

cl

CATECHETICAL
LEADER



SYMBOL, SACRAMENT, AND WITNESS

IN THIS ISSUE:

Thinking about
the New Evangelization
Catechizing with Symbol,
Ritual, and Story

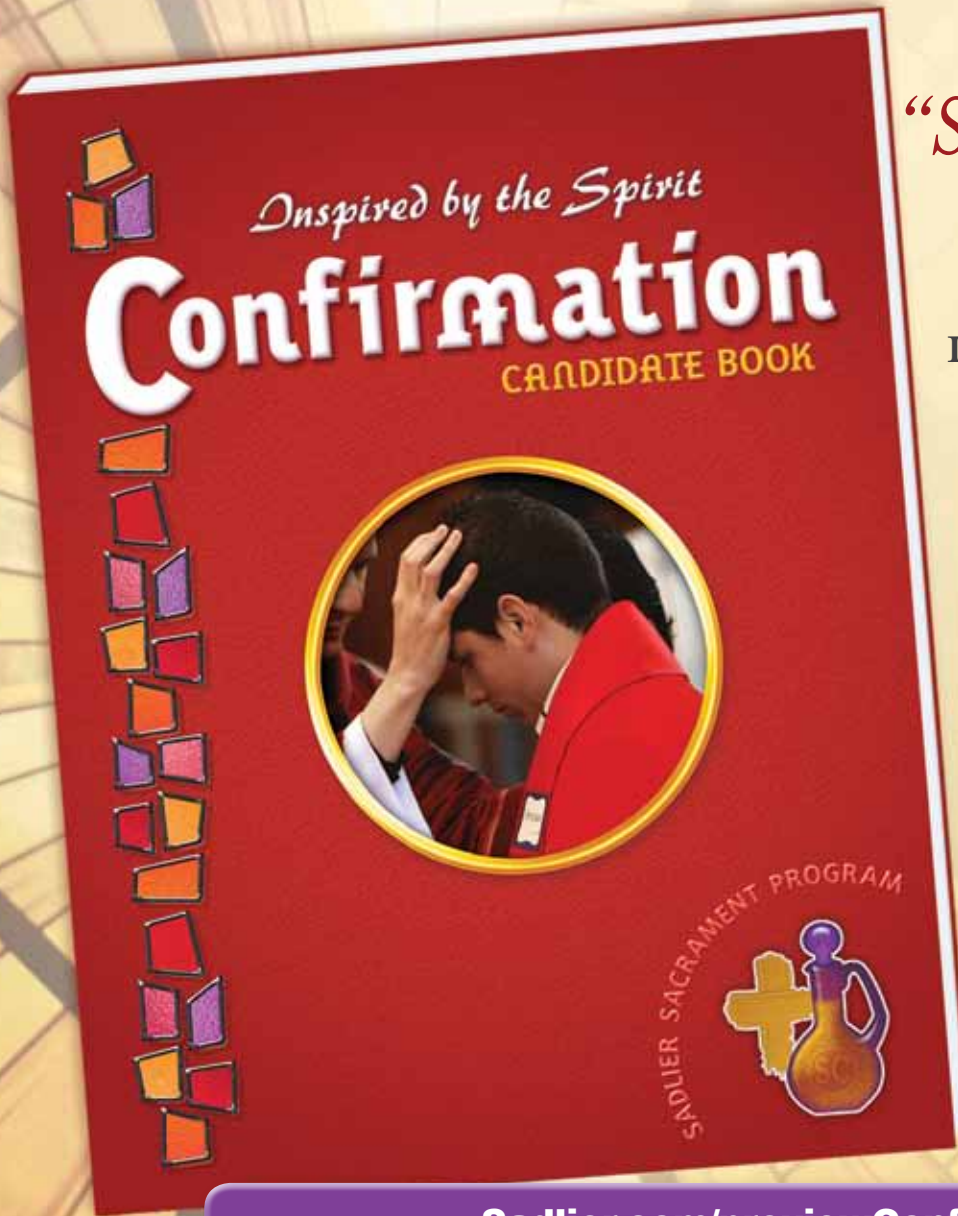
CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

Catechetical Leaders
and Pastoral Planning

NEW!

Sadlier

PREPARING JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL CANDIDATES TO BE



*“Sealed with the Gift
of the Holy Spirit”*

Immediate preparation for the
Sacrament of Confirmation

**Incorporates
the Roman Missal,
Third Edition**

Preview pages at Sadlier.com/previewConfirmation

For Bilingual Confirmation Preparation—*Vivimos nuestra fe*, a bilingual catechetical program for adolescents, includes two volumes, each with a complete year's course for use in parish, school, or youth ministry setting. The fourth unit of Volume II, The Holy Spirit and the Sacrament of Confirmation, provides immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation. Preview *Vivimos nuestra fe: Inspirados por el Espíritu* at Sadlier.com/previewVNF.



Call for a **FREE** sample **877-930-3336**
Mention Promo Code U3.



Like Us on Facebook

Follow Us on Twitter

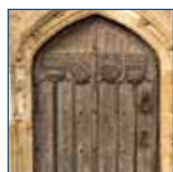
Sadlier since 1832 Sadlier.com

CATECHETICAL LEADER **Table of Contents**

October 2011

In Every Issue

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------------------|
| 2 | From the President
Six Goals for the Future | Anne Roat |
| 3 | From the Executive Director
A Partnership that Places Families at the Center | Leland Nagel |
| 23 | Book Review
<i>Gamestorming</i> | Reviewed by Daniel Thomas |
| 24 | Diocesan Director's Forum
Preparing to Lead: Survival Tips for
the New Diocesan Director of Religious Education | Amy S. Daniels |
| 26 | Echoes of Faith Plus
An Open Letter to Catechists | Jo Rotunno |
| 28 | Notable Resources | Dan Pierson |



*Teachers and Witnesses:
Thinking about the New Evangelization*
page 4



*Catechizing with Symbol, Ritual,
and Story*
page 9



*Sacraments and Sacramentality
in Christian Life*
page 14

Features

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 4 | Teachers and Witnesses: Thinking about the
New Evangelization | Stephen Bullivant |
| 9 | Catechizing with Symbol, Ritual, and Story | Kathy Hendricks |
| 13 | Sacraments and Sacramentality in Christian Life | Brian W. Hughes |

Catechetical Update

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| 19 | Catechetical Leaders and Pastoral Planning | Maureen Gallagher |
|----|--|--------------------------|

NCCL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | |
|--|---|
| Dr. Anne D. Roat
<i>President</i>
Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana | Ms. Joanie McKeown
<i>Secretary</i>
Diocese of Superior |
| Mr. Russell Peterson
<i>Vice President</i>
Diocese of Belleville | Mr. Leland D. Nagel
<i>Executive Director</i>
Washington, DC |
| Dr. Kathy Kleinlein
<i>Treasurer</i>
Diocese of Venice | Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair
<i>NCCL Episcopal Advisor</i>
Diocese of Toledo |

- | | |
|--|---|
| Mr. Brian Garcia-Luense
<i>At-Large</i>
Archdiocese of Galveston-
Houston | Ms. Karen Pesek
<i>At-Large</i>
Diocese of Springfield-Cape
Girardeau |
| Mr. Peter Ries
<i>At-Large</i>
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish
and St. John Student Center
East Lansing, Michigan | |

- | | |
|--|--|
| Dr. Michael Steier
<i>Ex-Officio</i>
USCCB, Secretariat of
Evangelization and Catechesis | Ms. Mary Jo Waggoner
<i>At-Large</i>
Diocese of San Diego |
| Mr. Michael Westenberg
<i>At-Large</i>
St. Matthew Parish
Green Bay, Wisconsin | |

NCCL STAFF

- | |
|---|
| Mr. Leland D. Nagel
<i>Executive Director</i> |
| Ms. Gina Garroway
<i>Associate Director</i> |

SIX GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



Dear NCCL Members,

You have all had a chance to become acquainted with the strategic plan that your board and representative council crafted two years ago. It was very ambitious and featured 16 action items that comprised the work of the organization during the past two years. During the

meeting of the Representative Council in May, Vice President Russell Peterson presented a progress report that included a report card for the 2009–2011 strategic plan. Action items were classified and graded in one of four different ways: completed as written; completed with adaptations; progress made but not completed; and inadequate progress made. When shared with the Rep Council it was noted that seven items were completed as written; four were completed with adaptations; three had progress made but not completed; and two had inadequate progress made.

However, even as the present strategic plan was still being executed, the Executive Committee began an internal and external environmental scan. We examined the industry trends, competitors, opportunities, threats, and critical issues facing NCCL. Utilizing the results, we developed six goal areas: adult faith formation, social media, evangelization, membership, development, and province/networking. We then sent those areas to the whole board to be formulated into goals.

During our July face-to-face board meeting, your board spent many hours working and fine tuning those goals. We then crafted two objectives for each of the goals. The next step will be to present the objectives to Rep Council in order for them to develop action items for each objective. However, prior to this process we wanted to be sure to involve our committees. So, I sent the goals and objectives to the

committee chairs and asked them to solicit their committee members for insights, advice, and comments. We have collected the wisdom of the committees and are ready to share the information with the Representative Council.

The work on the new NCCL three-year strategic plan will continue in November, when your representatives will be writing action items for the following six goals:

*We examined the industry trends,
competitors, opportunities, threats,
and critical issues facing NCCL.
Utilizing the results,
we developed six goal areas.*

❖ Goal One: To promote the centrality of adult faith formation in catechetical ministry.

❖ Goal Two: To advance catechesis as a work of evangelization as described in the General and National Directories.

❖ Goal Three: To promote the use of social

media in a manner consistent with the documents and communications from the Holy See and USCCB.

❖ Goal Four: To nurture the grassroots structure of the organization.

❖ Goal Five: To ensure the long-term financial viability of NCCL.

❖ Goal Six: To empower catechetical leaders to more effectively minister in a multicultural and multilingual church.

I know the process I have just described sounds exhausting and time consuming! In reality, this is the job of your board and Representative Council. They are charged with setting the vision and directing the work of NCCL. The final phase of this strategic planning process will take place in November during the NCCL Representative Council. The board is looking forward to this meeting!

God bless,

Anne

President, NCCL

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

A PARTNERSHIP THAT PLACES FAMILIES AT THE CENTER

Leland Nagel



What exactly is a *normal* family these days? I wouldn't even try to define it. My brother and I were visiting last week, and we got to talking about the differences between how we were raised in a *normal Catholic family*, which we have since come to learn was not as *common* or as *normal* as we once thought.

Our family always ate dinner together. Sunday, all day, was family day. *Name Days* were celebrated more often than birth-days. Consider this: At the end of my freshman year in high school, our Catholic school went from six 55-minute periods to eight 42.5-minute periods. Anyone out for sports had a study hall eighth period so you would begin practice earlier, be done by 5:30, showered and home for dinner by 6:00 pm. The family meal was that important.

At the *Symposium on Adolescent Catechesis* in 2008, Bishop Richard Malone explained how he saw the difference between *then* and *now*. “I was marinated—not just instructed in a schooling sense (that, too)—but marinated (translate “socialized”) in the basic flavors of Catholic life from my earliest years, formed gradually in the creed, code, and cult, and the symbolic world of Catholic tradition.” This is why we affirm the role of parents in faith formation. The church, both the domestic church and the parish community, is where this marinating takes place. It takes both, working together in partnership, to provide an immersion into what it means to be Catholic.

Earlier this year, we at NCCL, together with NACFLM, became partners with NFCYM in promoting and sponsoring a national initiative: *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth*. This is a parish-based process designed to reach out to and empower parents in forming strong families rich in Catholic identity and practices. This work is grounded in research that continually points to the parents as the most critical factor in faith development, exactly what we profess to believe in our documents.

- ❖ Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children (CCC, 2222-2226).
- ❖ The catechesis given by parents with the family “precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis” (CT, #68).
- ❖ Parents catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith (NDC, p. 234).

- ❖ “...the Christian Community must help [parents] assume their responsibility of... educating their children in the faith” (GDC, #227).

Difficulties arise when religious groups and spiritual leaders supplant the role of the parents rather than supplement or serve as an “aid to parents” (NDC, p. 235). Over thirty years ago, the United States Bishops cautioned against this in their 1988 document, *A Family Perspective*.

What the Church does and how it does it affects the unity, well-being, health, and stability of families. Church leaders need to be more aware of how the Church’s policies, programs, ministries, and services can either help or hinder families in fulfilling their own basic responsibilities. Church leaders need to see themselves as partners with families, and they need to resist the tendency—common in service institu-

What the Church does and how it does it affects the unity, well-being, health, and stability of families.

tions—to replace or substitute for families in fulfilling family responsibilities.

It is time to take an honest look and see how we are doing. What subtle messages are soaked up when we gather parents? What does our own attention to environment, hospitality, shared prayer, the meeting schedule, and the agenda topics say about what’s most important? How do we convey that we want to be supportive of their efforts to create an environment where spiritual growth is as important as physical, psychological, and emotional growth? What must we do to envision a partnership that enthusiastically honors the family, empowers parents, and places families at the center?

If you find that you could use some assistance or help to imagine a different way, then *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* may be exactly what you are looking for. That’s precisely why NCCL became a partner. We believe in the process. We support putting the family in the center. We know *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* can make a difference. Visit our website, nccl.org and click on the *Strong Catholic Families* icon to find out more and to schedule an event in your diocese. ■

Teachers and Witnesses

Thinking about the New Evangelization

Stephen Bullivant



Famously, Pope Paul VI wrote in his 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (#41). This intimate link between *living out*

and *proclaiming* has, of course, a long history within the Christian tradition and is most obviously manifest in the witness of the Church’s saints and (especially) martyrs. A long history does not, however, mean that it is outdated. Something that is old is not thereby precluded from being, or being made, new.

Beginning with Pope Paul VI (whom we’ll be coming back to), recent popes have called all Catholics, singly and collectively, to what Blessed John Paul II has christened a “new evangelization.” While this is undoubtedly a rich and complex concept—and one which can, in the final analysis, only really be understood through undertaking it—its central idea is simple to grasp. It is not a *first* evangelization of those who have never heard the gospel but is rather a “new evangelization of those peoples who have already heard Christ proclaimed” (*Redemptoris missio*, #30). For instance, Western Europe (where I live) was among those regions successfully evangelized in the first centuries of Christian mission. Yet today, Christian belief, practice, and self-confidence here are towards the tail end of a decades-long decline. Quite apart from the growth of other religious traditions, the numbers of Europeans who regard themselves as atheists, agnostics, or simply “nonreligious” are demonstrably on the rise. Furthermore, even though large numbers of people still consider themselves to be Christians, levels of orthodox Christian belief and evidence of Christian practice are not only low, but continue to fall.

Clearly, one cannot approach *this* situation (which I am, of course, painting with very broad brushstrokes) with the mindset and methods suited to a “traditional” mission territory. One is addressing *not* people who have never heard of Christ or his church, but people who have, at least to their minds, already heard enough (if not, indeed, too much!). In many cases, one is addressing people who have been baptized, confirmed, and first communicated, who have perhaps been educated in Catholic schools and universities, or have married

in Catholic churches; they may (or, increasingly, may not) bring their own children to be baptized. The very fact that such people exist in historically Christian countries and are in urgent need of evangelization implies a serious breakdown of our transmitting of the faith and of our retaining the faithful.

Clearly, then, the new evangelization, and the new—and ever changing!—socio-cultural situations which motivate it, raise a huge number of complex and challenging questions for the church. We have barely begun to formulate what these questions even are; as yet, we are far from having any definite answers to them. (Encouragingly, the 2012 Synod of Bishops is taking as its theme “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” Its detailed *lineamenta*, or preparatory document, may profitably be read and pondered online.¹) The new evangelization, if it is to be successful, requires us both to *understand* our multiple, overlapping cultures (including those based primarily in cyberspace) in which we find ourselves and to have the skills and confidence to *engage* with them afresh. To do this we should, moreover, make full—but critical—use of the social sciences. This is especially true given the growing numbers of sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and social historians exploring atheism, indifference, nonreligion, and related topics, especially in Europe and North America.²

THE NEW EVANGELIZATION’S BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

By way of demonstrating the importance of these resources for thinking about (and ultimately *doing*) the new evangelization, I wish to focus here on one particular issue—one that is, I believe, absolutely fundamental to the ultimate success or failure of the project as a whole.

Paradoxically, the socio-cultural situation facing the new evangelization (at least in Europe and America) is not, in fact, one primarily caused by a failure of mission—if by mission, we mean a form of outreach to those “outside.” Rather, as I have mentioned, Catholicism’s ailing fortunes in much of Europe, as well as the apparent beginnings of its decline in North America, stem largely from a failure to *retain* those brought

1. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20110202_lineamenta-xiii-assembly_en.html.

2. See, most notably, the work of the *Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network* (nsrn.co.uk).



up within the church. To put it fairly bluntly, if we do not fix this, then the new evangelization is doomed from the start. It would, indeed, be like giving someone a blood transfusion without first stemming their hemorrhaging arteries.

In the United States, for example, two reports published in 2008 are revealing. Firstly, the Pew Forum's "Religious Landscape Survey,"³ based on interviews with a sample of 35,000 individuals, found that while 31.4% of Americans were brought up as Catholics, only 23.9% would today describe themselves as such. (This figure would, moreover, be much smaller were it not for immigration.) Bear in mind also that people tend to identify as belonging to religious groups long after they have ceased to adhere to them in practice or belief in any meaningful way. That is to say, *within* the 23.9% of Catholics, there is a large proportion whose affiliation extends little further than answering "Catholic" when asked "What is your religion?" by pollsters.⁴ That said, in terms of evangeliza-

tion, American Catholics are clearly doing something right: according to the Pew report, one in every 40 Americans is a Catholic convert (that is, 2.6% of the United States population identify as a Catholic, despite not having been brought up as one). However, this is massively offset by the fact that fully one in ten of the American population are Catholic "deconverts" (that is, 10.1% of the U.S. population were brought up as Catholics but no longer identify as such). To put it a bit roughly, for every *one* person who completes the RCIA—and over whom we are right to rejoice—*four* people become so alienated from the church as to no longer even call themselves a Catholic.

Secondly, data from the 2008 "American Religious Identification Survey," based on responses from almost 55,000 households, showed that fully 15% of the U.S. population answer the question "What is your religion, if any?" with "none," "atheist," "agnostic," "secular," or "humanist."⁵ The

3. Available online: <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

4. See also Robert D. Putnam and Dave E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), pp. 138-41.

5. See Barry Kosmin, Ariela Keysar, Ryan Cragun, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera, *American Nones: The Profile of the Non Religion Population: A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008* (Hartford, CT: Trinity College, 2009). Available online: http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/NONES_08.pdf.

proportion of such “religious nones” in the U.S. population has almost doubled since 1990, when the figure was 8%. Of America’s estimated 34 million religiously unaffiliated adults, 24% identified as “Catholic” at the age of 12 (so just over eight million people). In total, 68% of current religious nones identified as belonging to a religious group when aged 12. Of these, 35% are former Catholics.

Statistics from Britain tell a somewhat different, though no more encouraging, story. According to the 2009 British Social Attitudes Survey, when asked “Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?” slightly over half of respondents (50.6%) answered “no.” The *combined* Christian responses totaled 42%. Only 8.6% of Britons described themselves as Catholic—the lowest percentage since the survey began in 1983. 13.2%, however, claim to have been brought up as Catholics. Ignoring the effects of immigration, that equates to one in every three British Catholics having abandoned not only practice and belief but the name itself.

Evidently then, in Britain and the United States (and no doubt elsewhere too), we are dealing with a failure of transmission and retention. This failure is, moreover, both one of the main contributing factors to the *need* for a new evangelization and is arguably the greatest single barrier to its success. Addressing this issue ought, therefore, to be an integral part of the church’s strategy. As Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote in *Redemptoris missio*: “the boundaries between *pastoral care of the faithful, new evangelization and specific missionary activity* are not clearly definable, and it is unthinkable to create barriers between them or to put them into watertight compartments” (#34).

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

Now there are undoubtedly many and complicated reasons for this failure of transmission and retention. However, recent data and hypotheses from a number of quarters single out one factor in particular: *practice*.

Research by Alasdair Crockett and David Voas, for example, suggests that a major predictor of the inheritability of religious practice, belief, and affiliation is the example of one’s

own parents.⁶ Their analysis of 60 years’ worth of British statistics showed that children with two parents who don’t attend church regularly have only a one in forty chance of becoming regularly attending adults themselves. For children with one regularly-attending parent, this raises to a chance of slightly over one in five. Children with two regularly-attending parents, however, have slightly under a one in two chance of becoming once-a-month-or-more attenders later in life. Such data receive general reinforcement from other sources. Bruce Hunsberger and Bob Altemeyer’s study of members of American atheist groups found that “*most* of these atheists had little or no religious training during childhood....About 30 percent of the sample had at least one atheist or agnostic parent, and many other future atheists come from parents who apparently believed in God but otherwise had very little interest in religion.”⁷ Furthermore, the Oxford anthropologist Jon Lanman’s cross-cultural work has highlighted the significance of a perceived disjunct between parents’ professed religious beliefs and their actual low levels of practice in the formation of non-believers. He adds, “many non-theists name hypocrisy as an important element in their rejection of religious practice and [religious] beliefs in general.”⁸

The Canadian evolutionary psychologist Joe Henrich has recently proposed the theory of what he calls “credibility enhancing displays,” or CREDs.⁹ The basic notion here is that, for interesting evolutionary reasons, human beings are biased towards believing ideas if the one proposing it is seen to live out the “costly” implications of it. Such “costs” may include such things as time, effort, social standing, money, and health. To put it very simply: if I just *tell* my friends

6. Alasdair Crockett and David Voas, “Generations of decline: Religious change in twentieth-century Britain,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 45/4, 567-584.
7. Bruce E. Hunsberger and Bob Altemeyer, *Atheists: A Groundbreaking Study of America’s Nonbelievers* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books), p. 42.
8. Jonathan Lanman, “‘Walking the Walk’: How fewer religious displays in one generation leads to increased non-theism in the next,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (forthcoming).
9. Joseph Henrich, “The evolution of costly displays, cooperation and religion: credibility enhancing displays and their implications for cultural evolution,” *Evolution and Human Behaviour* 30, pp. 11-28.

CATECHETICAL LEADER

PUBLISHER: National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

Catechetical Leader (ISSN: 1547-7908) is published six times a year by the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), 125 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017. Authors’ views do not necessarily reflect those of NCCL. Letters to the editor and submissions of news items are encouraged. Send to *Catechetical Leader* at the address above or e-mail nccl@nccl.org. Phone: (202) 884-9753.

Fax: (202) 884-9756. Contact NCCL for reprints.
Copyright © 2011 by NCCL.

Subscription rates: (U.S. addresses): One year, \$24; two years, \$42; three years, \$54. (Foreign addresses): One year, \$48; two years, \$86; three years, \$114. NCCL members receive *Catechetical Leader* as a part of membership. To subscribe, send name and address with check or credit card number to NCCL at address above.

Bulk rate subscriptions: 2–5 subscriptions, \$22 each; 6–10 subscriptions, \$20; 11–20, \$18; 21 or more, \$16.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NCCL, 125 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Please recycle CL.



that it's important to give a significant proportion of one's disposable income to charity, they are probably unlikely to do it. However, if the telling is accompanied by their seeing me actually giving my money to charity on a regular basis, i.e., by my living out the "costly implications" of my professed beliefs (or, in Henrich's jargon, by performing a "CRED"), then they are far more likely to be persuaded by the idea and thus to do it themselves.

English is, of course, littered with folksy phrases and clichés illustrating this idea: "Walk the walk; don't just talk the talk," "Practice what you preach," "Put your money where your mouth is," "Put up or shut up."¹⁰ There is also a considerable body of experimental data supporting the general principle. Young children, for example, are far more likely to eat something from a stranger presented as food if the stranger eats some first. They also have far fewer difficulties in believing in certain types of invisible entities as germs where there is an elaborate set of corroborating practices built around them (the ritual of washing one's hands before eating, throwing food away if it's been on the floor, etc.) than they have in believing in things they have merely been *told* about, such as unicorns or mermaids.

Significantly, Henrich relates his general idea to the transmission of religious beliefs and practices. He points, among other things, to the emphasis placed on heroic individuals as models to be held up to believers; to the tendency of religious leaders to undertake certain "heroic" vows (not least poverty, chastity, and obedience); to the well-documented significance of martyrdoms—an extreme case of a CRED—for strengthening and spreading religious belief systems ("the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," as the early Latin theologian Tertullian observed). All of these, Henrich argues, are examples of "costly displays" enhancing the credibility of the doctrines espoused and thus rendering them more likely to persuade. Again, the idea here is not so much that the presence of CREDs *guarantees* the adoption of the beliefs which they support, but rather that, without them, they are a very hard sell indeed.

Let us recall again Pope Paul VI's observation: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (EN, #41). This is well borne out by the data presented above. At least within the family, those who practice what they profess have a far higher probability of transmitting the faith to the next generation—though this is an (almost) necessary, rather

10. Again, see Lamman's article cited above.

than a sufficient, condition. Practicing one's Catholicism does not guarantee that it will be passed on, though not practicing almost guarantees that it will not be.

THINKING ABOUT THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Let us return now to the new evangelization. In the first place, we may stress again the importance of practicing our faith. *Doing* certain things because of what we believe strengthens not only our own beliefs, but those of others around us. As we have seen, this is true especially in the home, but the point applies more broadly. Note that CREDs need not be instances of martyrdom or extreme self-denial (though these are, indeed, especially efficacious ones). Faith-

fully attending Mass each Sunday is a CRED—that is, an instance of our practice conforming to the beliefs we profess to hold. (As a speculative aside, it may be that the Catholic Church's continued insistence on the Sunday obligation is at least part of the reason why, in Britain for example, the decline in religious practice and belief has been slower among Catholics than it has

among Anglicans, where no such formal obligation exists). Other CREDs would include such things as pilgrimages, vigils, devotions, lenten penances, practicing the works of mercy, abstaining from meat on Fridays, and attending Mass on holy days of obligation: all things we do, or used to do, on the basis of what we believe.

Two very recent announcements from the Bishops Conference of England and Wales are encouraging in this light: the reinstatement of an obligation to fast from meat on Fridays¹¹ and the *consideration* of reinstating a number of holy days of obligation, which have been translated to the nearest Sunday.¹² While I do not mean to say that such obligations should be undertaken *in order to* "make a show of it," i.e., to present a CRED to the world—we ought not to be naive about their indirect benefits. There is, of course, a tension here between "parading one's piety in front of men, as the hypocrites do," and "hiding one's lamp underneath a basket." (The same applies, of course, to the public wearing of ashes on Ash Wednesday—a CRED in itself, though again, that is not, and should not be, the reason for doing it.)

Secondly, a strong case can be made on social-scientific grounds—and indeed, on several others—for a reemphasizing of saints and martyrs. It is, of course, these heroic (and

11. See: <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/content/download/8391/57604/file/plenary-resolutions-may2011.pdf>.

12. See: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2011/05/18/bishops-consider-reinstating-some-holy-days/>.

very human) individuals who, through striving to, in Dorothy Day's phrase, "live as though the Truth were true," are our best examples of both witnesses *and* teachers. A saintly life is a CRED *par excellence*. And we may once again recall Pope Paul VI's comment: "if [a modern person] does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." Once again, being a witness doesn't guarantee that one is listened to, but rather without witness, one is almost guaranteed no meaningful hearing at all. The witness of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, Blessed Chiara Badano, the servant of God Dorothy Day—all models eminently suited to the present-day—is arguably a far more powerful evangelistic tool than any amount of apologetics (which is not to deny the importance and necessity of apologetics). This is especially true given our present situation, in which examples of Catholics who have failed—all too often catastrophically—to live their lives in accordance with the ideals they profess, are widely known.

Of course, it is not enough for teachers simply to point to saints as "vicarious" witnesses. Instead, they—*we*—must go further. As such, John Paul II and Benedict XVI are right to remind us that we are all called to be "the saints of the third millennium." Just as the histories of the first evangelizations of Europe and North America are littered with the names of saints (all of whom, I expect, rather surprised themselves), so too must future histories of the new evangelization be.

TREASURES NEW AND OLD

To sum up very briefly: what I have tried to do in this article is show how the social sciences might be of service to Catholics as we think more deeply about the new evangelization. The task ahead is formidable, and we must use all the tools at our disposal if we are to succeed. To do this, I have focused on a single issue, *sketching* both a diagnosis (failure of transmission), and a potential, if very partial, remedy (a renewed

emphasis on practice). In both cases, I have supported my judgements and arguments with reference to recent research emerging from the fields of sociology, cognitive anthropology, and evolutionary psychology. At the same time, however, I am well aware that the real heart of what I have been arguing is nothing fundamentally novel. The bells and whistles of the most new-fangled research have added not one jot or tittle to my refrain: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

When we think of the new evangelization, perhaps our minds leap immediately to the "new"—to such things as iPhone apps, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. And evangelistic presence in these new social media is undoubtedly important; they are pervasive hallmarks of the cultures where we are both bringing and seeking to keep the gospel. (And the social sciences have much to teach us here, too.) But they should not distract us from other familiar but fundamental aspects of the task ahead. *Even* more urgent is the retention of those who are already Catholics and to re-emphasize the traditional practices of regular Mass going, Friday abstinence, holy days of obligation, the works of mercy, and the cult of the saints. Such things are not less important for the *new* evangelization simply because they are *old*. ■

Stephen Bullivant is Lecturer in Theology at St. Mary's University College. He finished his PhD, on Catholic theology and contemporary atheism, at Oxford University in 2009. In June 2010, he received the Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award for New Scholars from the Catholic Theological Society of America. He has two books forthcoming with Oxford University Press: *The Salvation of Atheists and Catholic Dogmatic Theology*, and *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism* (co-edited with Michael Ruse). Contact him at bullivants@smuc.ac.uk.



Subscribe now to *Catechetical Leader*

As an NCCL member you receive *Catechetical Leader* as a part of your membership.

Rates:

One year: \$24.00 Two years: \$42.00 Three years: \$54.00
(Foreign addresses) One year: \$48 Two years: \$86 Three years: \$114

Please indicate the number of years you wish to subscribe.

One year Two years Three years

Amount Enclosed or Charged \$ _____

Please send the subscription to:

Name _____
Parish _____
Street Address _____ PO Box _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Credit card:

Fax information to NCCL at (202) 884-9756

Visa MasterCard American Express

Card no. _____

Signature _____

Check:

Mail to: National Conference for Catechetical Leadership
125 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017

Catechizing with Symbol, Ritual, and Story

Kathy Hendricks



Corinne's expression told me something was wrong. Before I could shut off the ignition, she hustled up to the car window. "Things are out of control," she cried. "Ted and Larry almost threw out the blue mirrors." I jumped from the car and rushed inside. My two brothers stood together looking bewildered and sheepish. "They were cracked," one of them offered as a weak form of explanation. "That doesn't matter," my sister and I said in unison, "because they're the *blue mirrors!*"

Let me explain. Every December my mother took the large woodcarving from the window ledge in our dining room and replaced it with a set of blue mirrors. On top of these she arranged miniaturized figures of ice-skating angels, snowmen in top hats, snow-dusted trees, and strands of angel hair. As a small child, I could barely see over the edge. Viewing the imaginary ice pond at eye level was nothing short of magical.

Now my mother's house was being dismantled. After the death of my father six months earlier, she could no longer stand the loneliness and isolation. Neither did she have the heart for sorting, packing, and disposing of their things. The job was overwhelming, even for six grown children. Sixty-two years of marriage led to a massive accumulation of furniture, knick-knacks, china, and other household items. Much of it had sentimental value that made its dispersal all the more complicated. My three sisters and I were a bit more attuned to this than my brothers. In the case of the blue mirrors, we made a quick decision. We divided them among the four of us; my brothers didn't get any.

Although this episode took place several years ago, it continues to illustrate for me the power of *symbol, ritual, and story*. Each contains significant potential for meaningful catechesis.

THE POWER OF SYMBOL

Life overflows with symbols. Each one holds the capacity to evoke emotion, trigger memories, and create associations. Much of the time we are neither aware of what those are nor of their peculiar power. Not, that is, until someone tries to throw them in the trash.

With Advent and Christmas just around the corner, the symbols used in a cultural milieu serve as a case in point. Santa Claus and sleigh bells. Gift wrap and greeting cards. Candy canes and mistletoe. The list goes on and on. Some form a backdrop to the whole season, and we pay little notice. Others, like the blue mirrors, have a deeper import, one connected to family and tradition. These symbols acquire more meaning as the years pass. Fooling with them is a dangerous proposition.

The same is true in the church. Think of the universal nature of the symbols we use in our liturgical and sacramental celebrations. Bread and wine. Water and oil. Color and light. These sacred symbols unite us as a church across time and distance. Their usage is not optional. Other symbols are local and often tell about a parish community's history and

identity—a stained glass window donated in memory of a long-time parishioner, for example, or a statue of the parish's patron saint. Moving, altering, or eliminating such symbols without careful explanation can create a firestorm that flames and then smolders for years.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasizes the importance of signs and symbols: "*In human life, signs and symbols occupy an important place. As being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God*" (CCC, #1146).

*Life overflows with symbols.
Each one holds the capacity
to evoke emotion, trigger memories,
and create associations.
Much of the time we are neither
aware of what those are
nor of their peculiar power.*



The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) reminds us that liturgical formation, one of the six tasks of catechesis, does not simply explain Christian liturgy. It also makes “symbols [and] gestures...known and loved” (#87). The liturgical cycle provides an excellent framework for catechizing about symbols associated with each season. Like my mother’s blue mirrors, these symbols are tied to a particular time of year. Because they are used repetitively, the meaning behind them can fade from communal memory if we are not careful to preserve it. Effective catechesis helps people rediscover the beauty and the meaning behind the symbolism without over-explaining it. A good starting point is the home. Most people have their own “blue mirror” stories that they are happy to recall and share with others. In doing so, they also uncover how these symbols are part of the large and small rituals that are folded into their lives.

THE POWER OF RITUAL

Setting out the blue mirrors was just one of many pre-Christmas rituals my family observed every year. Like countless other households, we hung stockings, trimmed the tree, and gathered around the table for special meals. There was gener-

ally no discussion about how to celebrate the season. Without much thought we turned to the rituals that we knew and loved.

Rituals have a way of bonding us. They provide healing and connect us with our past. Many families have special customs and rituals that spring from their ancestral or ethnic background or that have simply emerged over the years. It is the year-after-year use of ritual and its symbols that make them work. This is something I urge parents to keep in mind when children complain about doing the same thing over and over again. That is precisely the point. In time, they will come to understand and even appreciate it. Just ask the parent of college-age children who return home to celebrate Thanksgiving or Christmas and expect all of the familiar rituals to be intact. The recurring nature of family rituals has renewed significance, not just because it is comforting, but also because it says something about being part of a family.

Liturgy is, by its very nature, repetitive. Thus we don’t seek innovative ways to celebrate it but find continuity with both the past and with the church around the world. In doing so, we celebrate our unity of faith—one that is ever ancient and



ever new. Much of liturgical ritual takes place in non-verbal fashion, just as God’s activity takes place in the unnoticed rhythm of our everyday lives. As the late Father James Dunning observed, “It is like children learning a language. They learn it by osmosis within their family and community; they think, pray, sing, and work somewhat differently than others because they have learned that language. Rituals are the most important language of a religious tradition” (“Liturgical Catechesis: ‘Doing the Rite Thing,’ James B. Dunning, *Catechumenate*, July 1991).

Rituals draw us together as a family of faith. They build identity, provide a sense of stability, and offer comfort during tumultuous times. The impending implementation of the newly revised English translation of the Roman Missal provides a good opportunity to catechize around the rituals, symbols, and gestures that are part of our liturgical celebrations. As Father Ron Lewinski notes, “The challenge is to avoid becoming oblivious or sloppy about our gestures and postures so that they become anemic or empty. Our ritual actions and symbolic gestures can be a means of inspiration to others who perceive them from the outside. Using these actions and gestures gracefully and with a deliberate intention can become an effective witness to others” (“Liturgy is Worship Beyond Words, Sixth in a Series on the Roman

Missal,” sadlierreligion.com/webelieve/romanmissal). Such witness is an opportunity to uncover our story as a community of believers.

Ritual should not become so repetitive that it becomes identical. This is not the meaning of unity. It is precisely what happens, however, when we become, as Father Lewinski notes, oblivious to its inspirational potential—both in the home and in the church. Ritual that is not adaptive is deadly. Weddings, births, adoptions, and death, moving to different locations or taking on new jobs—these are some of the experiences that keep families elastic. As circumstances shift, rituals are adapted to accommodate these changes.

In similar fashion, there is leeway in Catholic liturgy for adaptation. The homily is the biggest variable week after week. The introduction to the Mass and other sacramental rites can be adapted to the occasion, as can music and the general intercessions. Liturgical formation can help to draw attention to the ways a community celebrates the liturgy to meet the cultural flavor of its people and to challenge and enliven our relationship with God and one another. It also breaks open the ritualistic and symbolic elements to reveal their underlying story.



THE POWER OF STORY

As the sorting and packing of my mother's belongings continued, my siblings and I came across a little box containing the figures of the snowmen and angels that sat atop the blue mirrors. It launched a conversation as we began to recall our memories. Each of us, including my brothers, had created a little scenario of her or his own. In one version, the red-hatted snowmen were the "bad guys," and the ones with the blue hats, the good ones. This led to other recollections about Christmases past and how we celebrated it year after year. It all added up to the story of my mother's talent for bringing the family together and for creating a loving bond among us that would endure long after the blue mirrors were broken or forgotten.

Underlying all meaningful symbol and ritual is story. As a church, we celebrate our story, reliving "the great events of salvation history in the 'today' of liturgy" (GDC, 108). A mystagogical approach helps people reflect on their own experience in light of the great story of our faith. We share this experience in common as humans—brokenness and healing, captivity and liberation, life and death. The telling and retelling of our Judeo-Christian story brings forth a message of salvation that is as relevant today as it was in the lives of our spiritual ancestors.

KEEPING SYMBOL, RITUAL, AND STORY ALIVE

My mother died four years ago. In her final hours, the six of us gathered around her bedside, listened to the words of the priest as he anointed her, offered prayers for the passing of her life from this one to the next, and said our goodbyes. Afterwards, we drew into a circle as part of our vigil with her. We began to do what was natural to us as a family—we told stories. The blue mirrors came up and led to laughter as we recalled our warm memories. Mom died a few hours later. My brother, Larry, later noted that she died so peacefully because she could hear us sharing our stories.

Someday the blue mirrors will be lost, broken, or discarded. Nevertheless, I believe the stories behind them will be retained as our children and grandchildren enact familiar rituals and discover new symbols to cherish and pass along. The blue mirrors have deepened my own understanding of how our liturgical life as a Church has lasted—passed down from one generation to the next—and drawn us together as the people of God, bound by our sacred symbols, time-honored rituals, and stories of faith. ■

Kathy Hendricks is a contributing writer and national consultant for William H. Sadlier and author of A Prayerbook for Catechists. Contact her at kmhendricks11@gmail.com or visit her website: kmhendricks.com.

Sacraments and Sacramentality in Christian Life

Brian W. Hughes



We live in a global civilization. Never before have more people—especially in the industrialized world—been more connected and informed about vastly different international events, struggles, religions, cultures, attitudes, and behaviors. The temptation and need to compartmentalize facets of our daily

lives is a too common consequence of trying to manage this pluralism. People speak of their “work life,” “school life,” “social life,” “family life,” and, yes, “faith life.” It is a constant struggle to integrate all these different “lives.” Is it any wonder that many Catholic Christians only seem to practice their faith or think about the sacraments on Sunday? This split between what is “sacred” and “secular” is a persistent problem for anyone involved in church ministry, but overcoming it is an essential call of Vatican II.¹

According to the Catholic tradition, a vital way of integrating faith with all other dimensions of our lives is the practice of sacramentality. To understand what sacramentality means, however, I will connect several ideas. First, we will trace briefly how *mysterion* became “sacrament.” Second, the nature of grace as the self-communication of God will be considered. Third, the nature and differences between signs and symbols will be explored. Finally, I will bring all of these points together in presenting a contemporary view of sacramentality.

FROM MYSTERION TO SACRAMENTUM: THE EARLY CHURCH

We do not find the word “sacrament” in the New Testament. Early Christians borrowed the term from the existing religious-philosophical vocabulary and adapted it to serve a theological purpose, especially for the Latin-speaking West. *Mysterion* comes from the root *mystes* (μυστηζ) or “one initiated.” The term connects “secret” or “hidden” with “one initiated.” Since official toleration for Christianity did not arrive in the West until Emperor Constantine’s Edict of Milan in 313 AD, it is easy to see why this term, *mysterion*, would be appropriated in part from pagan mystery cults by early Christians to designate key rituals and practices such as baptism and Eucharist.² The term enjoyed biblical support and resonated

with what Christians taught, proclaimed, and meant about the rites connected to Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.³

The African church father Tertullian (160–225 AD) first uses the term *sacramentum* in a Christian sense.⁴ Before Tertullian’s use of the term, *sacramentum* could refer to an oath of loyalty that all Roman soldiers swore to their leaders and to their gods. It could also mean a deposit of money consecrated to temple deities.⁵ For Tertullian, *sacramentum* refers to the Christian practices of Eucharist, laying on of hands, and baptism.⁶ *Sacramentum* could also mean other things associated with religious rituals, such as water, oil, and blessings. Whether *sacramentum* referred to a particular action or rite or instrument associated with them, here we clearly see a meaning of the term tied to elements of Christian practice.

Mysterion could also mean something hidden or a broader power of divine action. This meaning appears in the Greek Christian writers like St. John Chrysostom who writes: “A mystery is present when we realize that something exists beyond the things that we are looking at.”⁷ The Western Christian tradition retained this far-reaching sense and translated it as *mysterium*. So from the third century on, “Greek Christian writers were using *mysterion* in two different senses, but the Latin authors now had two words to use: *sacramentum* to refer to the Christian rituals, and *mysterium* to refer to the mysteries of faith. They could now speak of *sacramenta* as signs of *mysteria*.”⁸ The early Christian rituals of baptism, imposition of hands, and Eucharist would become such important signs of God’s activity that they would come to be seen as necessary for human salvation.

2001) 23–25; German Martinez, *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003) 29–30.

1. See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (LG), 34.

2. Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction To Sacraments In The Catholic Church*. Revised edition. (Triumph, MO: Liguori,

3. There are many different meanings of the term *mysterion* in the New Testament, but far more in Paul’s letters (Eph. 1: 7-10; 3:1-6; 2 Thess. 6-8; Col. 1: 24-27; 1 Cor. 15: 50-53) than in the Gospels. It can mean: knowledge, divine action or revelation, the Holy Spirit, a mysterious power, Christ, and finally, a particular teaching, belief, or doctrine.

4. Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 29; Cf., Michael Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist, 1987) 31.

5. Lawler, 31.

6. Martos, 29.

7. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians I*, 7 as quoted in Martos, 29.

8. Martos, 29.

There are two important developments within this emerging sacramental theology. The first concerns Augustine's contribution. Christian theologians up to and within the Middle Ages came to see the rites of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, anointing of the sick, marriage, reconciliation, and holy orders as necessary, sacred, and salvific rites for the Christian community. Augustine gave Christianity a classic definition that still endures. In writing to Marcellinus in the year 412, Augustine writes, "...it would take too long to discuss the variety of signs which when they pertain to divine things are called sacraments."⁹ In other words, a sign that belongs to or signifies or points to something divine can be a sacrament. Elsewhere, Augustine specifies this distinction in reference to baptism: "[T]he water of the sacrament is one thing; another, the water which betokens the Spirit of God. The water of the sacrament is visible; the water of the Spirit invisible."¹⁰ In short, there is the sign of the sacrament that is visible and outward and the grace of the sacrament that is invisible and inward. Sacraments, as the tradition takes this from Augustine, are visible signs of invisible grace. Augustine's broad definition reflects something of *mysterion's* elasticity by incorporating not only the particular rite but also the broader sense of God's grace working in the world and in people's participation in Christian rituals.

The second development concerns how the sacraments came to have a more restricted function within the church. From Augustine and Tertullian through the Middle Ages and beyond, theologians specified God's activity in the sacraments. Besides the sign of the sacrament, whether it be water with baptism, oil with confirmation, or the imposition of hands for ordination, the non-repeatable sacraments gave to Christians a special character or seal. Theologians explained this seal as similar to the mark found on a slave indicating its owner or a mark of service to a superior.¹¹ The seal and its effect of grace were viewed as an invitation to convert, to move closer to God. Participation in the sacramental ritual did not automatically cause this change without the human person freely accepting and acting upon the invitation, however.¹² When theologians and church documents spoke about the "permanent effect" of the sacraments, they referred to the explicit offer of God to the recipient. Whether one chose to say "yes" and accept the offer was always a matter of personal choice and disposition. In this sense, simply seeing a person receive the sacrament of confirmation, for example, does not automatically mean that person will love God and neighbor

9. Augustine, *Epistolae* 138.1.7. "Nimis autem longum est, convenienter disputare de varietate signorum, quae cum ad res divinas pertinent, Sacramenta appellantur." Translation mine.

10. Augustine, *In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*, 6.11.

11. According to Richard McBrien, "It was the rite of sealing by which a person became a Christian for life, even if he or she were to lapse into heresy or schism." *Catholicism* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994) 795.

12. Cf. Martos, 59.



more. There is a real element of freedom involved in whether the effect of the sacrament becomes *living*.

As Christianity became the dominant religious influence and power in the West, its sacramental theology developed in tandem with the church's theology of ministry. As the Catholic Church gradually defined ministerial offices and duties more sharply, so also did it prescribe norms and rubrics for the performance of the Christian sacraments. Indeed, the term "holy order" echoes this stratification. According to Joseph Martos, "The term 'holy orders'...referred to the ranks or levels in the church's hierarchy: just as the army had military ranks or orders, just as the government had administrative levels or orders, so the church had ecclesiastical offices or holy orders."¹³ As bishops came to be seen as rulers and administrators during the Middle Ages, so did the uneducated clergy, especially priests, come to be defined by what they did. What they did was far less pastoral than routinely liturgical. "Their

13. Martos, 417.



main duties were...baptizing infants, offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, hearing confessions, giving blessings, presiding at funerals. They did little preaching, except to remind the faithful of their sacramental and moral obligations.”¹⁴ The sacrament of holy orders was seen as a “conferral of power” to perform specific sacramental rites.¹⁵ If we consider that sacramental theology also developed ways to think about the sacraments as being administered and received, valid and invalid, it is not difficult to see a more narrow understanding of *sacramentum* as a divine duty performed by the church through the clergy and for the laity. From the Middle Ages onward, all official Catholic sacraments required the presence and leadership of a priest in order to be considered valid at all. The notion of sacrament as a term referring to the presence of God in a broader sense became difficult to see apart from the mediation of priests and the rites of baptism, confirmation,

14. Martos, 427.

15. Martos, 431.

Eucharist, matrimony, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, and holy orders.¹⁶

GRACE

Though the theological thinking, ministerial offices, and liturgical rites have tended to constrict the way we think about sacraments, the whole point behind each of them is to draw people’s attention to the fact that God is communicating, *gifting*, God’s self to us, inviting us into a deeper and closer relationship with him. The traditional definition of a sacrament is a “visible sign of an invisible grace.” I want to explore what this really means and implies in its true theological depth. We can then properly understand how to move from a restricted notion of sacrament to a broader understanding of sacramentality.

Grace is nothing more than the mysterious presence of God or, better, the unfathomable love of God poured out for the human race. The effect of receiving the sacraments is an open invitation to God’s love. In God’s deepest reality as Father, Son, and Spirit, God is communicating God’s self within the Godhead, constantly relating and loving God’s self. This eternal sharing and giving and relating of God that is at the center of the mystery of the Trinity—that God is three and one—is also occurring outside God. God creates the universe in order to communicate God’s self to it. More specifically, Christians believe that God loves the world and the human race so much that God became human and entered time and space. This is the central doctrine of Christianity—the Incarnation. Put differently, God is constantly giving God’s self, giving God’s love, to reality all the time.

To say, however, that God is giving God’s self all the time to the universe has important implications. For the Catholic tradition, reality is the location of grace because God is constantly involved in communicating God’s self to the world. When God communicates God’s self, God does not hold anything back. God gives God’s self completely, fully, and totally. The clearest expression of this for Christians is Jesus dying for us on the cross. Jesus gave himself totally and freely due to his great love. In the same way, human beings are called to give themselves away as Jesus did through participation in the Spirit. As Pope Benedict XVI writes, “The Spirit, in fact, is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ’s heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them, when he bent down to wash the feet of the disciples (cf. Jn 13:1-13) and above all when he gave his life for us (cf. Jn 13:1, 15:13).”¹⁷

Now, there is another important implication of this view of grace. If all reality, all of our existence is graced, then there is no area or realm of our lives that is really separate from the love of God. The existence of anything is the result of God

16. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1117, acknowledges this understanding of sacraments as being “in the strict sense.” But it is not the only meaning we find throughout the Church’s life and tradition.

17. *Deus caritas est*, #19.

constantly loving it. This means that everything we see, feel, touch, taste, and smell is ultimately held in being by God, that is, by grace. Therefore, there is no area or realm of human life and activity that is cut off from God or separated from God. Yet, we are accustomed to cutting God off and out of various areas of human life. We do this by designating some things or actions or events or people as “sacred,” and others as secular or “profane.” However, if you take seriously that God is giving God’s self completely all the time to the universe, to a book as much as to a human person, then the distinction between sacred and secular or holy and profane is not real. There is no such realm or person or thing that is ever separated from the grace of God. Nothing, finally, is profane. All reality is graced. All reality is sacred because God holds it in being.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

To speak about and understand God’s self-communication involves certain ways we communicate with one another. We communicate with one another through signs and symbols.

Some signs are a natural part of our physical world. They usually refer to one thing and possess a restrictive meaning to that thing. Other signs are those society constructs. A stop sign is probably the most common conventional sign. There is nothing inherent to a red octagonal shape that indicates oncoming traffic must stop or, conversely, that a green light means *go*. Physical signs are different. Usually, the sign and the thing signified often have a causal link. For instance, smoke signifies fire just as droplets of rain or a mass of grey clouds are signs of an oncoming storm. So you can normally tell if something is a sign because it relates “to the thing to which it refers in a fixed and unique way.”¹⁸ What all these physical and conventional signs have in common is a fixed, objective meaning.

Symbols are qualitatively different than signs. Symbols are similar to signs in that they point to something and convey meaning. However, unlike signs, which normally point to something else, symbols have an intrinsic relationship to the reality they represent. Symbols have a denser, richer, more personal and subjective power that signs lack. Moreover, symbols do not simply refer to one meaning but they possess many layers of meaning within themselves that affect us. Symbols do not simply signify something; they try to make what they represent a living reality for you and me. They bring into our conscious awareness, imagination, and desire a multitude of meanings. Symbols possess a subjective and personal dimension that is normally absent from signs.

*Yet, we are accustomed
to cutting God off and out
of various areas of human life.
We do this by designating
some things or actions or events
or people as “sacred,” and others
as secular or “profane.”*

There are many different kinds of symbols. Water and fire are natural symbols. Water does not have a strict and narrow meaning. It can symbolize life, health, purity, and cleanliness. Yet, as we also know from the recent tsunami in Japan, water can also symbolize destruction and death. The same is true for fire. Fire can be an intense symbol of fear and destruction when we see forest fires or home fires. However, fire also conveys warmth and light and life in other contexts. There is something wonderful and comforting about a raging fire in a home fireplace during winter. Lit candles during Mass or votive candles, for example, symbolize the presence of Christ

for the community because in the Scriptures, Christ is often called the “light” of the world (Jn 9:5; Lk 2:32). The American flag and bald eagle are also symbols that citizens here share, but they, too, do not have a clear, univocal meaning. These symbols convey the values and identity of a country. A symbol’s meanings touch various groups of citizens differently.

Symbols are richer and denser than signs precisely because the feelings, images, memories, or thoughts they evoke are not necessarily the same thing for different people. The subjective power of the symbol touches some inward experience of the person who encounters it. Many such symbols are human actions, not simply pictures or images. Tears are a universal symbol of human emotion. They can be tears of pain and loss or happiness and joy. The same is true for handshakes and kisses—all of these are rich in their personal, emotional meaning but are not clear at first sight.

I have been talking about common symbols that elicit shared social meaning. There are many other symbols, however, including personal symbols. We all have or know something that possesses a special, personal meaning for us. Hand-me-down locket, a grandmother’s heirloom ring, a child’s first colorful drawing, a music box, or even a special glance between a married couple are all personal symbols. Special cards and gifts between spouses, friends, parents, and children are also ways we communicate symbolic meaning. All of these are rich ways we tell each other about our feelings, desires, hopes, and friendship. Music and art connected to an experience or series of experiences are symbols. They too are rich sources of symbolic meaning.

SACRAMENTALITY

At this point, we need to bring this all together. Grace, God’s self-communication to human beings, meets us where we are in the messiness of our daily lives and relationships. Grace comes to us in ways we know, feel, and can access through

18. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, translated by Susanne K. Langer (New York: Harper and Row, 1946) as quoted in Lawler, 15.



our senses. Grace discloses itself to us through the various dimensions of our world. The early Christian theologians talk about this using the term “mystery,” which originally possessed a broad meaning, and then employed *sacramentum* to specify special and important ways God’s presence discloses itself in ritual. Sacramental theology, however, became caught up not only in more specialized arguments about the particular ways sacraments differed from one another but also how the administration and reception of them became exclusively controlled by ordained priests. Since most of the sacraments occur only once (baptism, confirmation, marriage, holy orders), the ordinary contact Catholics had with the sacraments through history became restricted to Eucharist and reconciliation. Consequently, for the popular practice of Catholicism, sacraments were located at particular times, places, and periods of one’s life and mediated by priests. It is unlikely that Catholics thought much about the sacraments’ true depth and power outside of Mass and confession.

Yet the theological importance and meaning of “sacrament” is not limited to seven rituals. One of the key descriptions we can trace through Augustine and Aquinas is how sacraments give or cause grace. In short, their sacramental theology holds that “a sacrament effects what it signifies.”¹⁹ So when we say that sacraments effect or cause grace, what are we saying? Sacraments make real the presence of God for us by signifying it, by drawing our attention to it. In other words, sacraments effectively bring God into our hearts and minds by symbolizing the presence of God for us. For this to happen, people must have the right disposition and subjectivity to encounter such symbols. That is, we must have the right sensitivity to see God’s love mediated through the symbols around us. Everything in my experience, if I am prayerfully attuned to God, can be a sacrament for me. Michael Himes explains this as follows.

Sacraments presuppose the omnipresence of grace, the fact that the self-gift of God is already there to be manifested. But because grace is always present, it frequently goes unnoticed. Any thing, any person, place, event, any sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch that causes you to recognize the presence of grace, to accept it and celebrate it, is a sacrament, effecting what it signifies.²⁰

Sacramentality, then, is the potential that all reality can effectively communicate God’s presence to us. The meaning of

sacramentality is deeper and wider than its ritual and ecclesial function within official church celebrations, despite their importance. Sacramentality is the hidden love of God poured into the world ready to touch us through the symbolic power of our day-to-day realities. Pope Benedict XVI speaks of a “sacramental mysticism” that shapes us not simply as partakers of the Eucharist but as Christians who, because they have received Christ’s gift of himself, can now enter more deeply into communion with others. So as God gifts and enhances our ability to see through divine eyes and act with charity, so we also become more attuned to the love that comes to us through our neighbor and the channels of this graced world. In this way, we do not just know the sacramental principle—it

becomes how we see and how we define our lives. As Pope Benedict XVI states, “Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself.”²¹ This notion and reality is not new. It runs through the Christian tradition. It is simply another way of talking about the Ignatian maxim of “finding God in all things.” If nothing is truly profane or secular, then everything is potentially sacramental. Let

me cite Michael Himes once more:

Grace is always present. What is needed is someone to notice it. Sacraments are those persons, places, things and events which cause you and me to notice the grace. A sacrament reveals to you that inner luminescence, like a dying coal lit up from the inside. It allows you to see into its depth, to see the grace in which its existence is rooted, to acknowledge and celebrate God’s absolute love for all that exists.²²

In the final analysis, a proper understanding and practice of seeing the many facets and dimensions of our ordinary life as potentially and really sacramental can help integrate and deepen the faith of Catholics. It can help overcome our common experience of fragmentation and be an avenue to closeness with God not just on Sundays or at Mass. ■

Brian W. Hughes received his PhD in systematic theology from Boston College. Currently, he is Chair of the Theology, Philosophy, and Pastoral Ministry Department and Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Saint Mary. His new book, *Saving Wisdom: Theology in the Christian University*, was recently published by Wipf & Stock publishers. Contact him at HughesB@stmary.edu.

*Sacramentality,
then, is the potential
that all reality can effectively
communicate God’s
presence to us.*

19. Himes, Michael. *Doing the Truth in Love* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995), 107-108.

20. Himes, 108.

21. *Deus caritas est*, #14.

22. Himes, 108.



CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



CATECHETICAL LEADERS AND PASTORAL PLANNING

Maureen Gallagher



Catechetical leaders have a great contribution to make in the area of pastoral planning because they often see life through the lens of the paschal mystery. For catechetical leaders, pastoral planning provides an opportunity to make the process one which is based on community building. Planning is a process where the word of God is echoed throughout the development of the design for the future.

Today many dioceses are embarking on or have completed diocesan-wide pastoral planning efforts. Primarily these have focused on reorganizing parishes based on the current diminishing number of priests or demographic and financial changes. The planning has resulted in many restructured parishes. Some now share pastors; some are in strong partnerships; some have merged and have formed new parish communities with new identities; some have parish directors; some are served by *in solidum* teams of priests. All these changes involve loss and the possibility of new life. All can build upon the life-death-resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This realignment process often leads to individual or cluster pastoral planning. This is where the leadership of a diocesan director or a parish director of religious education can turn a sometimes deadly process into a faith-filled catechetical moment for both individuals and the community.

At first blush, it might look like successful parish restructuring or parish/cluster planning is good social science practice. While that may be true, it is much more than that. It is Catholic spirituality in action. It is the process of doing authentic pastoral theology and catechesis. What are the theological, catechetical, and spiritual underpinnings experienced in successful pastoral planning?

There are five key theological concepts, which have catechetical dimensions that can influence diocesan pastoral planning. Sometimes they are fully articulated; sometimes they are embedded in the planning process but not expressed. However, there is real power in seeing, naming, and acting upon the rich theological tradition, which supports planning and change. Seeing the spiritual reality gives a sense of the mean-

ing and support to the planning efforts. Naming it connects it to the Catholic heritage and builds solidarity with the tradition. Further, naming in the context of prayer helps the community discern the will of God. Acting upon what is seen and named, while not removing the hurt, loss, and feelings of “disorientation,” brings engagement and purpose to the radical change that may be happening. The movement to action involves many people growing in faith on the journey to communion with God.

THE FIVE CONCEPTS

1. Creation and Incarnation

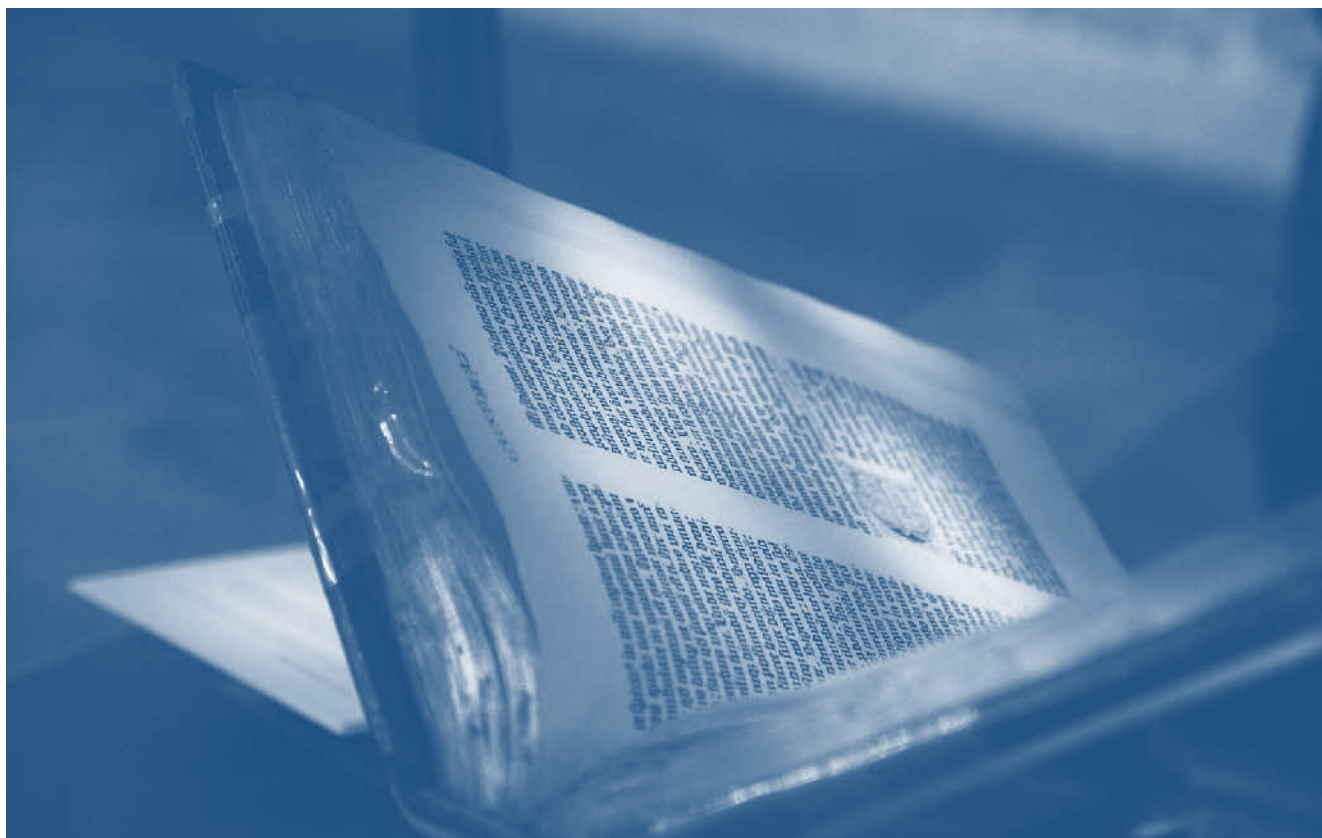
The first important concept is a melding of the theology of creation and the Incarnation. Teilhard de Chardin’s statement, “By reason of creation and even more the incarnation, nothing is profane for those who know how to see,” applies to parish restructuring and pastoral planning. It is a sacred process where the Spirit is engaging the community in helping to design its future. It is the spark of the divine, which enlightens the sometimes darkened path of resistance to change. It is the deep respect for the dignity of the human person, rooted in God’s creating humanity into the divine likeness, that sets a planning process grounded in spirituality apart. At a time of loss and hurt, where some may appear to be “winners” and some “losers,” where wandering in the wilderness is recognized as part of the change process, how we relate to one

another needs to respect the dignity of each person. The journey through change is rooted in the spirituality of the paschal mystery. It is interconnected with the community reading the “signs of the times” as an element of being marked at baptism as prophet, as well as priest and king. Catechetical leaders can help parishioners see within their baptismal commitment the connection between the “endings” involved in pastoral planning and the “new beginnings.”

Establishing ground rules for respectful dialogue is rooted in the dignity of each person and each community. The empowerment given by the local bishop; the way the planning process is structured; the dialogue that happens; the accountability embodied in the methodology; the timelines established; the materials created; the prayer resources assembled; the communication checklists provided: these are based on the belief that all are made in the image and likeness of God and all have a share in the future of the Catholic community. As shareholders in the mission and ministry of Christ, we are empowered to assist in the creation of the future of our parishes in collaboration with our bishops and pastors. We are brothers and sisters of the incarnate word of God and thus share in the dignity and gifts of all humanity.

2. Trinity—God in relationship

The mystery of the Trinity is significant to pastoral planning because it is the relationship within the triune God that calls



us to be in relationship with God and one another. We are created as social beings. Christ, becoming incarnate, empowered people in relationship with one another to share intimately in the life of God. Just as the persons of the Trinity share their life in relationship to each other, so we are shareholders in the life of God through the “body of Christ.” At baptism, we celebrate the divine life in the community. Baptism initiates us as shareholders, receivers of the promise of eternal life and a life of love and support in the name of Christ through the experience of the community. “Baptism is a sharing in the priesthood of Christ” (*Lumen gentium*, 26) and a “sharing in Christ’s prophetic office” (LG, 12). Catechetical leaders have this knowledge and know how to make it relevant to planning processes.

Sharing in the life of the Trinity leads us to be empowered as disciples of Christ. One implication for being shareholders in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ is that we need to be involved in planning, as disciples, on how the mission and ministry will be carried out in the local church. Planning provides a stellar opportunity for the whole body of Christ to work together, with particular attention being given to the poor and the underserved. Bishops, priests, deacons, vowed religious, and the laity all share in the body of Christ; all are vibrant energizers of the community of the faithful. While playing different roles, all share in the same life of the Trinity. All share in planning for the future. Catechetical leaders can be the “go to” people who help planners see, name, and act upon the Trinitarian presence in the community.

3. Life-Death-Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The paschal mystery is the third significant theological construct, which enriches any planning process. As stated above, at baptism we are initiated into the life of Christ. We die with him; we are raised from the dead with him. Engaging in this mystery through our lives prepares us for our final death-resurrection. We experience various kinds of death in our daily existence. We know the disappointment when dreams do not come true; when our loved ones suffer debilitating illness; when relationships end; when we lose a spouse, child, or parent; when we are passed over for a promotion; and when we fail at something for which we have been striving.

The poignancy of the life-death-resurrection mystery is felt when people have to share a pastor, when church buildings close and communities are asked to merge and form something new. The consolidating process involves a lot of loss. While some things—the most important things—remain the same or can deepen, the familiar images, the regular place we have worshipped and maybe our grandparents have worshipped, changes. Our comfort level is disrupted. We have identified our faith so closely with the place where we worship that change involves a real loss. Pain and hurt accompany the loss. In the planning process, not to identify the “endings-wilderness-new beginnings” with the life-death-resurrection of Christ is to miss a wonderful, strong, and effective way

to assist people to develop a sense of direction, purpose, and meaning as shareholders in the mission and ministry of the risen Christ. Not to connect to the paschal mystery is to miss an opportunity to help people grow in faith. Even if parishes are called to collaborate or partner with others, rather than merge, there is still loss. Why can’t things be as they used to be? We are strong; why do we have to collaborate? Resistance to change provides many catechetical opportunities as people are helped to deal with different adjustments and loss.

4. The Eucharist and Sacramentality

The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of the Church’s activity (*Sacro-sanctum concilium*, 10). Worship is a communion in holiness where all who share in the life of Christ come together to recall the covenant of the past in the present and renew it for the future. Liturgy is the way the community praises, thanks, and glorifies God. At Eucharist, those who share in the life of Christ gather to hear the word proclaimed—a word that is living as it is proclaimed—a word that fosters the conviction that when God speaks, something happens.

Sacramentality refers to the sacramental principle. This principle focuses on the belief that all reality is potentially a reflection of the presence of God and an instrument of God’s saving activity. It is connected to two other principles: mediation—that God works through ordinary people and ordinary events to achieve God’s purposes; and communion—the belief that the purpose of God’s activity is union with humanity.

How does all this relate to planning? Planning in Catholic communities is always done in the context of prayer. There the shareholders in Christ’s church gather to recall the wonderful, nurturing moments of the past. They do this in the present in order to be energized for the future. Rooted in Scripture and faith-sharing, the gathered community situates itself in the presence of God and prays for the guidance of the Spirit. Catholic prayer is not just words. It is blessing with water; it is lighting candles; it is being sprinkled with baptismal water; it is being anointed for service; it is praising God with incense; it is sharing meals and blessing food.

As people plan and prepare for change, sharing the stories of the past, connecting them to the Scriptures, and using the rituals of the church can be part of any meeting. It follows the pattern of the liturgy—gather the folks, listen to the story, and share the meal—as a way to praise and thank God. Prayer and ritual sharing prepares people for greater appreciation of the Eucharist and roots them in the traditions of the church. It unleashes the power of our traditions. It helps heal loss and hurt. This of itself empowers the shareholders of the mission and ministry of Christ to discern the will of God for them in the future. Catechetical leaders who have a great sense of ritual and story can be very helpful in parish planning processes where new life is waiting to be born from loss and death.

5. Stewardship and the Common Good

This great theological lens incorporates many theological principles and social justice values. In many ways, it encompasses the heart of parish reorganization. Good stewardship of resources and promoting the common good are Catholic values, which support pastoral planning. Upholding the common good has the ultimate goal of sharing the fullness of life in God.

The common good is experienced in many facets of existence: through family life, in friendships, in intentional communities, and in civic endeavors. When first encountered in a planning process, working for the common good may seem to conflict with parochial loyalties. When it comes to pastoral planning, the resistance found due to parishioners' attachments to buildings and the "way we do things here" engenders strong emotional reactions. Things that have nurtured faith in the past are changing. For many, faith and spirituality are deeply embedded in something very intimate, and change in such things as worship sites and pastoral organization brings a sense of deep personal loss, disorientation, and hurt.

In pastoral planning, one of the challenges is moving away from parochialism and toward what is good for all.

The focus on planning considers the best stewardship of human and financial resources for the common good. Shifting the focus from "my parish" to the common good of all the shareholders is the primary concept that shapes the discussion. The movement is from what I want for my comfort and convenience to what is in the best interests of the larger community. More specifically, it is often about how we can be organized to guarantee access to the Eucharist for all.

The planning process is more than just looking at what the "majority" wants. It calls for the wisdom of the whole community. Voices often not heard need to be listened to. Just as in the civic community the government's leaders need to spearhead the possibility of all being involved, so too in the church, the bishops ensure all are invited to be a part of the planning process in some realistic way. The Constitution on the Church calls bishops to be compassionate, to listen to the community whose welfare they promote, and to urge them to collaborate readily with them to achieve harmonious unity (LG, 27). Many bishops have begun highly participative processes respecting the many diverse voices in their dioceses. After listening on all levels and receiving recommendations based on what was heard, they make decisions incorporating the wisdom of the community for the common good.

Pastors are also expected to be listeners to their parishioners and to lead them beyond the self interests of their parishes. Directors of religious education have the potential to influ-

ence how parish pastoral planning is conducted. They can be on steering committees and provide valuable support in theology, liturgy, catechesis, and good organizational skills. They can make the planning process come alive and use their group facilitation skills to be sure all voices are heard and rich prayer and rituals are celebrated. They both understand and share in the need to grieve losses and let go of cherished events and spaces. Catechetical leaders can ensure that significant conversations take place in the process of planning.

St. Thomas Aquinas states that a right relationship to God necessitates a commitment to the common good of one's neighbor. The theological tool for achieving the common good is conversation. John Courtney Murray, SJ, promotes respectful conversation about the beliefs we hold in common across different "life worlds." David Hollenbach, SJ, advocates for a common vision, which can only be achieved through dialogue, to sustain the common good characterized

*St. Thomas Aquinas states that
a right relationship to God necessitates
a commitment to the common good
of one's neighbor.*

by virtues of hospitality and humility rather than suspicion and coercion. Kristin Heyer, professor of Christian ethics at Loyola Marymount, suggests using the lens of the common good, along with conversation, to move from "I want..." to "What would be good for the community to which we belong?" Meaningful conversations, through the lens of the common good, have led to wealthier parishes subsidizing poorer ones so there can be a presence of the church in an otherwise abandoned part of an inner city, an isolated rural area, or in another country where resources are limited. Dialogue, conversation, and participation are at the heart of who we are as shareholders and what the mission is for catechetical leaders. When we engage in these endeavors, we are deeply embedded in the Catholic tradition leading to a deeper communion with God.

By incorporating "best practices" from the social sciences and rigorously integrating theological and catechetical principles as well as spiritual practices cherished in the Catholic Church, the challenges facing the church related to restructuring parishes and effective pastoral planning can be turned into transformative moments for both the hierarchy and the faithful. Through the process of moving from some "endings" to some time in the "wilderness of the desert," new beginnings gradually emerge. Along the journey, catechetical leaders can find many opportunities to contribute to who we are called to be as church in the 21st century in the United States based on their effective faith-filled skills, mission, and ministry. ■

Maureen Gallagher, PhD, is consultant and partner in The Reid Group, which focuses on assisting Catholic communities to transform challenges into opportunities to build a better world. Contact her at mgallagher@thereidgroup.biz.

GAMESTORMING

A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers

By Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, James Macanufo
O'Reilly Media

Reviewed by Daniel Thomas



Here is a book full of creativity in itself that encourages creativity in those who read it. It is a lesson in creating and playing learning/discussion games that encourage their participants to speak to one another about the work situation. These games help everyone to listen to one another's ideas and experiences. How can we go beyond what we are doing now in the fuzzy future that we face in business and in the church? Here is a best practices toolkit for making work fun and people passionate and excited about coming to work (or maybe even coming to parish and diocesan planning meetings). Here are ways to get the creative juices flowing in everyone.

Since we live in a world that is fuzzy in which it is nearly impossible to create exact, clear, and precise plans and goals, we need methods to create "fuzzy goals." The characteristics of fuzzy goals are these: "movement toward them is progressive; they are emotional—passion generates momentum; and they are sensory—tangible artifacts make ideas sharable." These games give leaders methods to bring about change through involvement in the process.

There are games for opening an experience in order to open minds and possibilities, like: Brainwriting, Context Map, History Map, Show Me Your Values, to name a few.

There are games for exploring, looking for patterns, seeing things in new ways, and sifting through and sorting: The 4Cs, The 5 Whys, Five-fingered Consensus, Value Mapping, and others.

Finally there are closing games, moving toward conclusions, decisions, actions, and next steps: \$100 Test; Prune the Future; Start, Stop, Continue; and more.

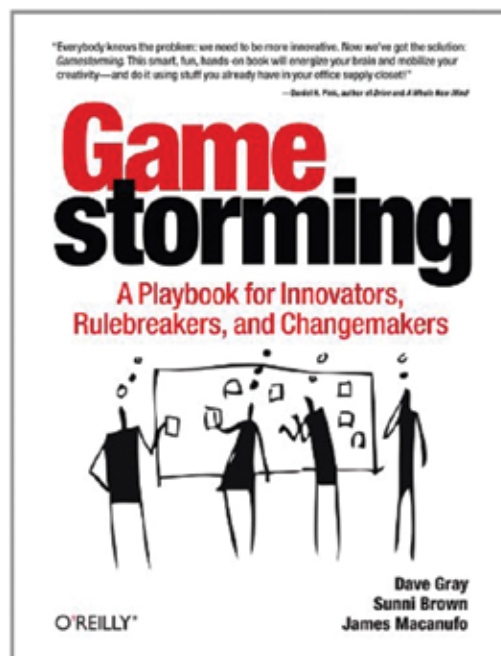
The book gives the Ten Essential Skills for Gamestorming and Core Gamestorming Skills (asking questions, creating artifacts and meaningful space, employing visual language, improvisation, and practice). It gives the reader the object of play, the number of players, its duration, how to play, and strategy for each game.

The very first game in the book is called "The 7Ps Framework." When preparing for a meeting you need these seven Ps: Purpose, Product, People, Process, Pitfalls, Prep, and Practical Concerns (the logistics of the meeting). What a helpful way to look at meetings!

The final chapter tells the story of Toby Daniels of a charity called Betacup as he goes through a workshop using some of the games in the book. It lets the reader experience how games are combined to create a change experience.

Get this book and create ways for your people to talk to one another, organize with one another, and come together in an exciting, enjoyable, and passionate exercise for innovation and change.

P.S.: Take a look at the website, gamestorm.com ■



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

Preparing to Lead: Survival Tips for the New Diocesan Director of Religious Education

Amy S. Daniels

Transitions are familiar to me, a third-generation military brat and a veteran, having moved four times during my seven and a half years of service on active duty with the United States Air Force. During my most recent transition from parish leadership to diocesan leadership, in the midst of goodbyes and words of farewell, someone would say, "Happy for you," pause, then add, "That's a big job!" Others commented, "I wouldn't want that job!"

Like Jeremiah or Jonah, when God sends us, we go with little to no detail about the ministry ahead. It's critical to

remember the One who sends has already prepared us. As I reflect upon my first six months as the Director of the Office of Formation and Discipleship for the Archdiocese of Atlanta, I hope my reflections encourage and assist others who are preparing to assume a diocesan position.

PRAY

God has a purpose for having sent *you* in particular. Your "yes" and your gifts are needed in this place at this time. Invoke the Holy Spirit to enable you to witness the Lord at work—in order to join the Lord in it. *His* will be done.

CALL to CELEBRATE

BAPTISM | RECONCILIATION | EUCHARIST | CONFIRMATION

AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND BILINGUAL

Includes
Revised Order
of Mass

+

for more information or samples, call 1-800-348-2440, ext 2173
or visit www.osvcurriculum.com

Our Sunday Visitor

Curriculum Division

LISTEN

A mode of listening to God in your prayer will serve you well; maintain the same mode, actively listening to the needs of those in the field, those whom your office serves, and with whom your office will collaborate. Listen to the needs of the office staff. Keep in mind they may be grieving the loss of the previous leadership or worried about the future under yours. While such concerns may not be articulated, attentive listening will reveal them. Regardless of the ministry setting—the local parish, diocesan, or the national church—ministry is about relationship. Ever try to have a relationship without listening?

CLARITY

Identify the catechetical needs of the parishes across the diocese. As a diocesan director, the effort to meet your colleagues in ministry personally is paramount to relationship building and to discerning the needs in the field. In addition, making the effort to meet them in the parish or deanery denotes a service-oriented focus. Ask if there are funds to enable you to travel throughout the diocese to make these visits. Or, allocate funds for such for the first year only. If neither is possible, technology provides a plethora of ways to reach out.

TIME

Active listening, keen observations, and discernment all take time. Discuss with your supervisor and peers any time-sensitive needs, and ask for the time required to build relationships, identify needs, prioritize, determine, and apply resources. A clergy friend of mine, having spent several years in a chancery, told me it takes years to find out what your job is really about.

God sends and has already prepared you for the mission. Pray, invoking the Holy Spirit to discern God's will; pray for the grace to listen, for clarity, for time, and for the courage to lead. God provides. ■

Amy S. Daniels has served as the Director of the Office of Formation and Discipleship in the Archdiocese of Atlanta since January, 2011. Prior to serving the archdiocese, she was the Director of Adult Faith Formation and Pastoral Care at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, Cary, in the Diocese of Raleigh. Before her reception into the Catholic Church, Amy served on active duty as a Chaplain in the U.S. Air Force. Contact her at adaniels@archatl.com.



Be My Disciples

Around the world, millions of catechists
are joining you in asking others
to answer Jesus' call:

“Be my disciples!”

How well you extend the invitation
to discipleship will influence the faith journey
of those you teach.



www.BeMyDisciples.com

An Open Letter to Catechists

by Jo Rotunno



Note to Diocesan and Parish Staff: The following letter encourages newer catechists to take active responsibility for their own formation and shows how *Echoes of Faith Plus* can help them become the competent, caring, committed catechists the church needs. If you would like a copy of

this letter formatted as a handout for catechists, e-mail me at jrotunno@rclbenziger.com.

DEAR CATECHIST,

Forty-three years ago this fall, I faced a group of California third graders for the first time as their catechist. I had little preparation and a lot of anxiety, but Fr. Tom had talked me into it! It would be five years before I entered a formal formation program in the Los Angeles archdiocese, but thanks to the dedication of my DRE, I stuck with it and over the years was transformed from a skittish volunteer into a deeply committed catechist.

Eventually, a team of three master catechists, all women, led me across a bridge from the pre-Vatican II church into an embrace of the renewed church that was seeking ways to speak to the modern world. That team formed me in the way they wished me to form others—through reflection on my life and my experience of church, theological and catechetical presentations, faith sharing and discussion, prayer, and always the challenge to make a deeper commitment to my Catholic faith and to the catechetical ministry. Eventually, the young woman who thought it was too much to walk three blocks to the parish on a Saturday morning for a workshop was training catechists herself and traveling across the three counties of the archdiocese, sharing with and listening to its many thousands of catechists. Later still, that travel would extend throughout the United States.

Some years later, I found myself far away in Allen, Texas, working for a catechetical publisher, RCL • Resources for

Christian Living. There, I was asked to serve as the liaison with the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership in the development of a new multimedia resource for catechist formation, *Echoes of Faith*. I was able to take the approaches and insights used in my own formation and bring them to a wider audience. RCL and NCCL gathered a national team of more than sixty experts to create 13 videos and booklets containing the first, most important things you need to know. Today, a Spanish edition has been added, a second DVD edition has been built, and a third edition is in the planning stages.

Your parish catechetical leader wants to launch you on the same journey that mine invited me to take so many years ago. With *Echoes*, she can help you evaluate the current state of your formation and choose some first steps to take in three important categories. The National Directory for Catechesis calls these elements your Being, your Knowing, and your *Savoir-faire*.

*In the end, many of you
still want some help in getting
through next Tuesday's class!
In fact, you'd like to
be a smashing success.
Echoes offers you real classroom
catechists who demonstrate for you
some of their best and most creative ideas.*

Being: Who You Are.

What does it mean to be a catechist? What are the qualities you already have, and which ones will you need to develop? What different roles do catechists play? How do you create the environment for catechesis? Is it just like being a classroom teacher, or is it something more? *Echoes* has answers.

Knowing: What You Need

to Know. In what aspects of the Scriptures and teaching of the church do you need the most help? If you answered, "Every area," you are not alone. *Echoes* will help you prioritize your needs and decide where to begin. None of us will ever know enough. The journey is life-long, but it is an exciting one.

***Savoir-faire.* How to Assist Others.** In the end, many of you still want some help in getting through next Tuesday's class! In fact, you'd like to be a smashing success. *Echoes* offers you real classroom catechists who demonstrate for you some of their best and most creative ideas. You'll see them working in real classrooms with real kids



and then hear them share with you their trade secrets. They want to help you be the best that you can be.

The most common reason that catechists say “no” to their own formation is a lack of time. The current edition, *Echoes of Faith Plus*, addressed that concern by offering you a way to study at home. All four segments of each DVD are also available on a CD-ROM that is included with the participant booklet for each module. If you couple your home study with parish gatherings with your community of catechists and continue to practice your skills in the classroom, I can almost guarantee that you will stay with this ministry and eventually become a mentor and guide for others. You have been called to the

most fulfilling ministry in the church, and I pray each day for you and for the more than 400,000 other catechists who today are assisting in the ministry of catechesis in the United States church.

My very best wishes,

Jo Rotunno ■

Jo Rotunno serves as Publisher at RCL Benziger. She speaks nationally on catechetical topics and has developed catechist resources throughout her 27-year career in Catholic curriculum publishing. You can reach her at jrotunno@rclbenziger.com.

Echoes of Faith[®] Plus

Order Today!



Two Bonus Interviews Included On Each DVD!

- Nationally known theologians and catechetical experts
- Content conveniently divided into topical segments
- Each booklet includes a CD-rom for self-directed study
- A resource for enrichment workshops



Visit EchoesofFaith.com or call RCL Benziger Customer Service at 1.877.275.4725.



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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

On Being

American Public Media
(being.publicradio.org)

On Being, hosted by Krista Tippett, is a “spacious conversation—and an evolving media space—about the big questions at the center of human life, from the boldest new science of the human brain to the most ancient traditions of the human spirit.”

Here is a sampling of programs you can use for adult faith formation.

- The Far Shore of Aging
- In the Room with Walter Bruggemann
- Autism and Humanity
- The Ecstatic Faith of Rumi
- The Inner Landscape of Beauty with John O’Donohue
- Learning, Doing, Being: A New Science of Education
- Evolving Faith
- Spirituality of Parenting with Rabbi Sandy Sasso
- Preserving Words and Worlds (St. John’s University and Abbey)
- Desmond Tutu’s God of Surprises
- Einstein’s God

Church Publishing Incorporated

(churchpublishing.org) has created small group modules on four *On Being* Programs:

- *Einstein’s God: Explore religion’s place in the hallways of science*
- *Living Islam: Dive into the rich tradition and cultural fabric of Islam*
- *Sustainable Faith: Discuss your role as a steward of the planet*
- *Spiritual Heroes: Discover the full spectrum of spiritual leaders*

Edutopia: What Works in Education

The George Lucas Educational Foundation (edutopia.org)

Since 1991, the George Lucas Educational Foundation has been improving the K-12 learning process by advocating for innovative, replicable, and evidence-based strategies that prepare students to thrive.

Edutopia is a place catechetical leaders and catechists can find inspiration and ideas about the best practices in interactive learning environments, classroom tips, practical hands-on advice, articles from practitioners, writings and posts from 20 blog contributors, and a video library. Some topics and resources include:

- Social Emotional Learning
- Teacher Development
- Making Sure They Are Learning (video)
- Anytime, Anywhere: Online Learning Shapes the Future (video)
- Positive Discipline Strategies Yield Quick Results (video)



Education Nation

Milton Chen, a senior fellow and executive director emeritus of the George Lucas Foundation, is author of *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in our Schools*.

In this book “Chen explains how six leading ‘edges’ of innovation are challenging the inadequacies of our current education system amidst today’s technologically sophisticated world.” These edges include:

1. The Thinking Edge: Getting Smarter about Learning
2. The Curriculum Edge: Real Learning and Authentic Assessment
3. The Technology Tools: Putting Modern Tools in Young Hands
4. The Time/Place Edge: Learning Anytime, Anywhere
5. The Co-Teaching Edge: Teachers, Experts, and Parents as Coeducators
6. The Youth Edge: Digital Learners Carrying Change in Their Pockets

During my reading of *Education Nation*, I was continually reflecting on how these “edges” of innovation are also challenging the catechetical ministry. As our children, youth, and adults experience new ways of learning, we

as catechetical leaders are challenged to think and plan innovatively in all aspects of our catechetical ministry.

Education Nation and Edutopia.org are excellent sources of information and research that can assist us in this planning.



The Pillars of Faith
Ave Maria Press

This four-book series, written by Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi, includes:

- *The Faith We Profess: A Catholic Guide to the Apostles Creed*
- *The Sacraments We Celebrate: A Catholic Guide to the Seven Mysteries of Faith*
- *The Commandments We Keep: A Catholic Guide to Living the Moral Life*
- *The Prayers We Offer: A Catholic Guide to Communion with God* (Spring 2012)

I recommend these books for parish catechetical leaders. More and more individuals who are serving as parish directors and coordinators of religious education have not had the opportunity and availability for a formal catechetical and theological education.

Msgr. Vaghi has written a “crash course,” using the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* as the primary sources. He writes in a clear, popular, and easy-to-understand language. Each chapter concludes with three questions for reflection and a prayer, which is selected from a variety of sources.■

Dan Pierson served as director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for 17 years and is the founder of faithAlivebooks.com and eCatechist.com. He is co-author with Susan Stark of What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist (Pflaum Publishing).

BLESSING OF STUDENTS

Eternal God, your wisdom is beyond our understanding.

Yet it is revealed to us in the life and love of Jesus, your Son.

Bless these daughters and sons of yours
who have answered your call to grow in faith.

Enlighten them with your Word and fill them with your Spirit
that they may follow the path that leads to your wisdom.

Open their eyes that they may see your presence each day,
open their ears that they may hear your voice in unexpected places,
open their minds that they may understand
the mystery of your love,
and open their hearts that they may be joyful companions with us
as we continue to grow in likeness to the mind of Christ.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

—DIANA MACALINTAL



SUPER-CHARGE TEEN FAITH!

Faith Fusion brings the Catholic faith to life in words and images that engage young people and inspire them to action. Specifically designed for Confirmation or RCIA, **Faith Fusion** can also be used as an ongoing faith formation program for junior high or early high school students.

Faith Fusion delivers an energetic presentation of the faith through contemporary design, style, and tone of voice intertwined with prayer, reflections, activities, and saintly stories in every lesson.

A comprehensive, age-appropriate review of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, **Faith Fusion** explains the doctrine of our faith in a way that helps young people apply Catholic principles to our culture. They'll be more engaged in the process, more secure in their knowledge, and more prepared to participate in the parish community!

Order your copies today, and super-charge teen faith!

NEW!

**FAITH
FUSION**

Knowing, Loving, and Serving
Christ in the Catholic Church

Ordering Information

Student Text ID# X875
224 pp. \$21.95

Student Text Pkg. of 10
ID# X1074 \$131.95 **SAVE \$80!**

Catechist Guide ID# X936
224 pp. \$24.95

CALL 1-800-348-2440 x 2173

TO ORDER TODAY!

A07BFCL

Our Sunday Visitor

Publishing • Offertory Solutions • Institute • Curriculum
www.osv.com