be aroused and animated. We long to share our faith with those spiritual companions who have answered the call to be catechetical leaders, some older, some younger, some of darker skin and others of lighter complexion. We

want to feel like the living, moving, body of Christ so that we can go home and boldly proclaim the good news...in word and in deed.

We gather in Houston not just to *transform catechesis* but to be transformed ourselves. You are always welcome to take a “time out” in the prayer room. While the earth may be “charged with the grandeur of God,” the Houston Hyatt will be electrified with the passion and enthusiasm of Catholic catechetical leaders committed to the person and the message of Jesus Christ. Blessed be God forever. ■

FORGING A NEW FRONTIER

A Report from the Rural Catechesis Committee

by Dorothy Giloley, SSJ



The Rural Catechesis Committee was formed at the NCCL Conference 2007. There are presently 21 members on the committee and each one also serves on one or two of the subcommittees. Rosie Bartel, the diocesan director for the Green Bay Diocese and Sister Dorothy Giloley SSJ, the diocesan director for the Fairbanks Diocese are the co-chairs of the committee. There are seven subcommittees, which have with the following responsibilities:

There are seven subcommittees, which have with the following responsibilities:

- The National Survey
- Researching Resources (Catholic Publishers, etc.)
- Collaborating with Organizations That Support Rural Ministry
- Integrating with Other NCCL Committees
- Working with the Annual Conference Committee
- Catechetical Leadership and Catechist Formation
- Publications

The sub-committee that worked on the National Survey has it ready to be distributed to the dioceses. This will be done through the NCCL office via e-mail. We hope that this survey will give us a good overview of the situation, needs and resources in rural, remote and small parish communities throughout the country. We have been working with the planning committee for the NCCL National Conference in Houston, 2008. The Rural Ministry Committee will be offering the following workshops at the National Conference:

SUNDAY, APRIL 6

1:45–3:15 pm: Rural Catechesis Gathering

The results of the National Survey will be distributed and discussed. We will also dialogue with the Catholic publishers who are present regarding resources and creative ways of developing catechetical materials for rural parishes.

MONDAY, APRIL 7

3:30–4:30 pm: Hot Topics

Rural response to the keynote speakers' presentations and how their messages can be lived out in our rural communities.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

2:00–3:00 pm: Hot Topics

Discussion and presentation of resources for training catechetical leaders and catechists in rural areas.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

1:15–2:30 pm: Learning Session

Sacramental Prep in Rural Parishes: A panel of four will share their thoughts and resources for sacramental preparation and dialogue with the participants.

So far the Rural Catechesis Committee has been working on the National Survey, planning the workshops for the National Conference 2008, and working on some articles for publication. Beginning in 2008 Rosie Bartel will be working with the following subcommittees: Catechetical Leadership; Integrating with Other NCCL Committees; and Publications. Sister Dorothy will be working with the subcommittees on: Collaboration with Organizations that support Rural Ministry and Researching Resources for Rural Ministry with the Publishing Companies.

One of the challenges we have faced as a committee is defining *rural*. In conversation with the National Catholic Rural Life Conference I have gained many insights into this problem. Rural can be defined by numbers, location and even mentality. For the survey we will use these definitions:

Rural Parishes—located in a non-urban, country setting with 500 households or less.

Small Parishes—non-rural but with 500 households or less.

Remote Parishes—those with no road access (such as the native villages in Alaska).

As a committee we invite all catechetical leaders who minister in rural or remote areas or small parishes, either directly or as support persons on the diocesan level, to share with us your best practices in this area of catechesis. We also welcome you to join one of our subcommittees. The Rural Catechesis Committee was formed as result of a need coming from catechetical leaders from across the country. We look forward to a

challenging and hope-filled future as we travel into this new frontier of rural catechesis. ■

Sister Dorothy Giloley, SSJ, is the diocesan director of religious education for the Fairbanks Diocese and the Region 12 representative for NCCL. A Sister of Saint Joseph from Philadelphia, she has been ministering in Alaska since 2001.



I would call that moving moment “anamnetic catechesis” — remembering something in such a reverent way that is cannot be easily forgotten.

World Series or Doug Flutie’s famous “Hail Mary” pass that clutches victory from defeat as time expires in a football game.

Still anamnesis is not to be understood as some form of ecstasy or as standing outside of bodily experience. It is the opposite: it stands fully within a community, a long tradition, and a set of meanings that are being actualized in the here and now.

I once visited St. Michael’s Church in New York City late one afternoon. Dim light was streaming through the church, which was empty except for me, kneeling in the back, and a Hispanic man who was walking the Stations of the Cross. As he moved from station to station, he whispered in Spanish to his young son the meaning of each station. If I could invent a term to describe this moving moment, I would call it “anamnetic catechesis”—remembering something in such a reverent way that is cannot be easily forgotten.

ANAMNETIC CATECHESIS

If anamnesis is a possibility, its opposite is also a possibility: perfunctory, mindless repetition of formulas that have lost significance for the individual. Under certain conditions the Eucharist could be celebrated so as to suppress its character of anamnesis. For many in the assembly, the ritual seems to have become a boring, ho-hum event of minimal significance. Someone has proposed that in some assemblies what is being ritualized is a consumerist bargain with God: “I’ll give you my fifty minutes, but you stay off my back the rest of the week, and make sure nothing bad happens to me or the people I love.” Such an attitude would make anamnesis impossible.

The question of whether parishes should provide “catechesis for the Eucharist” is one that needs attention today. Instead of providing such catechesis in school or classroom settings, what may

be needed is a communal catechesis of the assembly. Too often, speech about the Eucharist is formulaic and even stunted, almost as if people are preoccupied with the use of proper language rather than fully appreciative of the many-faceted realities of the Eucharist — sacrifice, meal, memorial, pledge of future glory, and so forth. The Gloria and various Prefaces are examples of quasi-ecstatic speech, a claim perhaps easily dismissed until one hears the Glorias composed by Bach, Vivaldi, or Mozart. These artists could not have composed what they did without letting themselves enter into the ecstasy of these texts. The Gloria, like the Preface, encodes the core of the Gospel in a deep way. In its first sentence, the Gloria seems to say that the glory of God manifests itself as peace among human beings. That peace is God’s glory, or at least a manifestation of it, among human beings. The Preface says our vocation is “always and everywhere” to live a life of thanks to God for God’s gifts. What a radical challenge to consumerist ethos!

Liturgists, on liturgical and theological grounds, can easily scorn Ronald Knox’s 1950s book *The Mass in Slow Motion* with themselves seeing, as Knox did, credible ways to help people enter into the Eucharist as anamnesis, and not by rote memory. The opening prayers of the Eucharist, especially the Gloria and the Creed, are filled with stunning claims accessible only through anamnesis, yet people often seem to rattle them off as rote formulas free from any emotional entanglements. Such statements of faith are properly recited out of deep love and gratitude made accessible through anamnesis. Anamnesis is like a father’s going each morning to his infant daughter’s crib and lifting her up in a joyful and playful embrace that will define for her, at some level, who she is.

UNREMEMBERING

I remember the day of my Confirmation at age twelve in St. Joseph's Church in Somerville, Massachusetts. I knew the day was important, but I was unsure exactly why. As I looked around me at my fellow confirmands, most of whom appeared distracted, it seemed that most of us considered the experience to be some sort of party, but we did not really know why we were there or what we were celebrating. Something "magic" was happening to us. We were about to become "strong and perfect Christian soldiers of Jesus Christ." I remember believing that the event had to do with the Holy Spirit, a mysteriously reality one had to believe in but which nobody seemed to understand. The Holy Spirit was going to make us somehow better.

It took me many years of study before I "got" the deepest truth of that moment: *The grace of the confirming Spirit of Jesus is not communicated all in one magic moment. Or the opposite can be mediated through the Spirit-filled family and parish: a self-serving sense of superiority layered over a deep religious sense of uncertainty.* Confirmation, like all the church's sacraments, is a community sacrament. This reality was effectively hidden from

me by the well-rehearsed rote distortion "strong and perfect Christian soldiers of Jesus Christ."

CATECHESIS

Those of us whose main ministry is catechesis meet many people who, by misunderstanding doctrine, are shackled in dogmatic chains that keep them from flourishing in faith. An old woman once told me how she had not been able to receive Communion for over fifty years because she did not believe that Jesus was physically present in the Eucharist. She used the "shackled" metaphor for herself, saying that a belief conversation with Br. Cosmas Rubencamp, CFX, removed her chains. Rubencamp told her she was right to refuse to believe that Jesus is physically present in the Eucharist. He told her (obviously influenced by Piet Schoonenberg), "That is heresy. Jesus is not physically present in the Eucharist. He is sacramentally present there, and we know more about what sacramental presence is not, than we do about what it is." She said, "He unshackled me and I began to flourish." Unfortunately, too little is written about the positive side of "unremembering."

continued on page 21

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BUILDING COMPETENT, CONFIDENT, AND COMMITTED CATECHISTS

by Jo Rotunno



I began working with the original *Echoes of Faith* project in 1996. At that time there were close to 400,000 catechists in the United States church. The community of catechists then had a median age that fell in the forties, but all trends showed us that as the years progressed catechists would become younger and less informed about their Catholic faith. Research had shown that young adult Catholics were more technologically aware, less likely to know the vocabulary of the Catholic faith, more selective in their appropriation of the creed and practices of the faith, and increasingly bilingual or even non-English-speaking. The original *Echoes of Faith* was created to respond to these emerging realities and our conversations with you in recent years have borne out these original assumptions. The future has arrived.

Catechists today are indeed younger and younger. Increasingly, they look to the computer as a source of information. They are even more uncertain of what their Church teaches, and they are much more multi-ethnic than they were twelve years ago. In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, more catechists are formed and certified in Spanish than in English each year. But across the country, the percentage of catechists who are certified at all and truly prepared to hand on faith to children has diminished and that is a disappointment because *Echoes of Faith* was created to reverse that trend.

Echoes of Faith Plus can help this catechist community that is so needed by the church to become more competent, confident of their abilities, and committed to filling one of the most vital roles in the church. We know that *Echoes of Faith* works as a vehicle for catechist formation. I'd like to remind you of the reasons why.

- *Echoes Plus* helps you form a community of catechists in your parish or diocese. Catechists will know who they are as sharers of faith and what the importance of their role is today. They will engage in a process of spiritual formation that will lead them to a greater commitment to their Catholic faith and a passion for what they do as catechists. The three modules in the Catechist series will start your catechists on their way toward these goals.
- *Echoes Plus* gives your catechists a strong baseline understanding of the teachings of their Catholic faith and the Scriptures upon which our teachings are based. The five Theology mod-

ules of *Echoes Plus* do not cover all a catechist will want to know over a lifetime, but we would all be gratified if we could feel that every catechist in our parishes understood at least as much as *Echoes* teaches. This basic competence is a standard that we have a right to expect of all our catechists. It's not a distant dream; it's a reality we must demand now.

- *Echoes Plus* builds the skills that will give your catechists the confidence to share faith creatively, with passion and enthusiasm. *Echoes Plus* catechists have the opportunity to observe how we learn and to see really good catechists in action. They learn that catechists are ordinary people motivated by faith, creativity, and a deep love and respect for the children and adults they catechize. The Methodology Series and the Adult Faith Formation module help you build this confidence in your catechists.

Finally, *Echoes Plus* continues to embrace emerging technologies in its approach to catechist formation. All modules have moved to a DVD/print format. The addition of a CD-Rom to each companion booklet gives your catechists the opportunity to access and review the DVD content on their home computers and to use *Echoes Plus* in a self-directed setting where necessary. We've also added a much more comprehensive Program Director's *Manual to Echoes Plus*.

*The original Echoes of Faith was created
to respond to emerging realities...
The future has arrived.*

Echoes of Faith Plus was created by you and for you. As of April, 2008, *Echoes of Faith Plus* is complete. RCL Benziger has been proud to produce this project for the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, but the wisdom behind the project is yours. We entreat you to make *Echoes Plus* your own—for the good of your catechists and the children and adults they serve. With *Echoes Plus*, everyone wins. ■

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

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NCCL Is Pleased to Welcome Bishop Leonard P. Blair as our new Episcopal Advisor



Bishop Leonard Paul Blair was born in Detroit on April 12, 1949. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Blair of St. Paul of Tarsus Parish, Clinton Township. Bishop Blair grew up in Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish, Detroit, and has one sister, who lives in Waterford.

Bishop Blair was ordained to the priesthood in June of 1976 following studies at Sacred Heart Seminary College, Detroit; the North American College, Rome; and the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

Bishop Blair holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in History from Sacred Heart Seminary College; a Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) from the Pontifical Gregorian University; a Licentiate in Theology (S.T.L.) with a specialization in Patristics and the History of Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University; and a Doctorate in Theology (S.T.D.) from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome.

Bishop Blair's previous assignments include: Ecumenical Officer for the Archdiocese of Detroit; Dean of Studies and Assistant Professor of Theology, Sacred Heart Major Seminary College; service in the Papal Secretariat of State Office, Vatican City; Administrative Secretary to the Archbishop of Detroit; Vicar General and Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Detroit; Consultor, Archdiocese of Detroit; Instructor in Church History and Patristics, St. John's Provincial Seminary, Plymouth; and Archivist for the Archdiocese of Detroit. Bishop Leonard Paul Blair was named the seventh Bishop of Toledo on October 7, 2003, and installed in the Diocese of Toledo on December 4, 2003.

We meet many people who, by misunderstanding doctrine, are shackled in dogmatic chains that keep them from flourishing in faith...too little is written about the positive side of "unremembering."

The wider catechetical field needs the active work of creative people gifted with the kind of mental suppleness needed to enter the Eucharist in a deep way. They would be capable of seeing the relation of all to all that is buried deep in liturgical ritual: the relation of the present and past, of the seen and unseen, of the bread and the congregation, of the assembly and the Spirit of Jesus, of the here-and-now and the not-yet, and of the presence and the absence of the Spirit of Jesus. Humorlessness is a condition that negates any lively catechesis. Catechesis is actually a smiling invitation to join the Gospel's dance, a dance not of one's arrival but of one's way forward, toward the unnamable and unforgettable. ■

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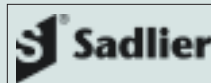
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EDITOR: Joyce A. Crider

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT: Mary Kay Schoen

DESIGN: Rings Leighton Design Group

PUBLISHER: Leland D. Nagel

PRINTER: Tri-State Printing Company

Catechetical Leader (ISSN: 1547-7908) is published six times a year by the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), 125 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Authors' views do not necessarily reflect those of NCCL. Letters to the editor and submissions of news items are encouraged. Send to *Catechetical Leader* at the address above or email nccl@nccl.org.

Phone: (202) 884-9753

Fax: (202) 884-9756. Contact NCCL for reprints.

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Subscription rates: (U.S. addresses): One year \$24; two years, \$42; three years, \$54. NCCL members receive *Catechetical Leader* as a part of membership. To subscribe, send name and address with check or credit card number to NCCL at address above.

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Finally, Virgil Michel enjoyed the supportive friendships of many people who were also inspiring and influential figures in the liturgy and social movements in the U.S. Among them was Dorothy Day, cofounder of *The Catholic Worker* and the Catholic Worker Movement. Biographer Robert Coles quotes her writing about her passion for liturgy: "To be in church isn't to be calmed down, as some people say they get when they are at Mass. I'm worked up. I'm excited by being so close to Jesus, but the closer I get, the more I worry about what He wants of us, what He would have us do before we die."

Among his friends was Catherine de Hueck Doherty, pioneer of the lay apostolate in Canada and founder of Friendship House. In "I Saw Christ Today" (*Orate Fratres* 12, 1938), she said that the Mass, "fully participated in, will open to us the mind of Christ, and we will radiate him in our lives. And then we shall be able to go forth and fight the good fight of Christ against poverty, misery, injustice." Other co-workers in the vineyard included William Heulsmann, Bernard Laukemper, Martin Hellriegel, Cecilia Himebaugh, Hans Ansgar Reinhold, and Reynold Hillenbrand, all of whom contributed to promoting the vision Michel had for liturgy and for society.

This has been only a glimpse into the richness of Dom Virgil's hopes and dreams for liturgy as the basis of social renewal. Does

this man from a generation past have anything to say to us today? Yes, I think so. Perhaps now more than ever, his is a voice that needs to be heard.

I end here with the powerful words Michel spoke to Catherine de Hueck Doherty during a visit to the Friendship House:

"Go, live the Mass and you will restore the social order and the world to Christ — but first begin with yourself! That is the soul of the apostolate. That is your soul. That is your vocation. Be steadfast in it, persevere and Christ will use you to renew the face of the earth. You will become pregnant with him, give him birth, allow him to grow to his full stature by the process of his growth in you and your corresponding death to self. You will be his hands, his feet, his eyes, his voice, his heart! He will walk the earth again in you, for this is the hour of the laity." ■

Anne Koester is the associate director of the Georgetown Center for Liturgy, Washington, D.C. She has edited or co-edited three books for The Liturgical Press: Liturgy and Justice: To Worship God in Spirit and Truth; Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal (co-edited with Barbara Searle); and Called To Participate: Theological, Ritual, And Social Perspectives (co-edited with Barbara Searle); She is also the author of Sunday Mass: Our Role and Why It Matters from The Liturgical Press.

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SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

by Megan Anechiarico

ACROSS

- 1 Spiritual pilgrimage
- 6 Acts of charity
- 11 International peace and security org.
- 12 Escapade
- 14 Hindu mantra
- 15 Endure
- 17 Dreaming
- 19 Poet Eliot
- 20 Dominican initials
- 21 Jumble for a pirate's drink
- 23 Abbr. for college in Lewisburg, PA
- 24 Act
- 25 Anti opponent
- 26 Jumble for beige
- 27 Hawaiian garland
- 29 Partner of colonialism
- 30 Jumble for compete
- 32 Jumble for scoundrel
- 33 Formal address
- 35 Spiritual accompaniment
- 36 Police investigator - abbr.
- 37 Fourth mo.
- 38 Chilly exclamation
- 40 007 description - 3 words
- 45 Light-rail transit - abbr.
- 46 Jumble for definite article
- 47 Internet address letters
- 48 Circus Barnum
- 50 French where

- 51 Assist
- 52 Laura Ingall's mother
- 53 Gore
- 54 Type of insect
- 56 Syn. For 1A
- 57 Abbr. to direct special attention
- 58 Anxious
- 61 Cola brand
- 62 Community's role
- 63 Spiritual get-away

DOWN

- 1 Major goal of CST
- 2 Burden
- 3 Make amends
- 4 Heating/cooling co.
- 5 Colloquial you
- 6 Opp. Of NW
- 7 Epoch
- 8 Moral principles
- 9 Undergrad
- 10 Commission
- 13 Engagement in spiritual development
- 16 Jumble for the Bishop of Rome
- 18 Life insurance co.
- 21 Advent prayer
- 22 Plain and simple
- 25 Crucial
- 28 Ancient female oracle's self-introduction
- 31 Sleet

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62								63						

- 34 Jumble for tear
- 36 What faith does in spiritual development
- 39 Contemplate
- 41 Mature — 2 words
- 42 Small case
- 43 Japanese wrestling
- 44 Conversation with God
- 49 Anathema — var.

- 53 Taj Mahal city
- 55 1980s short-lived musical supergroup
- 56 22nd letter
- 59 1982 Spielberg film
- 60 Jr.'s father

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