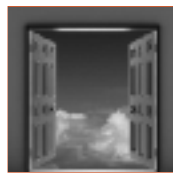


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YOUR LEADERSHIP WORKS HARD FOR YOU

Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership

Dear NCCL Members,

The theme for this issue of *Catechetical Leader* is relational leadership. It dovetails nicely with what occurred during the November Representative Council meeting in Chicago. Forty-two leaders of NCCL gathered to do the work of the conference on your behalf. We came together to renew old relationships and establish new ones. We deliberated, celebrated, prayed, and discerned. We worked tirelessly because we are passionate about the ministry of catechesis.

These are some of the highlights of the Rep Council meeting:

- a strategic planning process, during which the representatives developed sixteen action items that will become the work of the conference for the next two years;
- time with the Leadership Discernment Committee to surface names for the two at-large board positions which will be filled in April;
- Forum gatherings for the diocesan directors, diocesan staff, and parish catechetical leaders to discuss items of mutual interest for each group;
- member check-in time that enabled the Rep Council to randomly call over 100 NCCL members to find out how things were going in their ministry;
- reports from Lee Nagel on the National Office, Kathy Kleinlein on the financial health of NCCL, Dr. Michael Steier on the USCCB Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis, and our Episcopal Advisor Bishop Leonard Blair on catechesis;
- updates from Theoretical Foundations Committee, Membership Committee, Bylaws Committee, and Product Development Committee;
- participation in a process to evaluate the proposed national certification process for lay ecclesial ministers and to comment on the newly revised standards for lay ecclesial ministers;

- viewing two sample ideas for a new NCCL website that the Technology Committee is developing;
- a discussion of the province nominations for the 2010 Catechetical Award;
- brainstorming ideas, themes, and agendas for the 2011 Annual Conference, which will mark our 75th anniversary;
- sharing how provinces are incorporating the USCCB priorities in their ministry and where the energy is in each of the provinces; and
- offering input on the New Wineskins Award.

If you read the above listing of items and thought it was a lot, please remember that all this was done in less than three days! Your NCCL leadership worked long hours to finish an ambitious agenda. They rarely complained and willingly labored to do the work of your conference. Their work helped to forge the relationships that will strengthen our conference for years to come.

By this time you should have received an official copy of the minutes from the November Representative Council meeting. So you can read all the details and see for yourself the work that transpired. What you will not read about is the dedication and zeal of forty-two people who gathered because they committed to serving you and our conference. They were an outstanding group of leaders and I felt privileged to facilitate our meeting.

Your Representative Council will gather again in April prior to our annual conference. We will have a limited amount of time together but, as usual, a large amount of work to accomplish. Remember that you have a voice in our conference through your province representative. Let them know of any issues or concerns that need to come before the council. And be sure to tell them how much you appreciate their relational leadership on your behalf.

God bless,

Anne
President, NCCL

125 Michigan Avenue, NE Washington, DC 20017
202-884-9753 • FAX 202-884-9756 • Email nccl@nccl.org
Website www.nccl.org

RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT ON MUTUALITY

Leland Nagel



One of my favorite memories stems from my annual evaluations at a former job. Towards the end of the process, my supervisor would ask, “What do you want from me during this coming year?” This was a very different feeling from the days of my student teaching experience when my snooervisor was searching for everything I did that was inappropriate.

Don't get me wrong. I didn't always get what I desired but I knew that he cared about me as a person and about improving my job performance. Just knowing that I could remind him of what I desired, and sometimes needed, was enough to sustain me when the quicksand of involvement was dragging me down, sucking the life out of me.

That's the key in relational leadership as well as evaluation. If you are not willing to help me change, then it probably won't help if you simply tell me what I am doing wrong. I need your help to change and you need to be open to hear the type of assistance that I will find most helpful.

If anyone approaches you and offers to “tell you something for your

*Leadership begins with,
“What can I do for you?”*

own good,” run away as fast as you can. Your well-being is not at the top of this person's concern list. Don't forget that every leadership style is relational. Even master-slave is a relationship, though not one I would care to enter.

Relationships are built on mutuality: support and regard for one another. Whenever a shared interest exists, you can be confident that the beliefs associated with the common concern will influence the behaviors of all parties involved.

Visualize a diocesan director asking the parish catechetical leaders of the diocese, “What is it that you want me to do for you? How can I (and the diocesan staff) be a source of support and encouragement for you?”

Picture a parish catechetical leader posing the following question to the parish catechists: “What can I do so this experience as a catechist will deepen your faith and enliven your spirituality?”

Imagine the parish catechists inviting their students to respond to this question, “What can I do that will help you to encounter the person and message of Jesus Christ?”

Envision a pastor inquiring of the parish staff, “What could I do that would make your ministry in this parish fulfilling and life-giving?”

Consider a parent sitting down with a child and asking the child, “What did you do this week that you believe pleased Jesus? What can I do to help you act like Jesus more often?”

I guarantee that the answers provided to the aforementioned questions will be as good as the relationship between the two parties. If a belief exists that the persons involved share an abiding concern to live as a disciple of Jesus, then the responses given will serve to deepen the baptismal commitment, strengthen the human bond, and enrich the faith life of not only the persons involved but the whole church community.

Evaluating programs has its benefits, but the real assessment occurs when the program ends, when the lights are turned off and the doors are locked, when we are told, “The Mass is ended. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

It commences as we are leaving. It starts in the parking lot. It begins with, “What can I do?”

Note: In an effort to follow my own advice, let me ask you, “What can I do to encourage you in your ministry of catechesis?” Please email me at LNagel@NCCL.org. |

Relational Leadership: Leaving the Door Open

By Gerry Creedon



When Celia came to my office, she had a gift to share, a silver frame. She wanted me to bring it home to Ireland to my mother. I said to myself, “She will go far in the ministry!” I had some extra photos lying around. A photo of myself in Celia’s silver frame hangs to this day over the fireplace in my family’s parlor in Inchigeela, County Cork. I find it embarrassing because any one of my thirteen siblings is better endowed.

I was no sooner back from my annual pilgrimage to the Emerald Isle than Celia visited again. She wanted me to consider opening the church on the nine days before Christmas for a Simbang Gabi, a Filipino novena of Masses before Christmas. It is also called Misa de Gallo, the Mass of the Rooster. The time requested was 5 a.m. My first thought was, “In my part of the world people often come home from celebrating at that hour.” Yet, how could I refuse someone who gave nice gifts to my mother? So I teasingly answered “The door is open, on two conditions: that you find another priest to celebrate and you do not wake me up at that hour!” That was all she needed to hear. Of course I have ended up celebrating with the Filipino Community on at least two December mornings each Advent. The liturgy is complete with *linternas*, *paroles*, Tagalog songs and an Asiatic breakfast. As many as 200 worshippers participate each morning.

A few of this community’s leaders who work in development came together to plan an outreach to those who lack health care in their homeland. Through Philippine Medical Missions, Inc., young abused women who sleep under the bridges of Manila received care and life skills. Working with partners in Manila, Mindanao, and beyond over the past ten years, \$65,000 were raised to support service and systemic change in the health care system.

While I was recognized as one of the co-founders of Philippine Medical Missions, my real claim is that I did not close a door.

RECOGNIZING OPENINGS FOR LEADERSHIP

A concern is sometimes raised about compassion fatigue. I believe this fear is misplaced. Our parish, St. Charles in Arlington, Virginia, has had a decades’ long twinning relationship with a community in southwest Haiti. Annually education is sponsored for more than 700 children. This practical engagement opens up our community to an understanding of a different cultural and economic reality and to the struggles and vitality of the Haitian church. This twinning experience has not prevented us from developing similar Africa and Dominican Republic outreaches. Now we are developing Communities Rising, an effort to provide small grants to community-led projects throughout the poorer world.

We are called to be companions on the journey who identify and affirm the capacities and gifts of others.

All of these projects begin with individual leaders and groups who propose and share their vision for engagement. Rather than creating a compassion drain, these signs of solidarity bring enrichment to a diverse parish in which Latino, African, and Filipino parishioners feel an increased sense of pride and belonging, while the larger community is given an opportunity to learn the beauty and dignity of their other sisters and brothers.

One of our resident priests has been called to serve elsewhere as a parochial administrator. Reflecting on what he had learned here, he summarized, “St. Charles is a place where the door is always open and the lights are always on.” I could not find a better description of relational ministry.

When I worked in the Dominican Republic we used two expressions to describe ministry: accompaniment and empowerment. We are called to be companions on the journey who

identify and affirm the capacities and gifts of others. I have always seen ordination as the process of ordering the charisms of God's people. This means an attitude of hospitality. It also demands structures that facilitate engagement.

Bishop Grullon of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic once sent out a Christmas card that said "*Romper las cadenas de dependencia* (break the chains of dependency)". In this way he asked people to take responsibility for themselves in a church in which hierarchy often is used as an excuse for inaction and in a society in which democracy is honored more in the breach. An alternative pastoral process only works when we take seriously the words of the Baptist: "He must increase and I must decrease." We are left with the sandal straps.

CREATING STRUCTURE FOR LEADERSHIP

The US bishops have provided a vision for structuring mission in their excellent document, *The Parish: A People, a Mission, a Structure*. The fundamental mission of the church is tripartite: message, community, and service. In the life of the parish these priorities break down into education/formation and youth ministry, community life, liturgy, social ministry, and stewardship. These ministries need the support of a pastoral team that provides formation and facilitation. They also need the direction of a pastoral council that fosters participation in long-range visioning and planning. The pastoral council ensures that turf is transcended by overall community and pastoral concerns. Integration and coordination become the necessary breath of a parish, while communication is its life blood.

In the area of structure for social ministry, I have long believed that this function needs professionalization as much as the other areas of church endeavor. Whoever thought of opening an elementary school without trained teachers? The Gospel

will not be heard unless it is accompanied by action for justice and the transformation of our society. The work of service and systemic change is not just a volunteer task. I have found that parishes that take the social mission seriously need to hire a trained social service coordinator to foster the work of outreach and a social justice coordinator to deal with the root causes of the problems we encounter. For one professional to do both is a recipe for burnout. Usually justice advocacy and community organization get swallowed up by the demands of direct service.

I also believe the area of education needs structure for faith formation for adults, especially those involved in ministry. The definition of ministry needs to go far beyond ecclesial concerns. I recall a pastor who had a commitment to covenanting all of his registered parishioners to some form of ministry. He then went back to delete those families who had not "signed up." Many members who have only a Sunday

*Parishes need structures
that facilitate engagement.*

engagement in their parishes may be nurses or prison guards whose lives are a continuing ministry of care and healing. We need to recall the story of Moses and Joshua. Joshua had a list of people who were outside the tent. He wanted to curtail their prophecy. Moses took him to task, "Would that all the people of God were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all" (Numbers 11, 29).

LEADERSHIP AND HOSPITALITY

The Joshua approach has become too common in our culture and church. Denying the podium to politicians who do not

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conform to our ecclesial political doctrines has become a badge of exclusion. There are a thousand different occasions that offer us opportunities to divide and polarize. Whatever happened to Benedict's call at the White House lawn "to bring the principles rooted in our faith into a reasoned discussion in the public forum"? The most difficult form of hospitality is to entertain the ideas of those who are from another party or ideology, whether that sect be political or theological. We need to re-read Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam*. Pope Paul VI's first encyclical was a clarion call for the church to be in dialogue with

The most difficult form of hospitality is to entertain the ideas of those who are from another party or ideology.

ourselves, other faiths and the world: "Speaking generally of the dialogue which the church today must take up with a great renewal of fervor, we would say that it must be readily conducted with all people of good will both inside and outside the church." (No. 92) "All things human are our concern." (No. 97) Within the church Pope Paul wanted a dialogue that was frequent and intimate. In a parish, the privileged places for this dialogue and discernment are the pastoral team and the pastoral council.

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HOSPITALITY HOLDS THE KEY

I once served in a parish where my pastor spent all his time locking doors that I had left open. That's an attention deficit that I have not striven to overcome. The Vatican marked the Jubilee Year by opening an ancient door. It caused me to offer this reflection in the parish bulletin. Let it serve as a précis of what I may have learned about relational leadership.

The Door

Open wide the doors to Christ,
For too long have we barred the door.

Looking out for self-aggrandizement,
We have built up walls of competition.
Afraid of trust we have developed security
In locks and chains and bolts.

We have put peepholes on doorways
To screen our guests with discrimination
Double gateways secure luxuries.
We end up prisoners in our own castles.

Let us practise faith in self-surrender.
Let us offer the hand to friend and stranger.
Let us trust the air with open lungs
And believe only in Christ for safety.

Open wide the doors for Christ
Too long have we barred the door.

Gerry Creedon
2000

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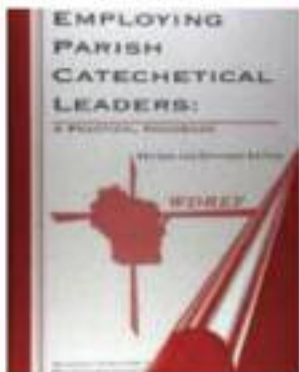
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The bottom line for relational leadership is hospitality. This fundamental value is well expressed by the US Catholic bishops in this statement from *The Parish, A People, a Mission, a Structure*:

Embracing all the activity of the parish is a basic vocation and commitment to evangelization. Not only calling active believers to ever deeper faith, but also bringing the message of Christ to alienated Catholics, inviting people to join in the Church's belief and worship, and making the Gospel real by applying it to the issues and conditions of our lives. The parish realizes that the most effective instrument of evangelization is its visible hospitality, its vitality and its own faithfulness to Christ.

A neighbor's son was bringing his father to Gougane Barra to the well of St. Finbarr, west of my home village, Inchigeela, in County Cork. His father had fallen into a deep melan-

choly on the death of his wife. Going through Inchigeela, they stopped at Creedon's bar. My father, Johnny Creedon, poured them some libations and told a few yarns. As they continued their journey the neighbor remarked, "Whatever we find in Finbarr's well, I know that Johnny Creedon would bring a smile to a man who was facing the gallows." Affirmation and an open heart go a long way to rousing the people of God from their fears, their lethargy and their despair. ■

Fr. Gerry Creedon has served as a priest in the dioceses of Richmond and Arlington, VA for the past forty-one years. He is chair of the Diocese of Arlington's Peace and Justice Commission and serves in a leadership capacity on social justice interfaith organizations locally and statewide. He is founder of Arlington Diocesan Mission in the Dominican Republic, former Director of Catholic Charities and holds a BA in literature, an MA in divinity and an MSW (Social Work).

Leadership: Not the Same As Management

by David Loftus



I used to consider that some people were born with a set of gifts and skills that endowed them with the capacity to influence not only a small circle of people, but indeed the whole world.

Reflecting on my personal experience of leadership in my life and ministry, I immediately call to mind social, political and spiritual leaders to whom I was introduced in my teen years.: Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Emmeline Pankhurst, Winston Churchill, Oscar Romero, Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Diana-Princess of Wales, Margaret Thatcher, John F. Kennedy, Indira Gandhi, Golda Meier, Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, Éamon DeValera, Michael Collins, John Paul II, Mother Theresa.

Leadership is not necessarily exercised by virtue of office or title.

Each of us can begin to call to mind our own names. What sets these people apart in my mind is the appreciation for the great influence they wielded and continue to yield—sometimes beyond their own death—upon others.

As a youth I could aspire to emulate these heroes and heroines, hoping with certain naïveté that I could develop the gifts and attributes of the these people whom I so admired, and that I too could become a leader to transform the world.

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP

As I re-consider, I have come to understand that leadership is not so much a skill or gift with which one is born as much as it is choice and commitment made in relationship with others. Often, these iconic leaders were born into ordinary circumstances but grew to become leaders by virtue of the covenant they entered into with others, sometimes on a local scale, but often on a global scale. Nelson Mandela personally acknowledges that he started out an ordinary man with ordinary concerns, but one who grew to become a leader because of circumstances in his life. Because of the relationships he entered into and the responsibilities he undertook, he grew to become recognized as one of the world's most influential leaders, one with a moral integrity that is perhaps unparalleled in his time.

Within church circles, ministerial and catechetical, I note that the great leaders were recognized as such not because of what they did, but because of who they were in relationship with others. John XXIII, elected a caretaker pope, invited believers to engage one another in different ways as believers. Beyond all the arguments on the merits and faults of the Second Vatican Council, his choice to engage believers in relationship changed forever the manner in which we relate with one another as believers. It certainly helped that John XXIII was pope. There's no denying that his title and the office that he held enhanced the leadership he exercised. But his office and his leadership are not to be understood as one and the same.

By manner of illustration, consider the world of music. In the world of music, there are certain positions that are entrusted with leadership. The position of first violin guides the orchestra, the first cornet guides the band, the principal soprano guides the choir. A leader is a person who exercises influence among a group of people toward a particular end. Leadership is not necessarily exercised by virtue of office or title, though oftentimes in church circles we conflate leadership with authority and or responsibility. It is too easy for us to fall to the temptation to expect that those who are appointed (or anointed) to exercise leadership are capable of being leaders, and this, as we all know when we consider it, is not always the case.

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE PARISH

As I listen to parish ministry leaders express their frustrations, it never takes long for the pastor and his disposition to come to the forefront. I'm not surprised by this. Any ministers who bear responsibility in the parish invariably have comments to make about their pastors. Pastors invariably have comments to make about their bishops. If we are honest about it, we all have comments to make about those upon whom we project our expectations for leadership.

Our parishes and the ministries that they foster are naturally communal. It is the community of believers that provides the context for leadership in the parish. Within the community exist webs of relationships and it is in these relationships—it is in the interactions with one another—that leadership is exercised. To the extent that I develop and maintain healthy relationships with those alongside whom I minister, I exercise quality leadership. In my relationships with my colleagues in ministry I enjoy both being influenced by them and exercising influence with them.

Truth told, it's easier *not* to engage in leadership. When I don't have to listen to others or be challenged by their different views and experiences, my life is less complex. I don't have to be inclusive, I don't have to be accountable to anyone else for the choices I make, nor do I have to live with the consequences of my choices. But I have learned the hard way that the ministry is impoverished when I refuse to be in relationship with others, when I decline to participate with others in the exercise of leadership. The truth is that *how* I achieve a purposed end is at least as important as the end in itself. The process is *at least* as important as the outcome. Relational leadership is driven by vision more than it is by any particular stance or position. The politics of relational leadership is about shared vision and not about personal hoarded power or "turf-wars."

Let me describe what I would *like* to practice in terms of being a catechetical leader who works alongside others in ministry. I offer that the pastor in a parish community, a parish catechetical leader, or anyone in leadership might find some parallels to make their own. In a sense, what follows here is what I would describe as some ideal attributes of leadership to which I would like to aspire in ministry.

SHARED VISION

One of the questions I have often asked people in ministry is a simple one. Why do you do this ministry? What do you get out of it for yourself? The reason I ask is simple enough: I seek to discern the individual's self-knowledge. Knowledge of self, awareness of motivations, consciousness of the ways in which we move and have our being greatly enhance our ministry, and are essential for leadership. *A good leader is self-aware and at the same time develops a good knowledge of others.* Beyond this, good leaders are not content to just know and to be, but also seek to achieve, to do, to carry out their purpose, driven by vision they hold.

Discerning the vision which drives our purpose is not always an easy thing, and sometimes is overlooked by those who would exercise leadership. I remember working with a group of master catechists in an advisory board setting. We had been collectively struggling to articulate and define our purpose as a group of committed and willing leaders. As I listened care-

fully to the concerns being raised and then pondered them following one particular meeting, I discerned a path forward and was excited with the resulting plans. When I shared those plans with the wider group, there was what seemed like an unleashing of energy and vibrancy that overwhelmed me. I was delighted with myself. Everyone seemed to buy into the vision. People were excited about the tasks they set for themselves in the meeting. I went home that night on a "high."

The next time we gathered, there was no energy. There was a lot of confusion about the purpose of our efforts. And as I look back, I realize that I had goofed. "I" had a vision. And, as in the larger tradition of the church, private and personal visions enjoy little or no credibility within the gathered community.

Asking questions like "What do I hope will happen?" or "What is it that I am working toward in my ministry?" can help to ground me in my vision. I might also ask: "Who else shares this vision?" "Who else has helped to develop this vision?" These kinds of questions enable me to appreciate to what degree my vision is purely personal and to what degree shared. The more a vision is shared, the more people are inspired and the purpose driven by that vision is not only shared but also appropriated. It's not enough to consider that the vision is shared in the telling of it to others, as I hope the narrated experience with the master catechists serves to illustrate.

INCLUSIVITY

Reflecting on relational leadership, I am also confronted with questions about inclusivity and exclusivity. *As I consider the quality of my leadership, I consider those with whom I work and I consider equally those with whom I do not work.* "With whom do I enjoy working?" "With what other styles or distinctiveness am I comfortable working?" "With whom do I avoid working?" "What differences with others do I seek to avoid?" Listening is a crucial skill, and maintaining a stance of openness to others and other ways of understanding and being in the world is a characteristic of relational leadership.

The temptation is to find safe harbor away from difference. I find myself struggling to avoid the temptation to smooth out differences and to instead, embrace the oftentimes difficult

We in ministry must be empowered to grow in and to exercise our own leadership.

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journey to shared purpose. These difficulties often include (but are not limited to) cultural, linguistic, ecclesiological, liturgical, social, economic, educational, political, canonical and pastoral differences. Sometimes, it is the purely simple and practical that precludes involvement or participation in process of leadership: "At what times do I usually meet people?" "Are certain times better for some people than for others?" "How do I foster participation and inclusivity?" "How do I foster exclusion?"

EMPOWERMENT

For myself, I find one of the more difficult practices in leadership is the simple art of "letting go." Entrusting to others tasks and responsibilities for which I have skills and gifts enough to engage and discharge is not easy for me. However, the *empowerment of others* is a crucial aspect of quality relational leadership.

As we colleagues in ministry "own" the vision that drives our purposefulness and as we together wrestle with the challenges of difference, so we must be empowered to grow in and to exercise our own leadership. The use of power is proper to ministers, and especially to those ministers with responsibility to exercise leadership. Familiarity with different types of power can help in our appropriate exercise of it. A fuller treatment of the different types of power is beyond the scope of this work, but suffice it to say that the hallmarks of power and

When people expect leadership and are met with management, the frustrations and pains are often debilitating.

its appropriate use are openness, trust, inclusivity, greater ownership of the processes and accountability. Absence of these characteristics suggests a closer consideration of how we exercise power.

ETHICS

A final characteristic of qualitative relational leadership is that of *ethics*. Steven Covey in his 7 *Habits of Highly Effective People* speaks of the "compass" of leadership, illustrating a leadership that honors and incorporates principles, values, standards and morals. In ministry we are quickly becoming increasingly aware of "codes of conduct," but local policies and standards of behavior are an integral part of the exercise of relational leadership. Such policies or standards are related to the values that drive our purpose and shape our ministry.

These past years have been tumultuous for those of us who are actively involved in catechetical ministry in service of the

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Invitation to the 2010 NCCL Conference

I have the privilege of being a part of the 74th NCCL Annual Meeting Planning Committee. This is my personal invitation to each of you to join us in Las Vegas April 18-22 for the Annual Meeting. Come a few days early or stay a few days longer and visit the city, the desert, and the many wonders God has given us in the Southwest. It is a wonderful place to gather to warm up from the cold winter in the north, and reconnect with those people we only get to see at the annual meeting.

The theme of the annual meeting came about after lengthy discussion and debate among the team. We wanted to acknowledge that we were a multicultural and diverse organization while at the same time tie in the fact that we were in the desert. From that came the oasis; recognizing that catechesis is a place to be nurtured and to quench our thirst for the Word of God. Lee Nagel wrote a beautiful reflection regarding our choice of the theme. I would like to share it here . . .

The 21st century finds the Catholic Church in America to be an exquisite example of the universality of the Catholic Church. On a given Sunday, Mass is celebrated in over one hundred different languages. Within this cultural diversity are challenges and opportunities; sometimes there are differences. Occasionally a lack of understanding can lead to conflict.

In the middle of all this diversity, there is one place where all can come together, as one; it is the oasis where faith is shared. It is the place where each person can echo the rich traditions that have passed their faith from generation to generation. It is a place of oneness with God. It is the place of catechesis where one's confession of faith is "living, explicit and fruitful" (GDC, No. 82).

For Catholics, catechesis offers a haven where cultural differences serve to fill the oasis with the richness that diversity offers. This is not a place for dominance or attack; it is a place of welcome. There is no room here for hate crimes or stereotypes; this is a place of learning within the Christian community. Here is where the Christian life is nourished.

Here in the oasis of catechesis there is room for Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Czestochowa, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Lavang, to name a few. We have saints from numerous nations, different cultures, married and single. All can find respite here where the language of belief becomes the living waters.

Historically, the location of oases has been of critical importance for trade and transportation routes in desert areas. In American culture, which has been

described as hostile to religion, the church as sanctuary has deep meaning. An oasis, however, is not an escape. It is a place for nourishment and renewal. Here one's faith is replenished and enriched by the diversity of expression.

The NDC reminds us that "within the ecclesial community, the catechist is an important instrument of inculturation" (p.65). The theme for NCCL's 74th Annual Conference and Exposition confronts this challenge head on. While it appears there may be a desert of values in society, catechetical leaders know the rich doctrines and traditions of the Catholic Church, formed and transformed by different cultures, are an oasis that can quench the thirst of those seeking conversion.

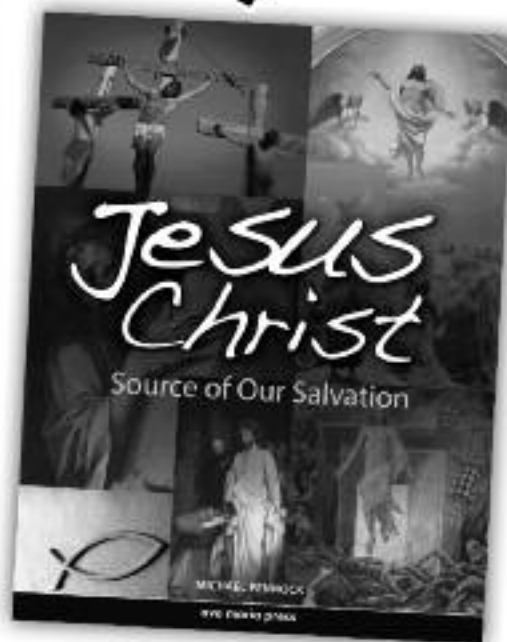
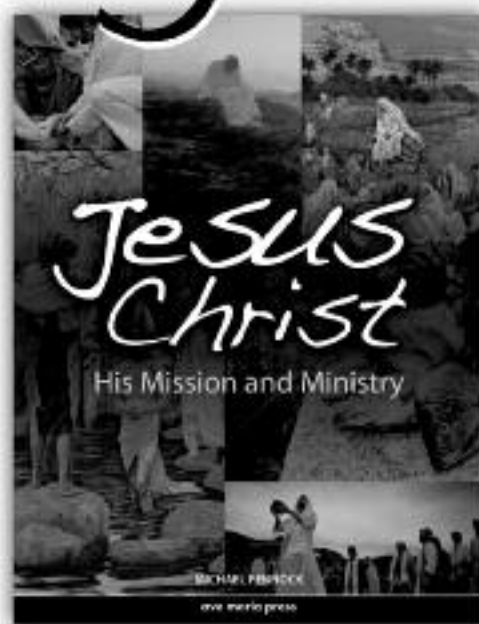
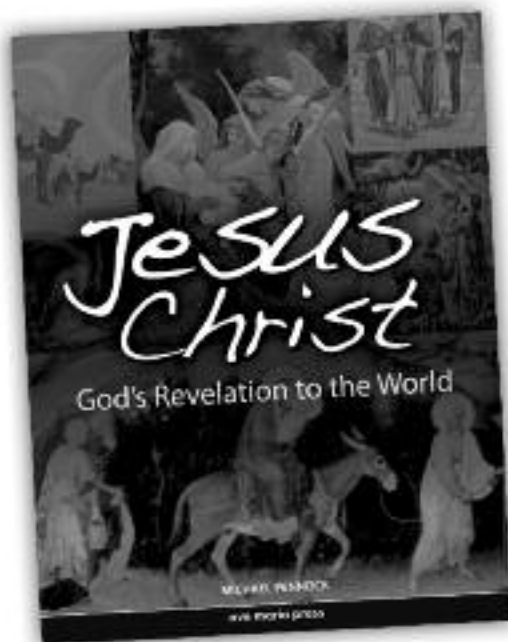
The invitations will continue to find their way into your email every two weeks with details of the conference. We will be adding a slide show on the Conference website with ideas for pre- and post-conference excursions into the beautiful desert and national parks of the area. We will also put some tourist information about Las Vegas sights and shows. Las Vegas has something for everyone. I am not a gambler, but am looking forward to walking in the desert before the conference begins and probably catching a show on one of our free nights.

Remember the hotel is only \$99 a night (single or double); if you share a room that is only \$50 per person! There are many restaurant choices, not only in Bally's but also in the connecting hotel and within a short walk. There is even a food court in the lower level of the hotel where I had lunch for \$8 in August! Budgets are tight, but with the low hotel cost and inexpensive eating options and the low airfares to Las Vegas, it is a great year to come! I hope to see you in Las Vegas April 18-22, 2010.

Christina Plum, 2010 NCCL Conference Planning Committee, Publicity Chairperson



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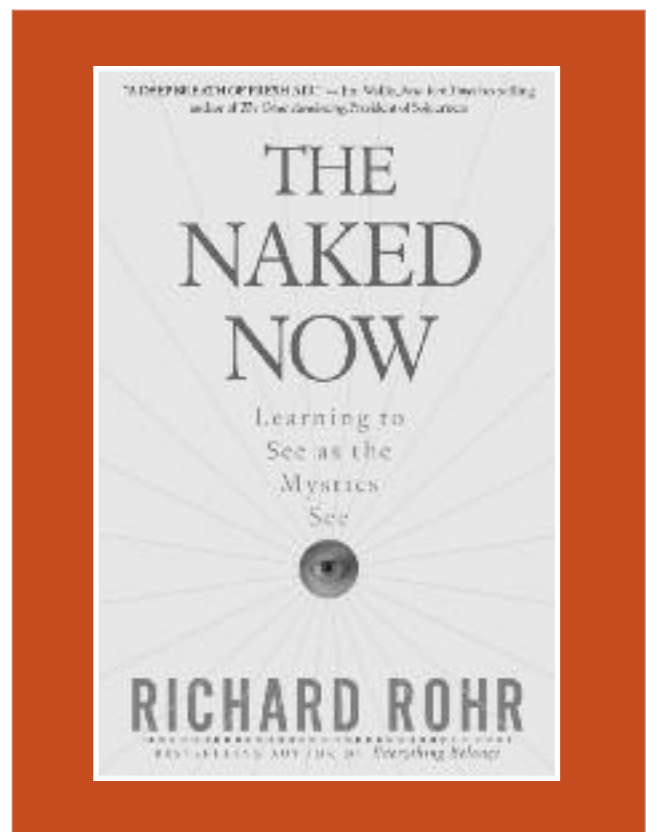
The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See by Richard Rohr.
New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, Inc., 2009.
Paperback, 192 pages, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Jeanne D. Schrempf

It was definitely the author and not the title that invited me to open and explore this book. Father Richard Rohr, founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation is a one of best known spiritual guides in these contemporary times—retreat master, author, and national speaker. But how, I wondered, does the vision of the mystic speak to the voyager in these turbulent times of war and violence, economic meltdown, foreclosures and joblessness, polarization, scandal and distrust. Is Richard Rohr's newest book a meditative journal for the practiced contemplative and the spiritually mature or is it offered as a guide and GPS system to anyone and everyone desiring to deepen their spiritual life and discover intimacy with God? The author would probably say "it is both/and."

This slim volume of text is anything but a "quick read." The ideas are so fresh and the insights so challenging that the reader has no choice but to accept the invitation to live in the presence of its message and to leave time behind. The reader might initially read through this work alone with journal or highlighter in hand, but a second and third reading might best be done with a spiritual guide or a small faith sharing group. The insights are so radically simple and yet deeply profound that they invite reflection, dialogue and sharing with others.

Richard Rohr's insights on recognizing that our ego resists change and that our world of dualistic thinking has left us with stifling polarities seem to build on his previous work of spirituality on the second half of life. Learning to live "naked now," in the present, uncluttered by non-essentials seems to take time and experience that comes from the quantity and quality of life.



Rohr expands many commonly used words to bring new clarity and insights. *Prayer* for him is the "umbrella word for any interior journeys or practices that allow you to experience faith, hope, and love within yourself." *God* "is more verb than noun, more a process than a conclusion, more an experience than a dogma, more a personal relationship than an idea.

continued on page 14

There is someone dancing with you and you are not afraid of making a mistake.” A *mystic* is “one who has moved from mere belief system or belonging systems to actual inner experience.” *Wisdom* is “the freedom to be present.”

Profound and challenging “sound bites” fill the pages of this book:

- “The core task of all good spirituality is to cooperate with what God already wants to do and has already begun to do.”
- “Learn how to see and you will know whatever it is that you need to see.”
- “All great spirituality is about letting go.”
- “No one comes to God just by loving or suffering, yet only those who have loved and suffered seem to come to God.”
- “Love and suffering are the primary spiritual teachers more than any Bible, church, minister, sacrament or theologian.”
- “It is only transformed people who have the power to transform others.”

- “Most of Jesus’ contemporaries missed the ‘Real Presence’ that was right in their midst and most of them were religiously observant people, as we might say today, ‘practicing Catholics.’”

Each of the chapters begin with a scripture or literary verse and explores such topics as God, Jesus, contemplation, prayer, faith, conversion, love, suffering, “third eye” seeing, and each concludes with a summary statement. The author weaves the wisdom and insights of traditional and contemporary spiritual writers into his writing and offers a rich bibliography in his concluding notes. *The Naked Now* concludes with an appendix of reflections, prayer, meditations and exercises to expand the gift of this profound book to the reader. When you purchase this book, buy two and give one away. The recipient—and you—will be given a life-changing gift. |

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

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Does That Make Me a Leader?

By Jason C. Coito



A few months ago, I was meeting with a young adult who was preparing a talk on leadership for a high school retreat. To help him clarify his talk, I asked him to define leadership. His response, based on the outline notes he had been given, went like this: if you have an impact on others, even without realizing it, you are a leader. I challenged him with the following question: “If I was driving in my car, got distracted by a cell phone call, and clipped you with my car without realizing it, then I’ve impacted your life. But does that make me a leader?” Though made tongue-in-cheek, I think the point was important. Leadership isn’t just about having an impact, it’s about understanding the impact you have and then making choices to use that influence, to decide the goal and vision behind your effort, and to inspire others to join you in that vision.

From the New Testament to our bishops and other catechetical leaders today, we find advice, instruction and models for leadership. Christ inspired people by his words and actions, first to follow, and then to go out as leaders commissioned to preach the Good News. Whether it was the sending of the seventy-two (Luke 10:17-20) or the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20), the leadership of Jesus was oriented toward empowering others not just to follow, but to become part of the mission. The same model of empowering leadership continues today in the catechetical leadership of individuals like Fr. John Cusick and Kate DeVries in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Their book, *The Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry*, includes a look at the leadership model of Jesus as he selected the Twelve and offers to those involved in present-day, young-adult contexts in parishes a practical, pastoral application of Jesus’ example of leading ministry and involving others as leaders

In 1981, the United States bishops issued a statement entitled “The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure,” in which they provide a vision of the parish as a basic unit of the church. In parishes we nurture our response to God and give witness to faith, both as individuals and as a community. The bishops emphasize leadership as essentially relational, united in the parish by the pastor. It is critical to note that the bishops don’t

give the pastor a monopoly on leadership, but rather identify his role to empower and coordinate the leadership of many. They close with the observation that pastors who are most active in establishing collaborative leadership within their parishes have more prominent and active leadership roles, not less. Collaboration isn’t about farming out duties, but about empowering others to share in the priestly mission of the church, united with the pastor’s own priestly ministry: an important insight in this Year of the Priest.

I am reminded here of St. Augustine, another bishop who recognized the connection between leadership and the shared Christian life. He famously remarked “For you I am the bishop; with you I am a Christian” (Sermon 340). When he said it, he was remarking on the fear the former inspired, and the consolation brought by the latter. His pastoral leadership was a daunting responsibility that was invigorated by the shared joys and support of the Christian community. Relational leadership in ministry has us ask the important question of what leadership means within the communion of the church. Augustine elaborated on the quote above saying that, in contrast to the demands of his pastoral office, he experienced his identity as a Christian as a source of grace. So Augustine nails on the head these two important aspects of relational leadership within ministry and catechesis. First, ministry leaders must be connected to the strength of the believing community and the grace that resides within it. Second it must remain connected to the God who is the source of that grace and the heart of the community’s mission.

All of us engaged in ministry are called to develop the skills, knowledge and experience that nurture our own faith lives, while also nurturing the capacity of others to live Christian lives within communities, united in the mission of the church. While this common mission remains daunting, our common faith continues to give us hope. |

Jason Coito is part of the Campus Ministry team and Religion Department at Bishop Alemany High School in Mission Hills, California, and is a resident minister at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. Email: jcoito@alemany.org

Does Your Team Have A “Middle Child”?

by Rosie Bartel



I was at dinner the other night with my granddaughters. The conversation moved to their new school and how they were adapting to the change. The six-year-old said something that stuck with me. She said, “I don’t think my teacher likes me . . . because she does not talk to me as much as she talks with the other kids.” Interesting that at this young age she has already figured out the code.

So here is the question of the day. Who are you not spending time with on your team or in your program? Who is feeling a little under-loved because they notice that they do not get as much time as others? As a leader we are sometimes guilty of spending a lot of time hanging out with the “successful” people on the team because it is easy. We then spend a lot of time with the “problem” people because they need the time. Guess who gets left out? The answer is the “middle child.” It is the team member who is doing good work but not winning the awards.

What can a team member do to make sure everyone feels part of the team and there are no “middle children”? It is key to integrate spirituality and leadership. Integrating spirituality and leadership may seem paradoxical, but research and experience demonstrate that spirituality is a key component of leadership. There is a growing need for the integration of spirituality in both team and personal behaviors. This relationship is sometimes called spiritual or relational leadership. Relational or spiritual leadership requires a new model of transformational competencies and behaviors such as these:

- Focusing on service and servant leadership
- Developing trusting relationships and relational behaviors
- Balancing the community with personal wholeness for team members
- Demonstrating values that incorporate service, stewardship and social responsibility
- Building creativity, meaning and purpose into services.

I believe that transformational teams develop spiritual behaviors, competencies and practices, such as appreciative inquiry, servant leadership and relational leadership, to instantiate

meaning and purpose in the work of the team. Flourishing, sustainable teams incorporate spiritual and whole-person competencies, behaviors, tools, techniques and processes that design creativity, meaning and purpose into their relationships and services.

We will acquire many leadership skills over time. It is easy to confuse some management tools—like running meetings or planning agendas—with real leadership. Using the principles of relational leadership, we can reframe typical skills like agenda planning so that they are more effective. The goals of the agenda for a team meeting will not be just to get through the topics to be presented or decided in the quickest time but will involve more people, empower voices that might have been excluded before, make sure no one is railroaded and that fair decisions are made, involve others in building an agenda, and use collaborative practices.

You may remember times when the leader of a meeting made all the announcements. A small group of two or three in group members seemed to run the whole show and you never said a word. This experience often leaves members feeling marginalized and wondering why most even bothered to attend. Think of a meeting in which people disagreed hotly and then someone quickly moved to vote on an issue. A vote was taken, leaving the minority losing or feeling railroaded. In such a situation, some might have felt like the “middle child.”

Imagine the differences in a meeting whose positional leader or convener says, “It is our custom to make sure everyone is involved and is heard before we try to resolve issues. The executive committee has asked three of you to present the key issues on the first agenda item; we will then break into small groups for fifteen minutes to see what questions and issues emerge before we proceed and see what we want to do at that point. In your discussion, try to identify the principles that will be important for us to consider in the decision we eventually make.” Even if all do not agree with this approach, they would feel more comfortable suggesting a different model because the tone of the meeting is one of involvement and participation.

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CaTECHetical Leaders: Called to be *E*-vangelists

By Gina Felter



The best part of ministry is finding new and innovative ways of sharing the good news.

Catechetical leaders are being called to evangelize by extraordinary means in this digital era. We are called to evangelize the good news to a much broader audience than ever thought possible. Pope Benedict XVI acknowledges the “extraordinary potential for new technology” in his address for the 43rd World Day of Communications and he asks that we “take on the responsibility for evangelization of this ‘digital continent.’” When we embrace technology and utilize it to its fullest potential for the glory of God, we become *E*-vangelists of the living Word.

We all have our favorite websites bookmarked and tabbed and they have become indispensable tools in our line of ministry. We may even secretly belong to some of the Catholic social websites such as www.MyCatholicVoice.com or www.4marks.com. Has Facebook, Twitter, or MySpace become one of those indispensable tools? These social websites are absolutely indispensable when our priority is taking our ministry to where the people are.

By making our ministries present on these social media websites we are serving as a constant reminder of church, God’s presence, as well as raising the awareness of those who may be watching. If we can cause a member to pause and re-think what he or she is about to post just by our presence, imagine what impact we would have if we utilized these tools to their fullest potential.

These social websites allow users to essentially broadcast what is on their mind or what they are doing. Millions of people are using these social sites to connect with family and friends all over the world. There are just as many businesses, schools, and various organizations on these sites broadcasting upcoming events, special savings for “online” friends and even promoting other businesses or organizations that may be of interest to their members. Our presence on the Internet is well overdue and we are falling short of our potential by limiting ourselves to evangelizing on church grounds only.

To create your ministry’s presence on any of these sites is simple and self explanatory, as you will see when you visit their sites. Once you set up your online profile, check your security settings and modify them to fit the needs of your ministry. This can be done in the settings option and modified at any time. Some of the settings you will want to modify include who can post pictures to your page and who can write messages on your page. To help you get started in building an online presence, these sites will send an invite via e-mail to your current list of e-mail contacts—or you may choose to enter individual e-mail addresses. These social websites are exceptionally user-friendly. Keeping your page up to date and fresh is as simple as posting a witty, clever comment for all to ponder throughout the day.

Technology is so exciting! The fun does not stop at just creating a presence on a social site, but rather that is only the beginning. Mobile versions of these social websites are also available, providing members the opportunity to be graced with your witty banter on-the-go. Posting a link to a favorite Catholic website; reminders of the date, time and location of an upcoming fundraiser; or announcing a contest to solve a religious riddle are just a few of the ways to e-vangelize to members. The possibilities for what can be broadcast to members are endless. If your parish has a website, ask about posting a link to your page. This will amplify your e-vangelizing efforts and allow visitors of the parish website to easily connect with your page.

Catechetical leaders are called to be *E*-vangelists, uniting technology and faith. Some of us may be abundant in faith but scarce in technology expertise. We encourage you to utilize that abundance of faith and provide the opportunity for the technology expert in your parish to grow in faith by becoming your ministry e-scribe. |

Gina Felter, a proud Catholic wife and mother with five spirited children and a zeal for technology, is a member of NCCL’s technology committee. She has been involved in catechetics for eleven years, most recently serving as a parish catechetical leader in the Diocese of Fresno. She can be reached at ginafelter@gmail.com.

A Mid-Year Use for your Echoes PDM*

By Jo Rotunno

***PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S MANUAL**



This month's *Catechetical Leader* Update focuses on midyear program assessment. Good DREs and diocesan leaders are taking a deep breath as the new calendar year dawns and taking stock of where they stand in relation to all they intended to accomplish this year.

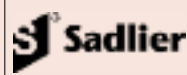
The flurry of fall registrations, workshops, diocesan and regional conferences, and Advent and Christmas events has passed and the long and productive months between now and summer lie ahead.

As I was considering topics for this month's *Echoes* article, I was reminded that the heart of every catechetical program resides in the quality and formation of its catechists. Just as it's a good idea to stop and do a midyear assessment of your programs, it's equally valuable to ask your catechists to stop and take a look at their

own performance and commitment to grow in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. As you know, these are the factors that will build long-term commitment and stability in your catechetical community.

Assisting in that enterprise is the whole purpose of *Echoes of Faith Plus*. However, the *Echoes of Faith Plus *Program Director's Manual* offers some tools that you may have overlooked so far. Among its resources you'll find a number of forms to help coordinators and DREs track catechist growth. The manual includes a Catechist Profile that we suggest you use to help new and returning catechists assess the state of their preparation as they start the year. The form asks them to list their formal faith formation background, their experience as catechists, and their attitude toward catechesis. What appeals to them about being a catechist? What gifts and talents are they bringing to their ministry? How do they

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hope to grow in faith through their teaching ministry? And most importantly, what commitment are they willing to make to their growth in the coming year?

Ask your catechists to go back and take a look at the commitments for their own formation that they made on this form at the beginning of the year. How well did they follow-through? If they were unable to meet their original goals, now would be a good time to recommit and perhaps to adjust those goals in light of their fall classroom experience.

The Manual also offers an End-of-Year Catechist Interview form. It asks catechists questions such as these: How would you describe your experience as a catechist this year? If you could change (or improve) one thing about your experience as a catechist this year, what would it be? How did you grow as

an adult Catholic this year? How have you grown in your skills and knowledge of the content you are teaching?

Why not use this form at midyear as well at the end of the year? It can be adapted easily for such a purpose. Using the form might allow you to pinpoint issues and help your catechists to make some midcourse corrections that will benefit them and, most importantly, the young people they serve. Use the information you gain to decide if there is an Echoes module or bonus interview that might assist your catechists in being the best they can be. ■

Jo Rotunno is director of marketing and electronic media for RCL Benziger. Echoes of Faith is a joint endeavor of NCCL and RCL Benziger.

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church. I have observed so many in ministry being touched by rationalization of plans prompted by legal settlements, economic chaos, internal re-visioning leading to re-structuring, and other factors. I have observed how many with ultimate responsibility for leadership in the community engage not so much in leadership as in management. For a number of months now, as I have listened to people from across the country narrate something of their experiences, and as I have directly observed for myself, I have been struck by the manner in which management decisions have been made under the guise of exercising leadership in a variety of areas of both diocesan and parish life. Across the board, I note that when people expect leadership and instead are met with management, the resulting frustrations and pains are often debilitating for us. This debilitation is even more difficult to bear when we consider that those who live with the management decisions are a people who often spend themselves in service of the church and its evangelizing mission.

Relational leadership is about shared vision, not hoarded power or "turf-wars."

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is crucial to our exercise of leadership. Our relationship with God is the defining relationship that underpins all the relationships we enjoy in our respective ministries. It might not be so far-fetched to comment that to the extent to which we practically attend to the quality of our relationship with God, we attend to the quality of the relationships of our lives. If we find ourselves falling short in our ministry-relationships, in our life-relationships, it is certain that we are falling short in our God-relationship.

BALANCE

So how can we balance our need to be good stewards and managers in our parish communities with the needs and expectations proper to good leadership? Can we discern the difference between management and leadership and foster appropriate means to develop both in our communities? It behooves us to attend to this distinction. When we feel managed, we all too easily feel manipulated and are discouraged from engagement and participation. When we feel leadership inviting us to engage and vision for a future we cannot yet see, we can feel empowered. We can take ownership for the good of the whole in processes that honor and respect the contributions we each bring to the community of believers for service of the church and the building up of the reign of God. |

Fr David Loftus is a priest of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, where he serves as a consultant in the Office of Religious Education, and a former vice-president of NCCL.



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DOES YOUR TEAM HAVE A MIDDLE CHILD *continued from page 16*

Conditions in our rapidly changing world require that each of us become effective members of our team in order to work with others toward needed change and for common purpose. How we relate to each other matters and it is symbolic of our social responsibility. Taking the time needed to build a sense of community in a team acknowledges that relationships are central to effective leadership. Relational leadership is purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical and about process. Attention to those practices builds a strong team with committed participants who know they matter and will grow spiritually.

Schedule some time today or tomorrow to spend some time with the ones you have neglected. Don't let them feel like "I don't think she/he likes me. . . ." Do not let them feel they are the "middle child" and spiritually and socially neglected. |

Rosie Bartel is the religious education and youth ministry director for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and the Milwaukee Province Representative on the NCCL's Representative Council. She has many years of experience in teaching adults and children at the parish, school, and college levels.

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

Biblical Literacy: Essential Bible Stories Everyone Needs to Know

Timothy Beal, HarperOne, 2009.

I have only had time to skim *Biblical Literacy* and I agree with Alice Camille's review in U.S. Catholic (November 2009) that it will help all, including believers and long-time scripture fans will find plenty to woo them to this excellent selection of texts. She notes that Beal does a fabulous job of connecting the dots between pop culture, high-brow literature, music, the art world, current events, and biblical resources.

Liturgical Press

Liturgical Press began publishing for the church in 1926. Since then, the dedicated staff continues to sustain the original mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Press is committed to providing religious and spiritual resources of the highest relevance and quality to the Christian community in the areas of liturgy, scripture, theology, and spirituality evolving to serve the changing needs of the Church. Liturgical Press continues to honor and embrace the Benedictine values of community, hospitality, and stability in supporting the work of Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN.

The staff of Liturgical Press recommends that these books may be of interests to the readers of *Catechetical Leader*.

The Four Gospels

Catholic Personal Study Edition

Readers will become familiar with the world in which Jesus lived, the cultural customs, the important geographic locations, the biblical terms familiar to first-century Christians but foreign to a contemporary audience. *The Four Gospels* lends itself to both quick reference and more in-depth study or meditation. Indispensable for all who long to know Jesus better. This 296-page paperback is published in partnership with Little Rock Scripture Study.

Living Liturgy

Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities, Year C (2010)

Joyce Ann Zimmerman, CPPS; Kathleen Harmon, SNDdeN; and Christopher W. Conlon, SM

This is an annual resource for parish ministers, liturgists, pastors, and planning committees. *Living Liturgy* offers a practical means for reflection on and celebration of the Mass for Sundays and solemnities as well as select other days. Written by a pastorally experienced team with expertise in Scripture, spiritual direction, liturgy, and liturgical music, *Living Liturgy* teaches that we learn from each other of the fullness of God's mystery, and by learning and worshipping together we enrich each other. Paperback, 336 pages. Quantity discounts available.

New Collegeville Bible Commentary New Testament

Daniel Durken, OSB, Series Editor

Concise and accessible, this one-volume edition allows readers to explore any or all of the books with just one resource alongside their Bibles. Readers will be able to engage Scripture more deeply and reflect on its meanings, nuances, and imperatives for living a Christian life in the twenty-first century. Paperback, 912 pp.

The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers

John Shea

This is a lectionary-based resource that references both Roman Catholic and Revised Common lectionaries, making it useful and relevant to all Christian denominations. This four-volume set (fourth volume includes feasts, funerals, weddings) is ideal for Christian preachers and teachers, and those who meditate on and are drawn to the Gospels.

Uncommon Gratitude Alleluia for All That Is

Joan Chittister, OSB, and Archbishop Rowan Williams

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams often says that, no matter what, the proper stance of the Christian in the world is one of gratitude. Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, and Archbishop Rowan Williams offer us a sweeping set of things and circumstances to be grateful for—things for which we can sing “alleluia,” “praise and thanks be to God.” 136 pp., Available March, 2010.

Festival of Faith and Writing

On April 15-17 Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI) is sponsoring their biannual Festival of Faith and Writing. There will be dozens of notable authors, including Parker Palmer, Mary Karr, Eugene Peterson, Kate DiCamillo, Stephen Carter, and Wally Lamb. Celebrate and explore what it means to be faithful readers and writers. For information and to register visit www.calvin.edu/festival.

40-Day Journey Series

The 40-Day Journey Series by Augsburg Fortress invites readers to take a personal spiritual journey with Christian leaders:

- Julian of Norwich
- Parker J. Palmer
- Gerard Manley Hopkins
- Kathleen Norris
- Madeleine L'Engle
- Martin Luther
- Joan Chittister
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Each book includes a short introduction to the life of the leader and forty chapters, each of which includes a reading from the author's writings, scripture reflections, a journal-writing exercise, and a prayer. These books are great resources for personal meditation or small group discussion anytime, but especially during Lent.

Dan Pierson served as the director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for seventeen years. He is the founder of faithAlivebooks.com and works with religious publishers in product development and marketing. Contact: pierson.dj@gmail.com