

CATECHETICAL LEADER Table of Contents

July/August 2010

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 2 **From the President** Anne Roat
Your Participation Does Make a Difference
- 3 **From the Executive Director** Leland Nagel
Summer...No Ordinary Time
- 13 **Books in the News** Reviewed by
Linchpin: Are you Indispensable? Donald Kurre
- 15 **Adult Faith Formation** Christopher Ruff
Small Group Faith Sharing with a Mission of Love
- 17 **Diocesan Directors' Forum** Anthony C. Marchica
Understanding Culture, Integrating Culture
- 18 **Tech Center** Carmen M. Cayon
Our RCIA Program Accepts the Gift of Technology
- 19 **Echoes of Faith** Jo Rotunno
Catechists and Families: Images of God's Enduring Love
- 21 **Young Adult Ministry** Elizabeth Devlin
How To Spend Summer When You're a Catechist
- 24 **Notable Resources** Dan Pierson



At the Crossroads of Faith and Culture
page 4



Update: Summertime: Sacred Time
page U2



Was Jesus a Linchpin?
page 12

FEATURES

Catechesis in the Multi-Ethnic Community

- 4 At the Crossroads of Faith and Culture Jaime Soto
- 8 Catechesis in *la familia* is Communal Verónica Rayas
- 22 *New Wineskins Awards Presented*
- Diocesan Award: An Invitation to Sing
- 23 Parish Award: From Church to Work

CATECHETICAL UPDATE

Summertime for Catechetical Ministers

- U1 Don't Things Slow Down in the Summer Time? Mary Caroline Marchal, SC
- U2 Summertime: Sacred Time for the Diocesan Director Wendy Scherbart
- U4 Vacation Bible Camp Is Worth the Trip Michele B. Olewack

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YOUR PARTICIPATION DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership

Dear NCCL Members,



You are reading this issue of *Catechetical Leader* during the lovely days of summer, but my reality includes writing this column one week after our annual conference and exposition in Las Vegas. My desk is piled high with correspondence and

projects that need to be addressed and my calendar is overflowing with meetings. It was good to be with colleagues, but coming home means tackling everything that was put on hold for a week. I am looking forward to summertime when I dream that a slower pace may actually happen.

One of the highlights of our Representative Council meeting in Las Vegas was the election of two new at-large board members. We said good-bye and thank-you to Tom Quinlan from the Diocese of Joliet and Chela Gonzalez from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. We welcomed Karen Pesek and Mary Jo Waggoner who were each elected to a three year term on the board. Karen is the diocesan director of the Office of Religious Education and safe environment coordinator for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau in Missouri. Mary Jo is the diocesan director of the Office of Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry for the Diocese of San Diego in California. Both Karen and Mary Jo will be with the board of directors for our June face-to-face meeting in Washington, DC.

If you were present at the conference in Las Vegas you may have had an opportunity to take part in one of the action items that are part of our strategic plan. The Communications Committee chaired by Linda Stryker and Marinell High spent their time during the conference videoing our members. They amassed hours of taping which will be turned into a short video. The video will be

used to promote the vision and mission of NCCL, as well as, giving information on how our conference helps catechetical leaders in their ministry. The video will debut on our website very soon.

When you go to the NCCL website you will find a detailed copy of the Strategic Plan. Read it, think about it, and decide how you can be involved. If you would like to be a member on one of the committees that are working on action items in the plan, please call or e-mail me. I will appoint you to the committee and put you in touch with the chairperson. Remember this is your organization and your participation does

*NCCL Speakers' Service will
provide access to quality speakers who
promote the catechetical agenda.*

make a difference.

This summer you will be receiving information about the NCCL Speakers' Service. This pilot program will provide speakers from NCCL to our member dioceses and PCL organizations. Lists of speakers and topics will be available in July. This program will enable NCCL to raise monies for our organization to help meet operating expenses. It will also enable our member dioceses and PCL organizations to have access to quality speakers who promote the catechetical agenda. I hope you will consider being a part of this new venture.

Wow—this article is done! The next item on my to-do list is planning the agenda for our June board meeting which will include a briefing on the new translation of the Roman Missal. But that is the subject of a future column. Hope your summer is as restful as I am dreaming that mine will be!

God bless,

Anne

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SUMMER...NO ORDINARY TIME

Leland Nagel



Liturgically the season of summer falls in Ordinary Time; yet there is nothing ordinary about summer or about “Ordinary Time.” Summer has a dual personality. Many people define summer as the time when there is no school and programs come to a standstill. But that is an image that doesn’t quite work in rural America. Some have the word “vacation” follow the word “summer” as in “summer vacation.” However, many catechetical leaders offer a VBS (Vacation Bible School) program which engages children, youth and adults in an intensive formative, fact-filled, fantastic five days. It’s anything but vacation for the parish catechetical leader.

Our music suggests a change of pace, rather than a usual, everyday, run of the mill occurrence. If you want to slow down use the lyrics “*Summertime, and the livin’ is easy.*” It’s an old song, 75 years old to be exact, and it isn’t close to the reality that most catechetical leaders experience. Then there was the catchy 1963 Nat King Cole hit, “*Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer*” which ends with the line, “*You’ll wish that summer could always be here.*” Somehow twelve weeks of VBS would indeed be hazy and crazy.

I am amazed at how many offices move to summer hours so people can work an hour longer from Monday to Thursday and then head home at noon on Friday. This was even true in San Diego where it was nice all year round. So summer isn’t just about the weather. It’s about spending more time in the sun with the people you love or as some spiritual advisors suggest: Spend your summer with the Son, the One who loves you.

Some find it easy to describe the summer season of their ministry as the time when they’ve been on the job for several years and all their programs are running smoothly. Life is good, they feel successful and as the song goes, “One of these mornings, you’re going to rise up singing, Then you’ll spread your wings, And you’ll take to the sky.” I think that means retirement.

Fresh Prince and DJ Jazzy Jeff recorded *Summertime* and Fresh Prince opens the song with these lyrics: “*Here it is the groove slightly transformed, just a bit of a break from the norm, just a little somethin’ to break the monotony.*” But maybe his best advice comes in the chorus, “*summer summer summertime, time to sit back and unwind.*” Do take the time to sit back with no agenda and let the Spirit of peace and rest flow over, under, in and through you.

There is a magic in summertime and it’s not just for catching up on all the stuff that didn’t get done during the year. It’s a time to change the routine; to go to work by a different route; to pack a picnic lunch, sit on the grass and eat without utensils; to share a popsicle and attend a noon concert. It’s time to fall in love with life itself.

In this Ordinary Time, take a little extra time to do the ordinary in an extraordinary way. It is possible that the first thing to do is slow down, stop being in a hurry. Maybe we need to believe that everything matters. Perhaps the extraordinary thing is to do everything, even ordinary things, with care and love. Ponder the words of Pat Schneider in this poem.

THE PATIENCE OF ORDINARY THINGS

It is a kind of love, is it not?
 How the cup holds the tea,
 how the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
 how the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
 or toes. How soles of feet know
 where they’re supposed to be.
 I’ve been thinking about the patience
 of ordinary things, how clothes
 wait respectfully in closets
 and soap dries quietly in the dish,
 and towels drink the wet
 from the skin of the back.
 And the lovely repetition of stairs.
 And what is more generous than a window? █

There is a magic in summertime and it’s not just for catching up on all the stuff that didn’t get done during the year.

At the Crossroads of Faith and Culture

Many Catholic ethnic communities today worry about losing their religious culture. It is a two-sided anxiety.

by Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento



For many years I lived in residence at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, located in the old Latino barrio of Delhi, on the outskirts of Santa Ana, California. The neighborhood's history dates back to the time when Mexicans worked in the surrounding fields and the local sugar beet factory. Delhi was their home. The sugar beet factory has now been replaced by hotels. The fields now produce industrial parks with a wide array of large and small industries. Delhi is still mostly populated by Latinos. Some families date back two and three generations in the neighborhood. Many families are recently arrived immigrants who have found a home there.

MORNING AT THE CROSSROADS

The old Latino barrio has been absorbed into the large metropolitan area of Orange County, crisscrossed by freeways. The neighbors no longer work the fields. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church sits on the corner of Central and Halliday. From there one can watch the neighborhood wake up and go to work in the early morning hours. Some neighbors board buses dressed in the uniforms of the various hotels in the area. Others are heading off to work in any number of small manufacturing plants. Some young men wait for the buddies to come by so they can jump into the back of a pick-up loaded with mowers, blowers, rakes, clippers and burlap sacks. Off they go to trim and prim the gardens of Southern California.

All of this activity usually takes place even before the sun brings the crimson glow of daylight to the crest of Saddleback Mountain in the east. There are small quiet rituals mixed in with the hurried rush to work. A young woman touches the tile rendering of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the front of the church. She bows her head while keeping her hand on the image. Someone else, perhaps one of the young men, will make the sign of the cross as he passes in front of the church. So common is the custom that there is a word for

it in Spanish: *persignarse*. Even the truck drivers barreling their heavy diesel trucks through the neighborhood will swing their right hand up to their heads to *persignarse* while shifting gears through the intersection.

Some of the elderly will begin to gather at the front doors of the church waiting patiently, sharing a morsel of gossip, before *el Padre* (the Father) opens the door. They hobble in and begin to storm heaven's gates with their prayers. A brief while later, children on their way to school will scamper by the church. Like a scene from the "Keystone Cops", the first will abruptly brake at the front door. The rest will collide into one another. As if on cue, they all *persignarse* and then scurry off down the

Catechesis with regards to culture has a profound incarnational dimension.

street. Perhaps one or more of them might sneak in to bless themselves at the holy water font, extra insurance for an upcoming test. Ten minutes before Mass, an old eight-track tape would begin winding through a worn recording of carillon bells that crackles through the loud speakers nailed to the rafters of the bell tower, a curious not-so-modern take on the ancient call to prayer.

These are some recollections about a parish church that literally stood at the crossroad of people's daily lives. I have only shared what a morning glance would tell. All through the day, the parish church on the corner of Halliday and Central was a simple, quiet part of the daily routines of people in the old neighborhood of Delhi. These humble gestures did not make them all saints. They did make a little more graceful some difficult, desperate lives.

In the pursuit of more effective pedagogies the quiet, subtle effectiveness of humble habits can be neglected.



These gestures are tethers that keep people from being lost in the worries and woes of immigrant life. The neighbors, young and old, stay tethered to the belief that there is something more. The “daily grind” for their “daily bread” is not all there is. There is something more that radiates from the tile image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, shimmers off the holy water font. The *persignarse* ties the person into a fabric of faith, a sacred safety net. No matter how uncertain the day may be, there is the trust that *el hombre propone y Dios dispone*. (Man proposes. God decides.)

HANGING BY A THREAD?

There is another recollection. This one haunts me. It is the sad, stoic figure of the *pandillero* (gang member) with the tattoo of Our Lady of Guadalupe on his back. Some of his buddies might have etched on their arms or chests the sorrowful face of Christ crowned with thorns. Are these gestures still tethers? If

they are, how tenuous a tether they must be. Do the tattoos become talismans to ward off evil? Are they a faint flicker of faith, a desperate appeal for tender mercy upon a seemingly graceless existence? I cannot plumb the soul of those men but they haunt me with the fear that culture and faith hangs by a very tenuous thread or has completely unraveled.

The tattooed *pandillero* may be an extreme example but it is not so unfamiliar. It is generally accepted that religious faith has little to say and even less to do with culture today. The *pandillero* with his religious tattoo is a disturbing ironic icon of this religiously disconnected age.

Catholicism has demonstrated a great potential to bring together faith and culture. This remarkable legacy has created a vibrancy of both religious and cultural expressions in cultures all across the globe. The daily routine at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Delhi, graced by many of these ordi-

continued on page 6

nary fusions of culture and faith, is a testimony to the abiding power of the Incarnation, the Word becoming flesh in the habits and routines that are the substance of human existence.

What does it mean, though, when those customs and habits do not have a connection with an authentic personal relationship with the Lord Jesus? What does it mean when those humble habits and daily rituals disappear altogether from the lives of believers? Many Catholic ethnic communities today worry about losing their religious culture. It is a two-sided anxiety. Cultural habits and traditions can linger on in a person's life but they can lose their mooring in any religious belief. Someone can assert religious belief but there are no habits or manners that weave this religiosity into one's everyday existence. Either way, the consequence is the same. Faith is separated from culture. Believing has little to do with living.

We need to look for ways to foster traditional habits and perhaps create new ones that become part of our common Catholic culture.

The Catholic bishops of the United States have established as one of their pastoral priorities the cultural diversity of the church. This pastoral priority is not just about developing multi-cultural sensitivity or the inclusion of different ethnic and immigrant Catholic communities into the life of the Catholic Church in the United States. These are important considerations. They should be earnestly pursued but the priority points to something more urgent.

CULTURE MATTERS

This priority recognizes the Incarnation as the fundamental abiding work of the church. Jesus, the eternal word of the Father, took on our humanity so that he could share with us his divinity. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (Jn. 1.14). This was more than a matter of flesh and bones. It was also a matter of language, habits, rituals, dress, and relationships. A Jewish woman from Nazareth gave birth to Jesus. She and her husband taught him to talk, instructed him in the manners and habits of the times, presented him in the temple and took him regularly to the synagogue. Jesus learned to respect and obey them. All this is the substance of a culture, an essential part of being human and therefore a vital part of the Incarnation.

The church continues the abiding desire of the Lord Jesus to share in our humanity so that we can share in his divinity. This is why culture matters. This is why we must be attentive

to the diversity of cultures that make up our church as well as the greater American society. Proclaiming and teaching the Catholic faith is unavoidably a matter of using culture and transforming culture so that the power of the Gospel can save the human person.

The cultural diversity of the Catholic community in the United States is not a concern limited to ethnic groups within the church and those who serve them. The bishops hope to engage the whole church in harnessing the vitality and power of our diverse cultures for the other pastoral priorities that face the Catholic community today: the life and dignity of the human person, faith formation and sacramental practice, vocations, the strengthening of marriage and family. All these urgent pastoral priorities cannot be adequately addressed unless we engage the many cultures that speak to the hearts and minds of our Catholic people.

Culture, in this light, is a significant catechetical concern. The catechetical task is not complete unless the catechist brings the faith into the culture, utilizing culture to live out the faith. Catechesis with regards to culture has a profound incarnational dimension. The Spirit of Lord Jesus urges us to bring his Gospel into the language, rituals, manners, dress and relationships of our own time. I would like to focus on one seemingly small aspect of culture that I believe is a powerful instrument for catechesis.

VALUE OF HUMBLE HABITS

Much of the conversation about catechesis today has focused on ensuring that the Gospel and the teachings of the church are communicated clearly, effectively, as an integral whole. This has often meant improving the disciple's cognitive grasp of the faith, making sure that one knows his or her faith well. In the pursuit of more effective pedagogies to achieve this, the quiet, subtle effectiveness of humble habits can be neglected. Culture is not only habits, but habits are a vital ingredient of culture. It is also an invaluable tool in catechesis, too often overlooked. Consider for a moment, the ability to speak a language. Simply put, a language is an acquired habit. It is so habitual that it becomes completely natural to us. Other habits also have this same potential to become completely natural to us, inclining us either toward good or toward evil.



The few illustrations that I presented from my time at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church are pious religiosity, ordinary habits, that reinforces belief in the disciple while also giving testimony to others and bringing amazing grace to a weary world. Catechesis can instill these pious practices as well as

inform them with content of the faith. These do not have to be limited to ethnic communities. Many mainstreamed, “middle-class” Catholic communities have come to sense the loss of habitual religiosity that perhaps was once part of their grandparents’ lives but now lacking in their own. This is not just a nostalgic impulse. True faith will always look for a way to be lived out.

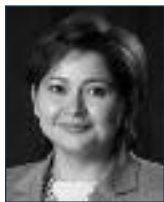
The late John Paul II very much believed in the necessary collusion of faith and culture. He said in his apostolic exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, “A faith that does not affect a person’s culture is a faith not fully embraced, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived” (CL, No. 59). The pastoral focus on cultural diversity is an opportunity for all of us to examine the potent role of culture in promoting the dignity of the human person, inculcating fervent participation in the sacramental life of the church, celebrating marriage and family, fostering religious vocations, and all else that is essential to the church’s mission. How can these priorities become more a part of our culture? An important part of the answer is in looking for the ways to foster traditional habits and perhaps creating new ones that become part of our common Catholic culture.

Appreciating and preserving the rich bounty of pious customs and habits that immigrant communities bring to our country; savoring the treasure trove of faith-filled traditions that belong to the diverse ethnic heritage of the Catholic Church in the United States; studying, adapting and experimenting with the array of new technologies to develop viable new expressions of piety for the new millennium—these are all part of the pastoral priority that seeks to bring the power and beauty of the incarnate Word to the hearts and minds of the Lord’s disciples today. ■

Bishop Jaime Soto heads the Diocese of Sacramento.

Catechesis in *la familia* is Communal

La familia challenges the misconception that an individual spirituality can be developed, challenged, and nurtured detached from the guidance of a community.



Several years ago I was conducting interviews about catechesis and community within Mexican American families. A woman named Carmen shared the following experience about a Latino/a sense of community and its influence on catechesis. When she

was a young girl, Carmen's family was the first in the neighborhood to get a refrigerator in their home, and it had just one tray of ice cubes. Carmen and her sister saw this as a golden opportunity to sell ice cubes in the neighborhood for one penny. The pennies they collected had given Carmen and her sister extra money to buy bubblegum and candy.

One day a neighbor arrived at their house to buy ice cubes, but the girls were not home. When their mother realized that they had been selling ice cubes, they were in deep trouble and were grounded for weeks. What to some may seem to be two young girls with an entrepreneurial spirit was seen as unacceptable behavior by the mother. Carmen explained the lesson she learned: "My mother taught us that we were not supposed to sell but to give. If you have something that someone needs then you share what you have with that person; it is not right or just to benefit from someone's needs." This story speaks volumes about *la familia's*—the Latino family's—influence on catechetical programs in our globalized society, but especially about Latino notions of community. Carmen's mother utilized the catechetical moment to teach her daughters and at the same time hand down a valued Latino/a tradition about community—one that focuses on caring for the needs of others and building relationships more than on material things, much less taking advantage of others.

The most effective way to understand community is to live and experience community.

Let us look at how *la familia's* notion of community influences catechetical programs. While there are many other points to *la familia's* catechesis, I highlight its understanding of community. This concept is of critical catechetical importance for our faith in view of the global community's current affinity for individualism.

CHALLENGES TO THE GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING OF INDIVIDUALISM

Today many in our global network society have high-tech devices that give the impression that somehow we are connected with one another. However, when I think of today's society I would go so far as to say we are more disconnected from one another than ever before. Words such as "online community" and "staying connected" spread misconceptions and distort what being a community means. Surprisingly, a large number of people will tell you that they have over 400 Facebook or MySpace friends. Most likely they will applaud the online communities for keeping them connected, but in reality these websites give people a false notion of community.

Community is about people who share life's journey with you. It is about people who can sense how you are by looking at your face or listening to your voice rather than reading your online comments. It is about one-on-one relationships through which you get to know more about the other person in the moments of everyday life. There can be no substitute for real flesh-and-blood community.

A consequence of this false understanding of such technocommunities is the depiction of faith as a private matter. For example, think about your own experience: How many times have you heard someone say, "I am spiritual but not religious." The problem with this dichotomy is that it treats spirituality and religion as polar opposites in the realm of faith, and as a result people think they must choose between being religious and being spiritual. If you say you are religious then you are connected to a tradition and community of believers with codified practices and beliefs. On the other hand, being only spiritual implies an individual's faith is private, accountable only to a higher being. Being religious implies membership in



an institution, and being spiritual implies strong individualism. This dichotomous notion separates the individual from the community, and further confuses people, leading them to believe that an individual spirituality can be developed, challenged, and nurtured detached from the guidance of a community and organized religion. *La familia's* notion of community challenges these misconceptions

The Latino understanding of community resonates well with St. Paul's use of the Greek word *koinonia* (community) to mean people sharing fellowship or have a close association. Michael Fahey points out that Paul often used the word *koinonia* with the modifier "by the

Holy Spirit." It was his conviction that through the Holy Spirit Christians enjoy communion with a triune God and are also 'in communion' with other baptized Christians: "Communion therefore has a vertical dimension (contact with God) and a horizontal dimension (bonding with other Christians)." Thus, a Catholic understanding of community refers to a relationship with God and with other human beings. St. Paul reminds us

that faith cannot be a private matter because faith must be lived within community. This is one way that *la familia's* notion of community contributes to catechesis in our technological society.

In la familia, members are to be grateful receivers and generous givers, not out of a sense of obligation but as a natural response of gratitude.

continued on page 10

NON-TRADITIONAL, COMMUNAL CATECHESIS

Traditional catechesis was long associated with children in a classroom who were taught the catechism by a catechist. Since the catechetical renewal of the twentieth century, catechesis has moved on to include numerous methodologies and contexts to hand on a faith that is living, conscious, and active. For example the *National Directory for Catechesis* affirms the methodology of learning within Christian community and also within a Christian family.

For hundreds of years the Mexican American family has had its own religious formation program in the home. While it is non-traditional, *la familia's* rich faith-cultural heritage has transmitted faith across generations. Traditional catechesis is rational and textbook-centered. *La familia's* catechesis is relational and grace centered, maintaining tradition in real life situations, by catechists who teach a person to "be" in relationship with God and other members of the community.

Traditional catechesis focused on a cognitive understanding of the faith so that a person would know the faith and be able to articulate these beliefs. *La familia* uses a lifelong, holistic approach that acknowledges the importance of catechizing the head (cognitive), the heart (affective), and the hands (active). All three components are vital to handing on a lived Christian faith to foster conversion, prayer, and a deeper relationship with God.

The most effective way to understand community is to live and experience community. *La familia's* understanding of community includes a unified body of individuals who live, work, and journey together throughout life. It is a connection with all people in the family, the neighborhood, the church community, and in the larger global community. This relationship as a member of *la familia de Dios* (the family of God) reaches beyond blood ties. It is a view of community that is interdependent, one in which all are members, and brothers and sisters help one another. On the one hand, the individual is essential to the community, and on the other hand, community is central for the individual because the community offers guidance, nurturance, and challenge. A member needs the community and the community needs each member. Even when there are family conflicts, the communal sense of *la familia* strengthens and highlights virtues that help the family resolve them.

Membership in the community is not just a concept but a lived reality in *la familia* as people live and experience what community means. As a member, life is lived with a collective

identity, as being part of a "we." Choices and decisions are made based on this collective identity. Consequently, a person lives a way of life in personal relationship with God and the community. It nurtures interdependence, values each member, and works together for the common good. Being in community and being a human being are interrelated at all levels. Survival of the fittest is a violation of community.

The responsibility of the community's members in *la familia* is reinforced regularly in the theological virtues and in liturgical events and observances in which the family engages throughout the year. These include baptisms, *quinceañeras*, home altars, family pilgrimages, and religious objects in the home just to name a few. This is what Latino/a theologians call popular religion, which is catechetical as well as mystical.

It amazes me to see the faces of youth light up when they realize they have something to contribute.

There are numerous catechetical methodologies that are effective in handing on a lived faith. *La familia's* catechesis echoes the catechetical apprenticeship method in which a person seeking a deeper relationship with God is connected to an experienced Christian believer or mentor. This model of apprenticeship is an accompanied journey in a life of faith. The mentor hands on knowledge and wisdom of faith to an apprentice by modeling rather than just instruction. A person learns by participating in living the faith in everyday life. As a result of this apprenticeship method a person can understand and assimilate truths rather than just repeat information. *La familia* offers many mentors because it includes godparents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, church family, and often friendly neighbors.

La familia's apprenticeship method allows for witness and participation in living the faith. A person grows up in a religious environment in which firsthand experience of life is embedded with the presence of God. He or she is constantly surrounded and shaped by faith people and important relationships grounded in God. Through witnessing and living the faith, a person is formed and eventually transformed by God's grace. Faith is naturally embraced as a person communally inherits faith and cultural traditions. They own and believe their faith because they experienced a relationship with God with the members of the community in everyday life.

MEMBERSHIP COMES WITH PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In our globalized society more people have a sense of entitlement, and this continues to be a challenge for catechesis in our church. I like to call them *takers* because they “take” as though the world owes them something. It is a mindset that says “I should be able to get anything I want, when I want it.” Takers don’t usually offer something first, actually very often they don’t think they have to make a contribution at all. This raises the question: Do takers really seek to take without giving back or have they been given so much without being asked or taught to contribute?

The false understanding of community that is perpetuated in today’s globalized society does not challenge people adequately to be responsible members of a community as gracious receivers and as generous givers. The word *membership* itself is associated with paying dues in order to get privileges. This presents a challenge to our catechesis to teach the importance of living in an authentic community of interdependence in a society that honors individualism and independence.

In my experience of teaching adolescents, it amazed me to see the faces of the youth light up when they realized they had something to contribute. Since no one had asked them to give of themselves, they did not realize they had anything of value to offer. I believe that deep within their core beliefs people don’t want to be takers. It was evident to me in observing adolescents that they long to be part of a community where there is mutual giving and receiving. They have not had an appropriate experience of membership in a real community where they receive from others and give of themselves.

La familia’s catechesis intentionally teaches responsible membership by being interdependent, by receiving and giving back to the community. *La familia* honors its members by recognizing that each person has a gift to share. From the moment a child is born the child receives automatic membership. This is a different type of membership, unlike that in a beach club or Costco store where you receive privileges because you pay dues. In *la familia*, as Carmen learned, what is most valued is the understanding that you have received so much and as a member you desire to give back.

continued on page 11

AmA NEW CONFIRMATION RESOURCES

For High School Candidates



Send Out Your Spirit
A Confirmation Candidate's Handbook for Faith
 Michael Amodèi

Send Out Your Spirit leads teens through the major tenets of their faith—the Trinity, Jesus, Scripture, Church, sacraments, morality, and more—specifically structured for the context of preparing for confirmation.

Candidate's Handbook: \$11.95

Leader's Manual: \$22.95

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Being able to receive is the first step in this process of responsible membership. Independence and the inability to recognize gifts received in community must first be overcome. Independent people who prefer to do things by themselves and prefer not to need help from another person lose the value and meaning of community. However, being interdependent does involve some vulnerability, which is often feared by those with strong individualism. In community, life is lived together, and vulnerability teaches the members the value of receiving from others responsibly. It is important in this process to recognize the many gifts and benefits received as a member, which are taken for granted. For example, community life teaches that approaching your day with a spirit of living in the present moment will help you to recognize the abundance of graces offered to you. This has the ability to embolden a spirit of gratitude throughout your day. It is naturally understood in *la familia* that members are to be grateful receivers and generous givers, not out of a sense of obligation but as a natural response of gratitude.

This spirit of interdependence and taking care of each other is integral in *la familia's* way of life. In this way a member of such a community can truly recognize God's love and grace in *la familia*. The community nurtures this experience. The spiritual benefits received include accompaniment, acceptance, care, and love. God is seen as divine providence for the community in its care of others. God's providence occurs through the actions of *la familia de Dios* as people reach out and care for one another's needs whether it be in the simple act of feeding a stranger who comes to the door or in work of promoting social justice. This enriches the church's catechesis beyond a simple use of textbooks. It is lived in the real human experience of a vibrant faith community.

CATECHETICAL IMPLICATIONS

La familia's catechesis focuses on the community as the location where handing on the faith is explicitly taught and lived. It is by participation in such community that one fully learns community. Faith is enriched as it is witnessed and lived in a community of faith. *La familia's* communal catechesis makes an important



catechetical contribution by challenging the global assumptions about the value of individualism. While non-traditional catechesis, it has proven effective for hundreds of years.

Contemporary society celebrates individualism and autonomy and as a result people often feel disconnected. As catechists it is necessary to be intentional about building community in programs, schools, and parishes. You can't force community but you can create an environment that fosters a lived experience of community. Integrating one-to-one face time and sharing and creating a sense of belonging that includes shared memories and hopes all build community. ■

Verónica Rayas, PhD, is currently the programs coordinator for *Tepeyac Institute*, a lay ministry formation institute for the Diocese of El Paso, Texas. She holds a doctorate in religious education from Fordham University.



CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

DON'T THINGS SLOW DOWN IN THE SUMMERTIME?

by Mary Caroline Marchal, SC



Our pastor is often heard saying that “things slow down in the summertime.” I’m not sure that we work in the same parish. My experience is that summer isn’t any slower, but it does have

a change of focus from the other nine months.

In our parish, three of us share responsibility for faith formation. Our full-time youth minister is busy working on trips to Appalachia and our archdiocesan leadership experience and planning for the fall. Our part-time coordinator of children’s formation is busy with Vacation Bible School and supporting the MOM’s group in their summer activities and parental programs for the sacrament of baptism. Recruitment and training of catechists is always ongoing. Curriculum is evaluated and directions set. My full time responsibilities focus on adults—including RCIA and adult faith formation. We are privileged to offer year-round RCIA. At any given point in time we could have mystagogy upstairs, inquiry in the library, and the catechumenate in our Adult Center.

We offer a variety of opportunities for adult faith formation during the summer. Yes, they are different than during the rest of the year but no less important to the continuing faith

formation of our parishioners. One of our neighboring parishes offered an evening vacation Bible school for adults. Even in the middle of July there was significant interest. Not everyone takes vacation at the same time.



We have found that our summer offerings need to be one-time events.

We have found that our offerings need to be one-time events such as showing a movie, with refreshments, and engaging in some good reflection. We often send things home through the bulletin or our newsletter. Having something in the home that is a quick read yet focused on Christian living seems to reach people where they live and love. Book clubs, study groups and Scripture study are some of the regular offerings. Older people feel much more comfortable coming out at night during the summer. Capitalize on it.

Planning, planning, planning also seems to dominate much of the summer. Confirming speakers, scheduling the space, these all take time and summer is the perfect time to do this.

Enjoy the change of pace but realize that the change is short lived. In the summer the deadlines are of our own making! Soon enough we will be back in the thick of it again. ■

S. Mary Caroline Marchal, SC, is director of religious education at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Louisville, Kentucky, and a former NCCL Board member.

SUMMERTIME: SACRED TIME FOR THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR

INSTEAD OF ADDING TO YOUR CHECKLIST, TURN A SUMMER OF DOING INTO A SUMMER OF BEING.

by Wendy Scherbart



Summertime for the diocesan director . . . can you picture it? How do you imagine spending your time? Do you see yourself finally attending to tasks that have been piling up? Are you planning for the next season's events, updating policies and guidelines? Are you taking an ongoing professional growth class or going on a retreat? Are you getting caught up on your professional reading? While these are all worthwhile summer activities, instead of adding to this checklist I would like to help you turn a summer of doing into a summer of being.

Here are three "R's" to help guide your sacred time this summer: reflect, recreate, revitalize.

Reflect upon and celebrate your accomplishments in ministry. In prayer, allow the Spirit to open you to the possibilities of making summer a sacred time. What are your recent successes in ministry? What are the reasons you love your job, or 'ah-ha' moments that you have had recently? Reflect upon them and share them with others. This can be a surprisingly affirming process.

In preparing to write this article, I took some time to reflect upon my accomplishments. A more than two-year process that began with an appreciative inquiry exercise culminated this past winter in a successful pilot program for diocesan leaders in spiritual companionship [see facing page].

This experience of reflecting on my accomplishments has deepened my gratitude for my ministry and especially for the relationships that offer me support. As a diocesan director of catechetical ministry, what do you love about where you are? What is working well? What is it you want more of in your ministry? What do you love about the church? How are you beholding God's goodness in your ministry? I encourage you to reflect upon and be affirmed by your accomplishments. May it give you confidence in your ministerial journey.

Recreate with family and friends. Last summer my family took a trip to Seattle. My husband, Jon, and my son, Tom, ran in a rock 'n' roll marathon. My mother and stepfather joined us, along with our oldest son Ryan and his girlfriend, Mollie. We explored Pike Place Market. We enjoyed wonderful meals at great restaurants and saw

the vista from the Space Needle. We spent a day in Victoria, British Columbia and experienced a piece of heaven in the Butchart Gardens. This time with family is irreplaceable. Nothing will sustain my ministry more than knowing the love of my family members.

Take time to be with friends who know you well and can speak the truth when you need to hear it most. Be with others, even when it is inconvenient for you, to show sacrificial love. It will make a lasting difference in their lives.

Embrace the longer days and take walks in nature. God has gifts to show you in nature. Take time for prayer and retreat. Give yourself permission to simply be. Do things you enjoy.

Revitalize your ministry. What are the important questions you want to ask yourself? What are your strengths? How can you use them more effectively? Who needs your support in ministry?

One of the best ways to revitalize your ministry is to take an occasional road trip to the parishes you support. Schedule parish visits to catechetical events, spend time with catechetical leaders in their offices, witness celebrations of sacraments, and participate in catechist formation sessions. See the fruits of catechetical ministry in your diocese. Be with those you support while they do ministry. Help them recognize their gifts. Support new leaders by connecting them with seasoned catechetical leaders who can be their mentors and coaches. Encourage your catechetical leaders to collaborate with others. Gather from them the needs



This summer take a leap of faith.

Photo by Mollie McDowell

that will guide the diocesan's office goals and objectives for effective catechetical ministry. And finally, prepare to pass the baton of ministry. Are you aware of who has the gifts to follow in your footsteps as the diocesan catechetical leader?

May your summertime be sacred. May reflection, recreation, and revitalization open the doors that will allow the Spirit to be present in your ministry! ■

Wendy Scherbart is the director for catechetical ministry at the Office for Parish Services in the Diocese of San Jose.

Appreciative Inquiry Bears Fruit: Spiritual Companionship

In December 2007, Tom Zanzig came to the Diocese of San Jose to share his vision of adult faith formation. Zanzig referred to his approach as a “community-based spiritual direction” model of AFF. He suggested, “Ministry among adults will succeed *only* if we *start and stay* with their lived experience of the spiritual journey *and* if we use strategies and techniques that help people name, reflect upon, and share with trusted others their lives as disciples of Jesus.” A participant approached me at the end of the workshop and asked me what I would do next to make this vision a reality in our diocese. Good question! I knew that I couldn’t take this step without others who shared my passion for adult faith formation.

The first step I took was to suggest to our diocesan adult faith formation focus group to change our name to adult *spiritual* and faith formation focus group. We agreed that attending to an adult’s spirituality is the key to motivating adults to participate in lifelong faith formation. We brainstormed ways to implement the strategies suggested in Tom Zanzig’s vision.

The first strategy the focus group examined was *appreciative inquiry*. A focus group member had attended the Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry training, which fortunately was offered locally. She reported her experience back to the group. Appreciative inquiry is a process that enables change in an organization based upon what is valued. The idea is to open the drawer of things people love. When you pay attention to what people love, good things happen. You are able to think outside the box. In order to get from point A to B—you need to feel loved in A if you want to get to B.

The ideas presented in the appreciative inquiry training were compelling. The Adult Faith and Spiritual Formation focus group decided to explore some of the appreciative inquiry exercises to see how they could be applied to the parish ministerial setting.

Some of our members did appreciative inquiry interviews with their parishioners and asked questions from Tom Zanzig’s worksheet:

- What were your best moments in faith as an adult?
- What were your best moments as a parish minister serving adult faith formation?
- What things do you most value?
- What core image best reflects adult faith and spiritual formation?
- What three hopes and wishes do you have?

The conclusions from appreciative inquiry interviews: Adults desire an experience of God’s presence in their lives and want to reflect upon their response to God’s call with others. They look for support from one another through opportunities to bear witness and be witnessed to. Adults want a sense of community. They want a sacred space for prayer, devotions, and rituals. They want to learn something new that will foster their growth in faith.

Next, our focus group explored another of Tom Zanzig’s strategies: small groups and Parker Palmer’s *Circles of Trust*. Zanzig selected this strategy because “small groups offer a powerful opportunity for nurturing spiritual companionship.” The group began by brainstorming a description of what group spiritual companionship would encompass. As a result we decided to put together a pilot series to experience for ourselves spiritual companionship. We realized that spiritual companionship is a ministry of *being* rather than *doing*. It is a personal transformation which encourages us as ministers to critically reflect on our own spiritual needs and identify the barriers to effective ministry.

The focus group brainstormed outcomes of spiritual companionship training that could promote effective parish ministry. For example: an RCIA team member will have a better ability to listen to others; a grief minister will be able to stay in a room full of conflict; and a social justice minister will be able to minister to family members of someone picked up in an ICE raid. In spiritual companionship the participants are invited to be open to the Spirit and inhabit a sacred space with people experiencing similarly difficult issues.

The spiritual companionship training took two years for our group to plan. In the winter of 2010, we piloted the training: *Companions on the Journey, a Ministry of Presence*. We invited leaders in our diocese to develop their spiritual ministerial gifts. In the publicity, we asked the question: Do you want to deepen your relationship with God and help others do the same? Spiritual companionship is a ministry that involves listening in a contemplative way to the experience of God in others. The training will help you to listen to yourself, God, and others.

The pilot was very well received by the participants. They found it enriching for their ministry and their family life. Some quotes from the evaluations: “This series has been beneficial for me in that it has helped me learn to be a better listener. My relationships have improved through the better listening techniques that I’ve learned.” “I realized how shared prayer can be a catalyst to deep conversations with those whom I minister.”

—Wendy Sherbart



VACATION BIBLE CAMP IS WORTH THE TRIP

by Michele B. Olewack



See you in September; see you when the summer's through . . . Remember those famous lyrics announcing the end of the school year? We spent our summers riding bikes to the pool, waiting for the Good Humor truck—

or if you were really lucky and you had a Baptist church in your neighborhood you might be invited to attend Bible school. At Bible school, you got snacks, crafts, and Jesus, and it wasn't like school at all.

Fast forward thirty years. It's no longer called Bible school; instead we say vacation Bible camp. For the past six years, VBC has been a huge success at our parish and a great way to keep children, teens, and adults excited about their faith over the summer. This is no longer the Bible school I remember, but the new and improved version. In just one week, twenty hours, children hear the word of God loud and clear, the Word is on their mind, on their lips and in their hearts all summer long.

With such a wide array of programs to choose from, we actually begin researching VBCs through our publishers and by surfing the Internet right after the New Year. To get a head start on all the other types of camps offered children in our area, we hold VBC registration in February and by May the instruction letters are in the mail with the camp theme music CD so children will know the songs when they arrive in June.

Will it be a safari adventure, where they embark on a grr-reat photo expedition of wild safari animals? Here they learn lions are the king of the jungle yet more importantly that Jesus is king of the universe. Who wouldn't want to go to a Caribbean island surrounded by snow-white sand and crystal blue waters

while searching for treasure more precious than gold? Here children learn through wonderful songs, games, and crafts that God's love is giving, kind, caring, forgiving and for always.

Children look forward to the Thursday evening camp ice cream social when family members are invited to a musical production of all the camp songs and Bible verses the children have learned throughout the week; this performance is one of the highlights of VBC week.

If you are a catechetical leader who feels you couldn't possibly undertake one more program after the long season, think again. Get together with a neighboring parish and work it together. You can share expenses, time and talent with other program

directors. We give our teen volunteers public-school service hours and confirmation service hours for a job well done. In addition to the teen and parent volunteers, don't forget to include the senior citizens during your recruiting process; they are full of

wisdom and creativity and that is priceless.

With some planning and preparation, VBC can become an integral part of your parish faith formation program. This is where God wants you this summer; he wants you and everyone involved to help children learn about his love. Six months after VBC, when parents tell me the children are still singing and dancing to the CD, a smile comes over my face because—little do they know—this catechetical leader is still singing to the music and praising Jesus too. ■

Michele Olewack is the coordinator of faith formation for youth at Our Lady of the Visitation Parish. She lives in Darnestown, Maryland. E-mail her at molewack@olvp.org.

If you feel you couldn't possibly undertake one more program, think again. Get together with a neighboring parish.



WAS JESUS A LINCHPIN?

Linchpin: Are you Indispensable?

by Seth Godin. New York: Penguin Group (USA), 2010. Hardcover, 256 pages, \$25.95.

Reviewed by Donald Kurre



I'm afraid to write this review. The book I want to review isn't about catechetics. It's not even about religion, theology, liturgy, or sacraments. I feel a strong, nearly overwhelming resistance to writing this review. As Godin might point out, my Lizard Brain is active today.

I intend to review or, perhaps more accurately, recommend Seth Godin's newest book, *Linchpin: Are you Indispensable?* Godin is an influential business blogger and the best-selling author of numerous books, including *Purple Cow*, *The Dip*, *All Marketers Are Liars*, and *Tribes*. The new dream, he says, "...isn't about obedience, it's about vision and engagement." or more specifically about the need to lean into our work, be indispensable, and to bring humanity and connection and art to the world.

The Lizard Brain is the very real limbic system in your brain. It wants to eat, be safe, and reproduce. The lizard is the source of "the resistance." Out of fear it wants to stop you from being indispensable.

The chapter titled The Resistance was for me one of the most valuable. He outlines ways to address this self-imposed resistance. "Real artists ship," he says. For example, "The people who break through usually have nothing to lose, and they almost never have a backup plan." Taking time to create a Plan B opens the door for the Lizard, which likes nothing better than the status quo—being safe and well fed.

How does the Lizard stop us from being indispensable artists? Godin suggest several ways: Procrastinating and claiming the need to be perfect. Delivering early, hoping defective ideas will be rejected. Excessive networking to gain others' approval. Intentionally avoiding others. Demonstrating a lack of desire to obtain new skills. Spending hours obsessively gathering information. Joining committees instead of leading. Starting committees instead of taking action. Producing work so average that no one notices it. Believing it's about gifts and talent, not skills that can be honed. Believing that a person has neither gifts or talents. Fear of failure, fear of success.



Today is the turning point, a once-in-a-lifetime moment when you get to make a choice. In the book's summary Godin says, "I didn't set out to get you to quit your job or to persuade you to become an entrepreneur or merely to change the entire world."

In this book Godin wants to sell you on being the artist you already are. "To make a difference. To stand for something. To get the respect and security you deserve." Resistance pushes for us to fit in. Godin says, "Fear of living without a map is the main reason people are so insistent that we tell them what to do."

This is a book about getting out of a rut, being more than a "cog in the machine," and creating a map using our potential in a world—in a ministry—that needs the art, passion, and commitment we have.

"Art" Godin says, "is the intentional act of using your humanity to create a change in another person."

"If every restaurant on the highway will give me precisely the same cheery service from the same robotic staff, at the same prices," he asks, "then why does it matter where I stop?"

The book is full of stories Godin uses to show his thinking, such as the one about Virgin Airlines founder Richard Branson. Branson chartered a plane when his commercial flight was canceled, then offered seats to his fellow passengers to cover his cost, and made it home on time.

This story appears in the chapter titled There Is No Map. This story explains one of the quadrants of discernment. The other quadrants include Bureaucrat, Whiner, and Fundamentalist Zealot. About the Fundamentalist Godin says, "Fundamentalist zealots always manage to make the world smaller, poor and meaner."

Godin explores what's change, and what is the fitting response to the change. In the table of contents he provides a survey view of the fourteen-chapter journey he proposes. The book is aptly illustrated by business card artist Hugh MaLeod and Jessica Hauge. We move from examining the new world of work to Thinking about Your Choices; Indoctrination: How We Go Here; Becoming a Linchpin. He argues, "The linchpin is an individual who can walk into chaos and create order, someone who can invent, connect, create, and make things happen."

continued on page 14

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BOOKS IN THE NEWS *continued from page 13*

He then asks, "Is it possible to do hard work in a cubicle? The hard work is being brave and committed enough to make a difference. His chapter is titled, "The Powerful Culture of Gifts." I see a direct relationship with our understanding of the work of grace in his description of the culture of gifts.

There is No Map is the eighth chapter. Linchpins are not waiting for instructions, but instead figuring out what to do next.

If value is created by what you choose to do, then the essence of becoming a linchpin is a choice. Making the Choice is a chapter title. We do not live and work in a vacuum and for that reason it is important to understand the Culture of Connection. Linchpins are people who are connected and connect others.

Godin talks about our inability to see things as they are: "You've fallen in love with a described outcome and at every stage along the way, it appears that hope and will and effort on your part might be able to maintain the future quo."

"Real change happens when someone who cares steps up and takes what feels like a risk. People follow because they want to, not because you can order them to."

The unique light Godin brings is reflected when he says in the chapter on Making the Choice, "Most of all, you don't set out to do something impossible. Certainly not as a gift. Unless you do. And then you win." Life without attachment and seeing clearly are important skill of today's linchpin in both business and, I would say, in ministry.

Linchpins do two things for the organization, Godin says: They exert emotional labor and they make a map. He shares and examines one list of seven things that make a person indispensable:

1. Providing a unique interface between members of the organization
2. Delivering unique creativity
3. Managing a situation or organization of great complexity
4. Leading customers
5. Inspiring staff
6. Providing deep domain knowledge
7. Possessing a unique talent.

Explaining making the choice Godin talks about DOING IT and suggests the reader google "More Cowbell." And you'll find what is certainly the most relevant *Saturday Night Live* skit of all time."

Linchpins can be better catechists, catechetical leaders, and ministers. He calls us to create a map. This is a book about being indispensable, outstanding, committed, and in relationship. "The individual who collects, connects, and nurtures relationships is indispensable."

I see many examples of Linchpins in our tradition from Jesus and St. Paul to Mother Theresa. The principles in Godin's book are not alien to our ministry. I encourage you to pick up Godin's book and choose to be indispensable. ■

Donald Kurre is director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Island, Nebraska.

Small Group Faith Sharing with a Mission of Love

by Christopher Ruff



I am passionate about small group faith sharing. It is an incredibly powerful means of personal and interpersonal renewal in Christ. I love it even more dearly as it has taken on a new and exciting dimension in my recent experience (more on that below).

My first mentor for small group faith sharing was Fr. Francis Kittock, a seasoned pastor at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Minneapolis. After hiring me in 1989 to direct parish adult faith formation, Fr. Kittock told me with justifiable pride of the long tradition of faith-sharing groups in the parish and asked me to keep them flourishing. Over a period of thirteen years at St. Charles, this became my primary focus and delight. I organized groups and utilized or composed a variety of resources. At any given time the parish had as many as 300 people involved in faith sharing.

Each group had its own character. Prominent in my memory is the “feisty” study group of baby-boomer doctors and lawyers with big personalities. They were a fun-loving group, but their prayers for one another in times of suffering touched me deeply. Their group, and a surprising number of others, had been together for more than ten years and could not conceive of life without their monthly meetings.

So here was the key—bonds of friendship forged in an experience of prayer and faith shared in each other’s living rooms. The topics could and did change—Bible study, the *Catechism*, church history. What endured and grew through it all was friendship in Christ, real care and prayer for one another, with plenty of laughter in the mix.

Now, a decade after having left St. Charles to come to the Diocese of La Crosse as director of the Office of Ministries and Social Concerns, I am still passionate about small group faith sharing, but with an added dimension.

About four years ago I was looking for a way to make the outreach of justice and charity in parishes less committee-centered, to raise awareness that it is the mission of every disciple of Christ. Social concerns committees are important, but it is clear from Jesus’ words in Matthew 25 that he will judge each one of us on what we have done, or not done, to him in “the least of these my brethren.” And so it struck me that a properly focused faith-sharing program would make the ideal setting for fostering compassion and care for our neighbor in need.

I began looking for resources that would embody this goal. Nothing I found quite matched my aspirations. I wanted something that would engage people in a manageable way and not overwhelm their busy calendars, and I wanted it to speak to their hearts with Gospel simplicity. I also wanted to avoid any particular social “agendas”

other than the great Commandment of Love.

I decided to write my own resources, a set of books I have called the *Discipleship Series*. There are three of them now—*As I Have Loved You*, *The Greatest of These is Love*, and *Who Is My Neighbor?*—and they have been utilized fruitfully in the Diocese of La Crosse (and beyond) for the past three years. The books contain a blend of Scripture, brief commentary, snippets from the *Catechism* and papal writings, illustrative stories (Dorothy Day, St. Damien the Leper, etc.), discussion questions and prayer. The component of loving service is woven throughout the materials and each participant is asked to commit to one to two hours of service per month (at a minimum).

Thanks be to God, this faith-sharing experience has borne the fruit of love lived in service, and the palpable joy that overflows from it. None of this is surprising. Did not Jesus tell us to abide in his love, “that you may have joy, and have it to the full”?

Here’s a way to make the outreach of justice and charity less committee-centered.

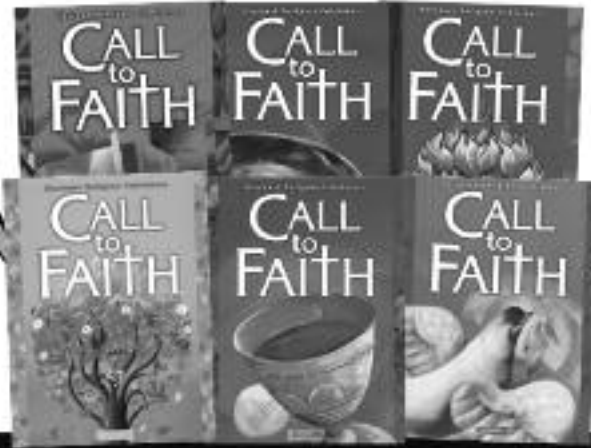
continued on page 16

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SMALL GROUP FAITH SHARING WITH A MISSION OF LOVE *continued from page 15*

Joy in the Lord is the sure hallmark of faith sharing done well, because it is a process not of academic learning but of lived assimilation of the Gospel at the level of the heart. And because it is lived in companionship with others, it leads to deep and lasting bonds of friendship. And why would this joyful assimilation not flower—*always and by a kind of law of the Spirit*—in a love that extends from the group and its members to the hungry and the poor, the sick and the aged, the lonely and the marginalized? Frankly, I can no longer imagine doing small group faith sharing in any other way, in any way that fails to recognize the blessed calling expressed so well in the following words of St. Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
No hands but yours, no feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which
He looks with compassion on this world;
Yours the feet with which he walks to do good;
Yours the hands with which he blesses. |

Christopher J. Ruff, S.T.L., has been director of the Office of Ministries and Social Concerns for the Diocese of La Crosse since 2001. He directs several programs for the formation of the laity and is associate director of deacon formation. He also assists the bishop in matters of social justice and outreach to the poor and disadvantaged.

Understanding Culture, Integrating Culture

by Anthony C. Marchica



The very definition of “culture” can be looked at from different perspectives. There is a national culture reflecting the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people. There is also a defined culture among those in a group of people whose shared beliefs and practices identify the particular place, class, or time to which they belong. Another distinct culture is evident in a particular set of attitudes that characterizes a group of people.

MANY CULTURES

I think it would be helpful to begin by taking a look at the diversity of cultures before we look at cultural diversities. There is ethnic culture, which seems to be the first one that people think of. This is the culture of a particular nationality or race. There is also regional culture within any ethnicity. There is definitely a difference in the culture of a large city like New York compared to a small town in the hills of Tennessee. Then there is, of course, a more local, or neighborhood culture, or even a culture among neighbors in a small subdivision or on a particular block. One of my sons is a teacher that lives in a subdivision that is working-class and children and family oriented, while the subdivision right next door is upper-class and for mature adult living.

There are also distinct cultural differences evident from one generation to the next. These differences are sometimes referred to as the generation gap. More clearly defined, we can see that the differences are the cultural expressions of a people born in a particular time, sharing events and experiences that have shaped their lives and perspectives. Some examples of such events would be the second-world-war era, pre- or post-Vatican II, the Viet Nam era, the scandals (political, business, finance, church), and 9/11. The generational differences are compounded by particular media impact, marketing strategies, advances in technology, medical advances, even the economy.

We also can't minimize the culture within a family. Each family is rich in rituals and traditions that define them. Each family has a shared set of experiences, history, memories and as well a shared set of beliefs and values. Thus, a familial culture also exists.

COMMON NEEDS

This all has a tremendous impact on church and ministry. How do you address the needs and desires of individuals in such diverse

groups? I suggest we first and foremost remember that we are concerned with the individual, not the group, and that our mission is to bring the individual into a closer relationship with the Lord our God, and we all have the same one. The commonality of being created by one God means that we share many other commonalities as well because God created all of us in his image.

Our common needs are fairly simple. We need to feel welcome, and that is simply communicated by a genuine joy in someone being part of us. At her funeral, my mother was best described by my nephew when he said, “There was never anyone so happy to see me.” We also need a sense of belonging. This means that we are a genuine part of a group, and not merely a tolerated or benign presence. You know someone is part of the group when they are present to offer ideas in planning, to help in the doing, and to evaluate in closing. We need to connect to what is happening—meaning we see that what is happening relates to our lived experiences and triggers some memories. It must be familiar in some way to reflect our inner selves. It needs to have elements of our culture to be understood.

Now comes the challenge of integrating this into “church.” The biggest obstacle is to think of church as synonymous with Eucharistic liturgy. We must look to the long tradition of the church as the center of praise and worship, the heart of the community, the hub of our socialization, our entertainment, and our gathering place. This is not accomplished in liturgy alone. It is at the heart of everything else we do. If we see ourselves as part of the full life and mission of the church, we will be present in liturgy.

Ministry is relational. We can't minister to strangers. Ministry begins with sincere invitation to everyone and a genuine joy when the invitation is accepted. It embraces the flavor that each person brings to the experience. It grows, evolves, expands, develops, and encompasses. Ministry is finite and limited when it is merely what we do. It is alive when it is in a constant state of becoming what we do.

This is who we are as the people created in the image of God... ever living, ever present, and ever loving. ■

Anthony C. Marchica is the director of catechetical leadership and youth ministry formation for the Diocese of Palm Beach, Florida. Contact him at amarchica@diocesepb.org.

Our RCIA Program Accepts the Gift of Technology

by Carmen M. Cayon



Four years ago our parish began the RCIA year by welcoming a diverse group of individuals. As the weekly session coordinator for the catechumenate team, I got to know them (and their sponsors) well and learned of how they had been searching for a parish. Through their stories I realized that their attempt to

inquire about how to enter our church was primarily through the Internet.

They were frustrated that despite repeated attempts to leave email messages through our parish website, they weren't able to connect with us until they phoned the rectory. The newer generation, known as the "digital natives," is very adept at spontaneously navigating the Internet. They were in search of a virtual front door for a potential Christian community. I began to ponder: *How digitally accessible am I to those whom I seek to evangelize?*

My catechetical digital experimentation began! I decided to supplement Sunday sessions through weekly emails to our RCIA group. The digital natives were the first to respond. It became a great way to continue what had taken place within our faith-sharing time and a way to process what was being discussed in order to reflect on it more deeply. Even those who participated only by reading the conversations said how they enjoyed the ongoing conversations. Some said it helped them to keep in touch if they happened to miss a session.

After the Easter Vigil, I surveyed our group about the weekly digital conversations. Everyone who had participated agreed that there were advantages to receiving emails; responses ranged from "being kept informed" to "convenient way to communicate" to "being thought of." Not everyone was able to participate for various reasons. For some, this was still uncharted territory and it was for this reason that I deliberately brought in hard copies of the discussions to our sessions to share them with those who did not participate.

It is important to build a sense of community while embracing people where they are in their spirituality and in their lived experiences. Our catechumens and candidates must feel comfortable with the whole process. I had observed how many of our group members seemed to value connecting digitally with their friends and family. This is why that year became a great opportunity for me to step out of my comfort zone.

Last year we took a cyber leap forward and launched our very own RCIA website. We designed a web page that is linked through our parish website. This has been an ongoing mystagogical experience. Our webmaster was one of the candidates in my original experimental group. She has now become an integral member of our RCIA Core Group. At our monthly Core Group gathering we analyze how the web site is being used and how it can be improved. With the guidance of the DRE and the core team, this page includes important dates and event information, photo images and videos from our sessions and rites, a closed group discussion link where we continue our weekly reflections (bypassing the emailing), and links to other credible parish, diocesan, and global Catholic websites.

My challenge had been to see *why* to use the new technology to supplement what we are doing in our RCIA catechesis. It now seems apparent. As catechists we are aware that our mission is to evangelize; this involves a dynamic process in an ever changing landscape of digital communications. I have accepted the challenge of twenty-first century technology as a gift to our ministry. I have seen how, when used meaningfully, it can transform our Christian communities. ■

Carmen Cayon, M.A.T., has volunteered with the RCIA process at Incarnation Catholic Church in Tampa, Florida for over thirteen years as a catechist in the English- and Spanish-speaking communities and as a Core Team member for the last five years. Contact: estudiocay@aol.com.

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Catechists and Families: Images of God's Enduring Love

by Jo Rotunno



This year's Catechetical Sunday theme is "Marriage: Sacrament of Enduring Love." Frankly, I had a temporary disconnect as I first tried to relate this theme to the ministry of catechesis. The more I thought about it, however, the more I realized what a wonderful opportunity this year's theme offers catechists to reflect on the nature of their ministry. And once again, *Echoes of Faith* can help.

Think, first of all, of the nature of marriage itself. The church describes Christian marriage as a covenant, a partnership between a man and a woman, ordered toward their mutual love and respect, the procreation and well-being of children, and service to others. The Second Vatican Council used the language of "domestic church" to describe the home as a symbol and microcosm of all that we mean by church, the seat of the

ministry of Jesus that we continue in the world. Consider using the Liturgy and Sacraments module early in the fall with all your catechists to stimulate a discussion on the role of marriage.

What does this have to do with the ministry of catechesis? Well, as I continue to think about it—everything. I think it is safe to say that the majority of parish catechists in the United States are men and women who are or have been married, and who are raising or have raised children. Indeed, their commitment to catechesis is often an outgrowth of the commitment to service that is at the heart of their marriage vows. These men and women stand as models to young people and to other adults of what it looks like to hand on the faith. The many single adults, women and men religious, and clergy who serve as catechists model the commitment to service as well, and many tell us that their vocational call began in the crucible of a Christian home.

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If you use the Person of the Catechist or Roles of the Catechist module this year, consider adding a few reflection questions such as these: What similarities and differences can you see between the ministry of catechesis and the sacrament of marriage? How are both ministries images of God's enduring love for us? One of the bonus interviews for the Person of the Catechist module is with Tom Groome. In this interview, he speaks of the Six C's of Spirituality: commitment, community, conversation, compassion, celebration, and conversion. His reflection on these themes would have great value for both married couples and catechists.

Finally, use Catechetical Sunday this year to discuss with your catechists their proper relationship to the parents of the children in their care. Remind catechists (and yourselves) that the

role of catechists is not to serve us. Indeed, quite the reverse is true. We assist parents in their role as the primary educators of their children in the faith. In today's world, they have a daunting task and they need all the help we can give them.

At your catechetical gatherings this fall, use the Catechist's Prayer, provided by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops for Catechetical Sunday, which calls catechists to "be a path of Christ's love to families, especially those in need." Both catechists and parents are indeed salvific images of God's enduring love. ■

Jo Rotunno is director of catechist and professional development for RCL Benziger. Echoes of Faith is a joint endeavor of NCCL and RCL Benziger.

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How to Spend Summer When You're a Catechist

by Elizabeth Devlin



As the school year comes to a close, one can take a moment to celebrate and think, “What a great year.” We all know that even though the summer season is upon us, our mission as catechists is far from over. The summer offers an opportunity to reflect on the ministry you oversee and to reflect on your personal spiritual journey.

As a young adult/youth minister I know it takes time and energy, countless hours, to make ministry run. A lot of laughter, sweat, and tears make the ministry possible and I am always amazed at everything that takes place in such a short time. I use the summer months as an opportunity to evaluate the ministry I coordinate. What worked, what didn't work, what can I do better? I invite my community to offer feedback about what events they would like to see more of or less of. I use the summer months as a time to build my calendar for the upcoming year, using this feedback.

The summer is also a chance to bond with those who serve as your team members and to recruit new ones! Being from California, we are able to enjoy beach bonfires together, an evening game of miniature golf, and sometimes a day of retreat for our volunteers. While not in direct ministry with the youth and young adults I typically serve, I am grateful to have the time to invest in making bonds that serve to build up and encourage our team. The summertime also offers a chance to go back out to the community and meet the new faces that might be joining your ministry in the upcoming year. In general it is an essential time to revamp and grow ministry.

While the paragraph above seems to suggest our work as catechists is never done, it is crucial to remember that summertime is downtime for the most important person, you! We all have dealt

with that teen, young adult, or parent that drove us crazy all year. We all need time away from our parish communities to relax and rest. I am very blessed, as my pastor encourages all staff members to take a month off during the summer to re-energize. Not everyone has this opportunity; however we all need some “me” time.

Take a weekend away to a relaxing spot, or veg at home for a day, and enjoy the summer days. We get so wrapped up in dealing with the issues of those we serve that it is possible to forget to take care of ourselves and our spiritual needs. At times we rush to finish the year and lose our focus of what God wants. This would be a great time to re-center ourselves on God's will for the ministry we coordinate. By taking some “me” time we will more likely be able to see where God wants us to grow.

We don't have to change our lives to the extreme to follow Christ; all we are asked is to take a small moment out of our crazy and busy lives to say “hello.” Spend some of this time in prayer and with the Eucharist. Set a time of the day were you leave all distractions to the side and be open to God's voice. Once the year begins again it will be important to keep this small “me” time as a regular date with Christ. This way we are being open to wherever we may be led.

Enjoy your summer. You deserve some R&R, time from away from the madness of ministry. Spend time with your family, friends, and your volunteers. We all need time to re-gather ourselves in preparation for the New Year. ■

Elizabeth Devlin will enter her fourth year as the young adult coordinator and second year as the youth minister at St. Louise de Marillac in Covina, California. She has served on the Young Adult Ministry Advisory Board for the Los Angeles Diocese during the last three years.

Catechetical Update Is Available Online

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

New Wineskins Awards Presented

Diocesan Award: An Invitation to Sing



*New Wineskins awardees
Therese and John Boucher
with Tom Quinlan*

John Boucher, director of the Office of Evangelization and Parish Development for the Diocese of Trenton, and his wife Therese Boucher, an adult religious educator, were presented with the 2010 Diocesan New Wineskins Award. Their program, Christmas Carol Festival, was nominated as a new way to reach inactive Catholics.

The Bouchers also noticed that during December, more than 70% of all religious searches on the Internet are for the words of Christmas carols. They began to wonder, “Could we put together a resource for parishes who would like to respond to this interest in religious Christmas carols? Could carols become a stepping stone to evangelizing inactive Catholics?”

The result was the Christmas Carol Festival project. In 2007, the Bouchers put together a draft guidebook and trained about 150 parish leaders to conduct local festivals. That first year, about 350 people participated in festivals. In 2008 six parishes

participated and in 2009, eight parishes did so. During both years an estimated 1,500-1,800 people participated in the Diocese of Trenton.

The Christmas Carol Festival is an annual evangelization project in the diocese that encourages parishes, families, or groups to use the rich tradition of religious Christmas carols and hymns to reach out to inactive Catholics and the unchurched. The goal of this nine-month process is to help people encounter Jesus within the community of the Catholic Church through invitations to sing, through pre-Christmas festivals (in non-liturgical settings, so as to preserve Advent time for active Catholics), and through follow-up events in January and beyond.

HOW THE PROJECT WORKS

Over the past decade, Therese and John noticed that their diocese, like many in the United States, had a growing number of inactive Catholics, and the biggest single subgroup was young adults in their 20s and 30s. Only 8-11% of this age group were connected to parish life. However, many of them have said that they wish they could sing religious Christmas carols in a relaxed setting during December, since such music is an important part of their most cherished childhood memories.

...ABOUT NEW WINESKINS

NCCL’s new awards—one at the diocesan level and one at the parish level—have several important aims:

- To highlight and celebrate extraordinary achievement in the ministries of evangelization and catechesis occurring in a parish/parish cluster or in a diocese/co-operating dioceses
- To share successful initiatives that may benefit other dioceses or parishes
- To encourage continued creative innovation in parish/diocesan catechetical and evangelization efforts.
- To reflect the spirit of the “new evangelization” promulgated by Pope John Paul II and the general and national *Directories for Catechesis*

festivals. Reports have also come forth about people who enter the RCIA in order to complete sacramental initiation and about unchurched people seeking to become Catholic.” ■

ENCOURAGING RESULTS

Participation in the nine-month process promotes welcoming, evangelizing, hospitality, and community-building in the parish, according to Martin J. Arsenault, director of the diocesan Office of Catechesis: “This process creates a new level of awareness about the importance of these pastoral activities. And in addition, there have been many reports of people returning to the active practice of their Catholic faith as part of the suggested follow-up after the

Parish Award: From Church to Work



Michelle Harris with Wineskins awardee Father Anthony Shonis

Father Anthony Shonis, associate pastor of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Henderson, Kentucky, was awarded the 2010 Parish New Wineskins Award for his program, *Sunday/Monday Connection*.

Father Shonis wanted to insure that the spiritual transition from church to work actually takes place. He proposed that the “food” received on Sundays can energize the workplace by making real the presence of Jesus not only in the pews but also in the daily lives of the parish community.

HOW THE PROJECT WORKS

Parishioners are invited to fill out a form on Labor Day weekend if they want a priest to visit them at their workplace. The visit takes only ten minutes. Father Shonis talks with the worker about different aspects of how he or she views the job. He does not

evangelize. He does, however, leave the worker with a prayer by Cardinal John Henry Newman that begins, “I am created to do something or to be something for which no one else is created; I have a place in God’s world, which no one else has . . .”

After visiting each workplace, he writes a short reflection on the person and place and how this visit is viewed in the scheme of spirituality. He shares this reflection in the weekly bulletin, allowing the entire parish to get to know each other better.

After six months, he invites everyone he has visited to meet to discuss the relationship of faith and work. He gives each a copy of the “Morning Offering” and a relevant newsletter subscription. During the past four years at Holy Name parish, Father Shonis has visited approximately one hundred workers. He makes a large impact in very small ways, according to Rose Wheeler, the parish director of religious education who nominated his program: “By visiting one person for ten minutes and reflecting on his observations, he connects a parish person-to-person and job-to-job. He shows everyone that no matter what jobs they hold, it is in performing the job with the love of Christ in your heart that the dignity each one of us long for shines through in every simple chore we perform.”

-Compiled by *Joyce A. Crider*, editor.

Catechetical Sunday, September 19, 2010

2010 Theme *Matrimony: Sacrament of Enduring Love*

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1-9	\$3.25	\$2.95
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Books, websites, and media for the enrichment of the parish catechetical leader.

Compiled by Dan Pierson

One of our major responsibilities as diocesan, parish, and school catechetical leaders is the initial and ongoing education, training and formation of our catechists. *The General Directory for Catechesis* and the *National Directory for Catechesis* present guidelines and recommendations. Diocesan Offices of Religious Education, Catechesis and Faith Formation have developed certification guidelines and often offer programs and classes in locations and parishes throughout the diocese and in some dioceses in an online format.

Many dioceses use the services of these organizations:

The Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) of the University of Dayton

G21: Online Learning for Spiritual Enrichment and Faith Renewal of Boston College;

STEP Program of Continuing Education eCourses of the University of Notre Dame.

Other popular programs include **Echoes of Faith Plus**, a joint project of RCL/Benziger and NCCL, and **Into the Fields**, published of Twenty-Third Publications.

Each year *Catechist Magazine* offers a seven-part program for catechist education that includes an article in each issue with support, resources and certification by the University of Dayton.

For over 40 years **RTJ: Religion Teacher's Journal** (six issues a year) and **Catechist Magazine** (seven issues a year) have been providing catechists with ideas, education and resources for teaching and for their education and formation. Both magazines have companion websites and can be found on Facebook.

St Anthony Messenger Press publishes a variety of newsletters/parish handouts that are used in a variety of ways for adult faith formation.

Bringing Home the Word
Catechism for US
Eucharist: Jesus With Us
Every Day Catholic
Jesus: A Portrait
Scripture from Scratch
Vatican 2 Today
Walking With the Saints
Catholic Update

These publications are available in print, online or in both formats. Many catechetical leaders use these as resources for catechist education, formation and certification.

The Catechist Library

I have compiled a list of popular books that can be used in a variety of settings: independent reading and study, small group discussion, book group, or for a class presentation. Many other titles could be added to this list.

For a more complete description of these books and resources, visit my website/blog—www.eCatechist.com, which provides ideas, resources and inspiration for the education and formation of catechists.

What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist

Dan Pierson; Susan Stark; Pflaum Publishing Group

Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14

Chip Wood; Northeast Foundation for Children

All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time
 Robert Ellsberg; Crossroad Publishing Company

Invitation to Catholicism: Beliefs, Teachings, Practices
 Alice Camille; ACTA Publications

Invitation to the New Testament: A Catholic Approach to the Christian Scriptures

Alice Camille; ACTA Publications

Invitation to the Old Testament: A Catholic Approach to the Hebrew Scriptures

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Reader's Journal for the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
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Connecting With Parents: A Catechist's Guide to Involving Parents in Their Child's Religious Formation
 Mary Twomey Spollen; Paulist Press

Teaching the Faith: A Catechist's Guide to Classroom Management
 Kim Duty; Paulist Press

Praying With Young People: Tips for Catechists
 Maureen Gallagher; Paulist Press

Called to Be a Catechist; Your Practical Guide
 Cullen W Schippe; Pflaum Publishing Group

Enjoying God and Teaching Creatively: Insights and Ideas for More Effective Religion Classes

Greg Dues; Twenty-Third Publications

What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life

Thomas H. Groome; HarperOne

The General Directory for Catechesis in Plain English: A Summary and Commentary

Bill Huebsch; Twenty-Third Publications

The Bible Blueprint: A Catholic's Guide to Understanding and Embracing God's Word

Joe Paprocki; Loyola Press

When You Are a Catechist

Judith Dunlap; St. Anthony Messenger Press

How to Teach Scripture

Biagio Mazza; Paulist Press

Prayers for Catechists

Kass Dotterweich; Pflaum Publishing Group

For Catechetical Leaders: Teaching Catechists to Pray

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 Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND
 Twenty-Third Publications

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 Visual Dynamics Publishing

Jump Starts for Catechists: Praying With Children

Gwen Costello; Twenty-Third Publications

The Catholic Bible, Personal Study Edition: New American Bible (NAB)
 Oxford University Press

NRSV-The Catholic Faith and Family Bible

HarperOne

The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life

James Martin; HarperOne

Dan Pierson served as director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for seventeen years. He is the founder of www.faithAlivebooks.com and www.eCatechist.com.