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CATECHETICAL  
LEADER



# NEW MINISTRY IN A NEW AGE

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Creating New Witnesses for New Evangelization

We Never Did It That Way Before!

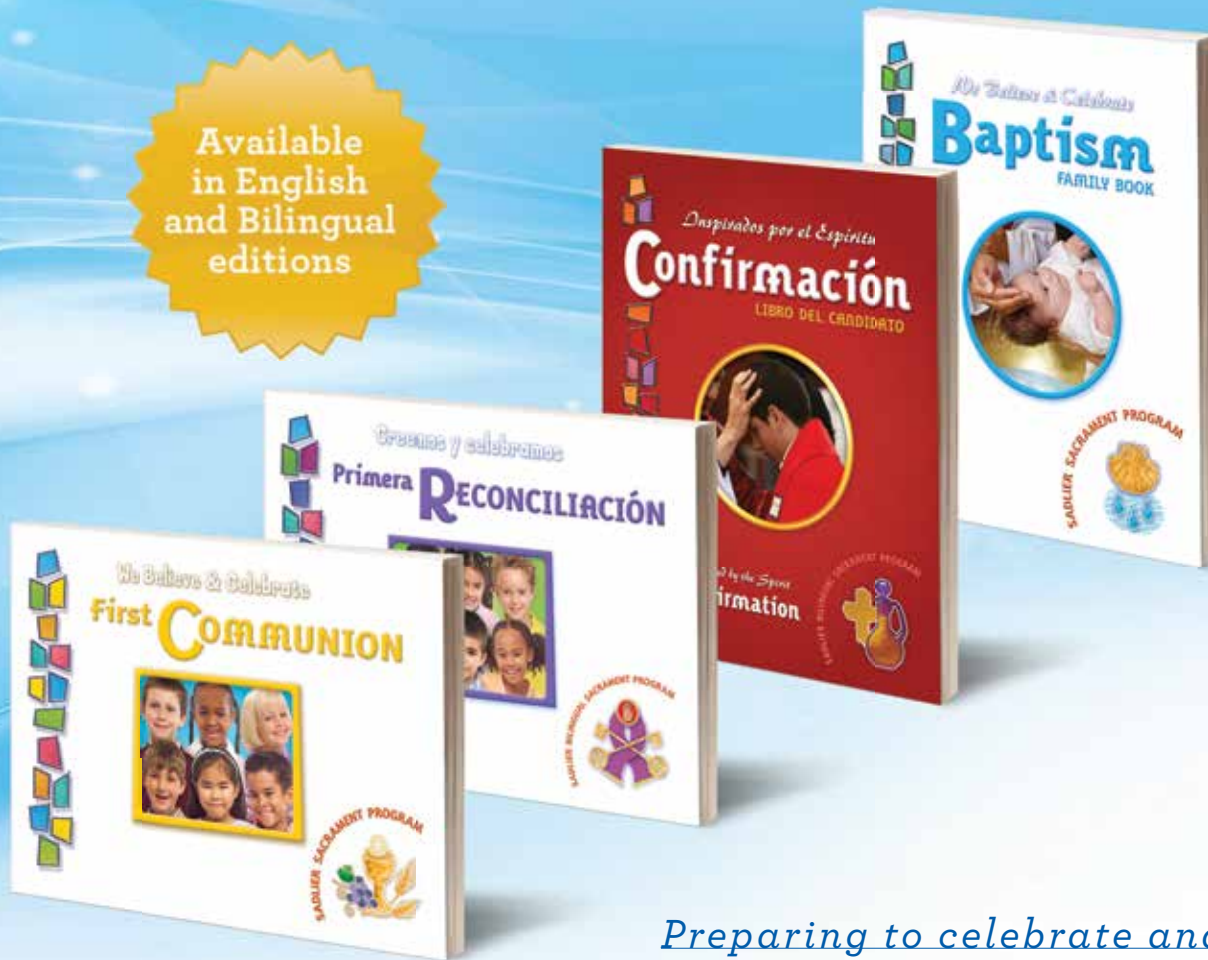
Young Adults, Baptismal Preparation, and the Invitation to Belong

## CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

Faith Formation for the 21st Century

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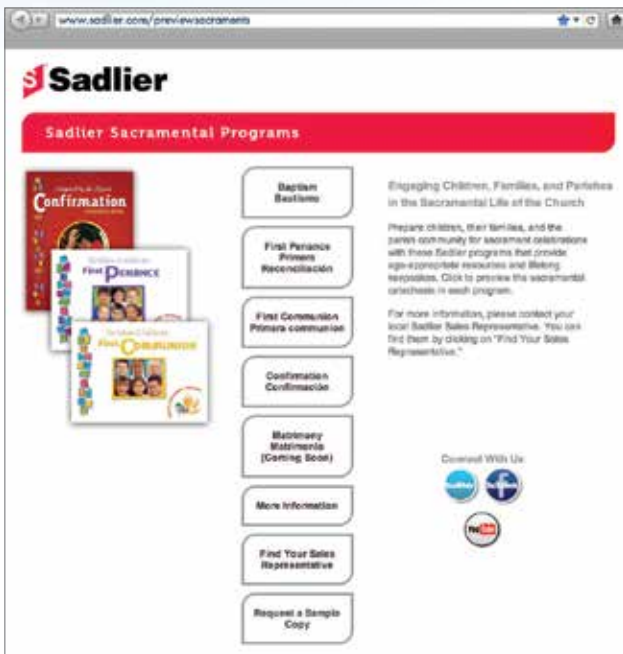
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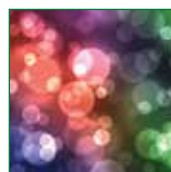
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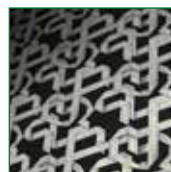
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# CELEBRATE, CELEBRATE: COME TO “YOUR” PARTY!

Bill Miller



## National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



If you were able to join us for the annual conference last May in San Diego, you know that we were blessed, once again, to have a terrific line-up of presenters and events, designed to both educate and motivate leaders in every segment of catechetical ministry. I am taking this opportunity to thank everyone who has ever worked to make the annual conference such a wonderful event, year after year. For almost eight decades now, NCCL (known earlier in history as NCDD) has been a shining star for catechesis nationwide...and even beyond our national borders. The annual conference, which is a centerpiece of our mission as an organization is still known as one of the finest events of its kind anywhere.

One of the things that most excites me about this event is the opportunity to witness representatives from every segment of our membership base, diocesan leaders, parish leaders, publishers, academics, exhibitors, and the national office staff working together to produce this wonderful conference. Of particular note are the Annual Conference Planning Committee members who start to work at least 15-20 months in advance in order to put it all together. This year, because I am a member of the Conference Planning Committee, I am getting a first-hand look (and feel) regarding all of the time, energy, and passion that contribute to making this event a success.

Now is a great time to plan to attend the upcoming conference, which will be held in my fair city of Cleveland, May 19-23, 2013. Once again, we are planning some exciting pre-conference and post-conference events, and will begin the main event with a wonderful celebration of our Sacred Liturgy on the evening of May 19, Pentecost Sunday! Wow!! Not surprisingly, once the members of the 2013 Conference Planning Committee realized the connection to Pentecost, the selection of a theme was relatively easy, and quite exciting! The Holy Spirit definitely inspired us to compose, **“Ignite the Fire of Faith.”** I can feel the energy contained in this theme already! The bright and bold logo for the conference bears the message beautifully.

And there is more exciting news. Have you heard that Cleveland has long since shed the moniker: “The Mistake on the Lake?” Thanks to the spirit and dedication of many devoted residents of our eight county area, Greater Cleveland can now be described as “The Toast of the Coast” (of Lake Erie). From the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to the magnificent Theatre District, from the Science Center to the many fine “downtown” eateries, Cleveland is a great place to visit, especially during the month of May. And don't forget to make time in your schedule to visit our beautiful Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. Perhaps you are a major league baseball fan. If so, you may want to walk a few blocks down the street and see the Detroit Tigers take on the Indians at Progressive Field! Please plan to come and experience the personal warmth and hospitality that makes Cleveland special. You will be among the many to discover what prompted Drew Carey to say, “Cleveland Rocks!”

The planning committee hopes that PCLs from around the country will be better able to attend this year since we have moved the conference further into May, thereby avoiding many of the conflicts that have arisen in the past when First Eucharist celebrations and Mother's Day festivities were happening at the same time.

NCCL members from the Cincinnati Province, which includes the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as well as the Dioceses of Cleveland, Columbus, Steubenville, Toledo, Youngstown, and The Eparchy of Parma are preparing to meet, greet, and treat you to some good old-fashioned Midwestern charm. Come to your very own “party,” as we celebrate the birth of our blessed church and the commission we have received to spread the Good News to every corner of this world. A place is being prepared, just for you.

Certainly, the Spirit of God is all around (and within) us. However, I believe that the presence and the power of God's Holy Spirit is going to be especially palpable during the week of May 19th, in Cleveland. I invite you to answer the call and come to the party, as we continue to explore exciting, effective ways to “Ignite the Fire of Faith!” ■

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# THE SPIRIT OF VATICAN II

Leland Nagel



Any election year is a big year, but this seemed more fraught with contention than most. Even the bishop's document on *Faithful Citizenship* came under attack. The issues were many, and often opposing sides quoted the same church documents to advance their agenda. Letters were written, prayers were

offered, proclamations were announced, vigils were held, all with the intent that "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now we have four years to see what promises will be kept, what threats will be exercised, and what eventualities will be realized. The good news is that God will not abandon us in our struggle. It is our Catholic belief that God is here with us, he loves us, and his grace is continually being outpoured. We feel this love and in turn, we love God and our neighbor.

It's been 50 years since the Council opened. One might think that is enough time to see which constitutions were realized, which decrees were enacted, and which declarations were endorsed. Despite the fact that much was written this year about the spirit of Vatican II, what Pope John XXIII really meant when he called the Council, and what really happened at the Council, the opinions expressed were so different that at times it felt as if I was listening to Fox News and CNBC.

Whenever this happens and I wonder if what is being proposed is in the spirit of Vatican II or not, I pull out these words from John W. O'Malley, a Jesuit historian of the Council, whose thoughts and reflections are the compass I use to judge the worthiness of any new endeavor that purports to be based on the work of the Second Vatican Council. Does the proposed idea, concept, or program move us from an old ideal to a Vatican II standard? O'Malley's list of 18 "from...to..." items becomes my yardstick. Once I make that decision, I can determine the strength of my support to move forward. Here are O'Malley's 18 ideas of how the Second Vatican Council moved us to a new vision of the church:

from commands to invitations, from laws to ideals,  
from definition to mystery, from threats to persuasion,  
from coercion to conscience, from monologue

to dialogue, from ruling to service, from withdrawn to integrated, from vertical to horizontal, from exclusion to inclusion, from hostility to friendship, from rivalry to partnership, from suspicion to trust, from static to ongoing, from passive acceptance to active engagement, from fault finding to appreciation, from prescriptive to principled, from behavior modification to inner appropriation.

We are the catechetical leaders. In our vision, one grounded in a deep and abiding love of Jesus, based on the information in the Catechism, guided by the National Directory for Catechesis, sustained by the sacraments and nurtured by a deep and sustaining prayer life, we move those we encounter:

...from information to knowledge, from memorization to "learning by heart," from doing the right thing out of the fear of going to hell to doing the right thing as outlined in the Ten Commandments, from just going to church on Sunday to full and active participation in the eucharistic liturgy, from graduating from CCD to a commitment to lifelong faith formation, from reading the Bible to studying Scripture, from glorifying our cultural heroes to patterning our lives

after the saints of God and witnesses of our faith, from doing the right thing in order to get into heaven to doing the right thing as a disciple of Christ, from routine prayer to heartfelt conversation and deep contemplation, from being solely concerned about No. 1 to assuming responsibility for the One Faith, the One Church, the One Family of God, from being called a Catholic to living the Catholic way of life, from listening to the Sunday readings and the homily to preparing for the Word of God by engaging in *Lectio Divina*, and from knowledge to wisdom.

The good news is that we don't have to do this alone. God will not abandon us in our ministry. It is our Catholic belief that God is here with us and his grace is continually being outpoured. Look into the hearts and minds of those who accept the call to serve in the esteemed role of catechist. You will see faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love...love of God and love of neighbor. ■

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*It is our Catholic belief  
that God is here with us  
and his grace is continually  
being outpoured.*

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# Creating New Witnesses for New Evangelization

Terrie M. Baldwin



Since Pope Paul VI wrote, “On Evangelization in the Modern World” in 1975, the church has been talking about the importance of sharing the gospel message throughout the world. While Pope Paul VI states in this document “it is important to proclaim the gospel through wordless witness so as to stir

up irresistible questions to those who see how Christians live,” he also states the need for explicit proclamation. “Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified — what Peter called always having ‘your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope you have’ — and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life... This proclamation — kerygma, preaching or catechesis occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization” (22).

In the 1990 encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer*, he raises a need for evangelization in three areas, one of which is the new evangelization, “an intermediate situation particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel. In this case, what is needed is a ‘new evangelization’ or a ‘re-evangelization’” (33). The awareness that the people of God within our churches need evangelization is becoming evident; the faithful themselves seem uncomfortable or unable to witness.

Finally, fast forward to the year 2012, where the *Lineamenta* points to a direct need for the new evangelization for the transmission of faith and asks for “new methods and means for transmitting the Good News to people in our world today with a renewed enthusiasm proper to the saints, who were joyous witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The document states,

A reassessment of our experiences and attitudes concerning evangelization, not simply at the practical level, will lead to an improvement in our practice

and approach to proclamation. On a deeper level, this process will allow us to ascertain the caliber of our faith, to determine our sense of ‘feeling’ and ‘being’ Christians and disciples of Jesus Christ, who are sent forth to proclaim him to the world, and of our being witnesses filled with the Holy Spirit and called to make disciples of all nations (2).

## AUTHENTIC AND ARTICULATED FAITH

When discussing the new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith, the one thing that needs to be developed is each person’s authentic and articulated faithful witness of the presence of God, their relationship with Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in community with one another. The process proposed is a simple method using prayer, sharing from an authentic witness, and scriptural questions allowing the faithful to begin reflecting on their own Trinitarian experience and thereby being so inspired by their own interior joy and self-knowledge are able to share their faith in 30-second, three-minute, and 30-minute stories to all those whom they meet.

Evangelists of many faiths use the “three-minute story” as a model for evangelization to create witness statements from their faithful. Through the process of reflecting on a moment of faith conversion, they are asked to write and/or speak about a three-minute story. I would like to suggest borrowing part of this idea and reflecting on the faith-life of an individual asking questions about their love of God, personal relationship with Jesus, and the effect of the Holy Spirit in the community of their lives. The reflections can be used as inspiration to re-evangelize themselves and engage in the new evangelization of others around them. This Trinitarian method is affirmed in the National Directory for Catechesis in the section on *The Transmission of Revelation*.

From the beginning God has made known the inexhaustible mystery of his love in order to give us a share in his own divine life. In doing so, God summons a response in faith from his people... God reveals himself to us gradually and in stages drawing us ever closer in order to prepare us to welcome the culmination of God’s self-revelation in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. The

pattern of this Revelation unfolds through “deeds and words, which are intrinsically connected...the works performed by God in the history of salvation show forth and bear out the doctrine and realities signified by the words; the words, for their part, proclaim the works, and bring to light the mystery they contain...Through the Holy Spirit, the Risen Christ is alive in those who believe, helping them to understand their experiences in light of faith (NDC, 16).

## A WAY TO BEGIN

The following is the proposal as a way to begin the new evangelization for the transmission of faith within a parish or faith community. It is designed to draw out the ways in which God is made known in each person's life so that each can make a faith-filled response for the mission of the church. This is a brief synopsis of a process which could be adapted for use in as few as two hours, or for as long as a weekend retreat:

Begin with an opening prayer to set a reverent tone for the experience. Second, share from the Gospel of John these three stories demonstrating times when Jesus used approximately each of these time frames to follow his way.

### **30-second encounter by Jesus (Jn 1:35-41):**

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah”.

### **Three-minute encounter by Jesus (Jn 1:43-51):**

The next day, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Phillip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Phillip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Phillip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Phillip said to him, “Come and see.” When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him. “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Phillip called you.” Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are

the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

### **30-minute encounter by Jesus (John 4:1-30):**

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, “Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John” although it was not Jesus himself, but his disciples who baptize, he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him. “How is it that you a Jew ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her. “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir give me this water so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will



worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.” Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him.

Next, explain to the participants that evangelization is a process where God works with you. In these three stories, it is illustrated how sometimes it takes only a few seconds to evangelize, sometimes a few minutes longer, and sometimes even longer. Each person needs to do only the part that they are able. Evangelization is God’s work done in God’s time and may not come to completion in the timeframe one expects.

In each of the stories, it is illustrated that seeds of faith were planted either before the arrival of Jesus as in the story of Andrew and Peter, were sewn as the story unfolded as in the story of Nathanael, or were left to be grown as in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well.

Let the participants know they are co-workers in the work of evangelization with God. Explain how Jesus acted with courage and love in sharing his story. Jesus desired faith for those that he knew well, with people he just met, and in his culture

with people with whom he really should not have been talking. Evangelization is a process to be used in all situations with all people.

The next part of the process would be for a witness to share three positive stories illustrating how this method can easily be used in everyday encounters. The following are examples of three personal stories as examples of experiences that could be shared by a witness:

### **30-second witness story:**

While at a retreat at a hotel, I was carrying a Bible and some materials back to my room. A stranger met me at the elevator and asked what that book was in my hand. I replied, the Bible. As we rode up to our floors, the stranger asked what a bible is, and I replied, “The story of Jesus Christ and salvation.” The stranger thanked me and got off of the elevator.

### **Three-minute witness story:**

At the line in the grocery store, a woman caught a glimpse of the cross on my necklace that was full of rhinestones, but did not have a body on it. She asked me why some crosses had a body on it and mine did not. I explained to her that the crosses with bodies were called crucifixes, but mine was just a cross with rhinestones, and it meant a lot to me. She asked what it meant. I said that it was Eastertime and this is the time we celebrate being resurrected people, which means people who reflect the light of Jesus. I said that the rhinestones reminded me of this and in my words and actions to live like Jesus Christ, for he has





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no feet or hands but ours. She said, “Hmmm,” and away she went with her groceries.

### **30-minute witness story:**

My son surprisingly volunteered our family to have dinner for the foreign exchange teacher who was teaching French at his school. He told me that the man had special dietary requirements so we could either kill a chicken in the garage or prepare fish by a recipe he would give to us. Reluctantly, I said yes and we went with the fish. When the gentleman arrived, we began talking over dinner, and he said that he was grateful that we welcomed him. I said of course, he was welcome. He said that he had a confession: he chose Sam, my son, to host him; the system was “rigged” as to what child got to host the teacher. I asked why and he continued to say that he himself was Muslim and wanted to eat with and get to know a Christian family. (I was so proud that someone saw something that resembled a Christian in my son enough to have asked for us.) Even more is that he asked because he found out that I was working for a church. I asked why this was important to him, and he said that he was a Muslim living in a village that did not allow Christianity and he so often wondered what was so horrible about the Christian religion that it would not be allowed? I said nothing. He asked if he could see a Bible. I brought one to him, and he was fascinated by it, mostly by the New Testament. He read a few of the stories, and I sat for a long time with him explaining some of the basics of the story of Jesus Christ and salvation. I made an offer to him that he could take the Bible with him.

He thanked me and took it. I also offered him my book on Christian Scriptures and Christology as I was taking these courses that semester. He took those as well.

A few weeks later, he asked to meet with me again to return the books, and I met him and he said to me, “I see nothing in these books that would make me understand why we are not permitted to practice Christianity in my village.” I agreed saying, “It is a book filled with love.” He thanked me and returned the books. I told him to keep the Bible and pass it on to those in his village if he would like to do so. He accepted the gift and said he would pass on the story of Christianity.

It is in everyday occurrences that the opportunity exists to evangelize; to share our experiences and stories to people who come into daily contact as they occur. I believe God places people in our paths that have the seeds of faith planted, ready to be sown. It is not “rocket science” to evangelize. It happens first by knowing the scripture and our faith tradition, in order to reflect on one’s own story, in order to be a missionary in one’s own hometown. Everyone is called to the mission of the church, to evangelize, using their own gifts in their own sphere of influence.

### **NAME YOUR EXPERIENCE**

The next step in the process of learning to tell a story is to offer participants an opportunity to get in touch with their own experience through a reflection of their Trinitarian experiences. This can be helped along by asking for responses on paper to the following questions:

- ❖ How has God been known to you? Who first told you about God? Who was a person you can recall in your life who has told you about the presence of God? Name a time when you've seen God's presence in your life.
- ❖ When did Jesus become real to you? Name one experience where you felt Jesus by your side? Describe your best experience of Eucharist. How has your personal relationship with Jesus changed your life? What does it mean to you to be part of the Body of Christ?
- ❖ When have you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit? Describe a time when you felt connected to another person in a spiritual way, when they may not have been in your presence. How have you felt connected to another person or a group of people?

The next step in the process would be upon completion of these questions, the participants would be asked to share one 30-second or three-minute version of a story that they wrote down with those around them in a small group format. Next, as a large group process, ask if one person would like to tell their story to those gathered.

Finally, a few suggestions could be made regarding practicing the experience or story with others after leaving:

- ❖ Practice first with a friend or close relative.
- ❖ Ask to share with someone who has been away from the church for a while.
- ❖ Share the witness on a personal social media site, like Facebook, Twitter, or in video format on YouTube.
- ❖ Pray and wait for an opportunity for God to use you for the work of evangelization.

The *Lineamenta* tells us “a new evangelization means to rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the church's beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out, ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16). This passion will not fail to stir in the church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of ‘specialists’ but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those

who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups” (24).

Here are a few suggestions on how to use the stories and

experiences for a parish community who might use this as a total parish process:

- ❖ Collect the stories and use them as a feature in the Sunday bulletin.
- ❖ Use the stories in a parish newsletter.
- ❖ Create a webpage or YouTube channel where the stories could be accumulated and read or viewed by others.
- ❖ Use the stories on a regular basis on a Facebook or Twitter page.
- ❖ Share the stories in blog format on the front page of the parish website.

Imagine how the stories could be read or seen and how they might inspire others to share their experience also in the context of a parish community. Evangelization, both new and old, is what would happen! Remind the group that together with God, the work of evangelization occurs. St. Augustine was known to have said about evangelizing, “Pray as if God were responsible, and work as if you were.”

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## CATECHETICAL LEADER

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Finally, conclude with a sending forth prayer or commissioning of the participants to go in peace and love to carry out the mission of the church as they share their stories.

### MY EXPERIENCE

Recently, I practiced this method on two large groups of adults and in both, the spirit of the groups were the same. People understood the scriptural basis, enjoyed the real stories of the witness, and enjoyed the quiet, retreat-like time allowed to get in touch with their own personal stories. As they left, many said they felt inspired and comfortable to go out and share their story.

I asked the second group that gathered, how many of them knew of someone who had been away from the church? Every hand in the room went up. I then asked if they would feel comfortable sharing one of their positive experiences of church with one person that they knew was no longer attending. Most responded in the affirmative. Then I asked, “What would it be like if each of you were able to bring one person back to the church?” The man in the front row answered, “It would be like Christmas.” Wouldn’t it be great if every day could be Christmas in our churches? It seems to me that this process could birth something new; it would birth a new process for evangelization and with the addition of a new transmission using the technology of social media, that in finding and sharing our personal stories, that is being witnesses to our faith, it really could be Christmas every day.

In the General Directory for Catechesis it states,

The Apostolic Tradition is perpetuated in the Church by means of the Church herself. The entire church, pastors and faithful, are responsible for its conservation and transmission. The gospel is conserved whole and entire in the Church: the disciples of Jesus Christ contemplate it and meditate upon it unceasingly; they live it out in their everyday lives; they proclaim it in their missionary activity. As the Church lives the gospel, she is continually made fruitful by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit causes her to grow constantly in her understanding of the gospel, prompts her and sustains the task of proclaiming the gospel in every corner of the world (43).

While this one method is not an answer to the whole issue of what is needed for the new evangelization, it seems that this process of connecting people’s lived experiences with an emphasis on a reflection of the Trinitarian God is a start toward creating authentic, credible witnesses for the transmission of the faith. It is a process for the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith; deepening the faith of the faithful and preparing them to do the work of evangelization within the church, and in the wider community. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, it is the hope that by embracing and participating in this preparation process for evangelization, the people of God will share their faith freely and willingly in order to build up the church, which is her mission. ■

*Terrie M. Baldwin is the director of the Office of Evangelization for the Diocese of Cleveland.*

# We Never Did It That Way Before!

Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS



Each December I chair the review committee for the *Catholic Schools of Tomorrow Award for Innovation* (Peter Li, Inc.). We review over 150-plus entries and select 12 Catholic elementary and secondary schools who are leading the way for designing exemplary new learning experiences and excellence in curriculum innovation.

I am deeply impressed with the creativity, breadth, and depth of the digital educational transformation being introduced to foster these new learning environments. Yet, the one area that lags behind in the entries for creative digital innovation is religious education, or catechetical formation. This does not mean there aren't fabulous initiatives underway, but it does indicate that the catechetical process has not caught up with our digital civilization.

Our committee spends days reviewing how new learning environments supported by the Internet, virtual opportunities, and new methodologies are transforming students' ways of thinking, learning, and being! Computer and mobile technology resources as iPods, iPhones, iPads, e-books, and vast, burgeoning assortments of apps are being woven into the general curriculum. Discovery, interactivity, diversity, and collaborative learning are the norms for transforming passive learners into engaged and critically reflective apprentices for life-long learning skills. The number of Catholic schools shifting toward "paperless learning environments" is picking up momentum. Learning spaces are rapidly evolving away from the traditional line up of tables or desks in a classroom and toward collaborative and virtual learning on and off campus. In *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom* Marc Prensky notes,

The distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants is becoming less relevant. Clearly, we need to imagine a new set of distinctions helpful to those who are trying to help create and improve the future. I suggest we think in terms of digital wisdom. The point is that while the need for wise people to discuss, define, compare, and evaluate perspectives isn't changing, the means that they use to do so, and the quality of their efforts, are growing more sophisticated because of digital technology.

## ARE WE READY FOR DIGITAL ERA STUDENTS?

While the plethora of tools — blogs, Wikis, podcasts, social media networking (e.g. Skype, Twitter, Facebook and You-

Tube) — may still be intimidating for some catechists, they are the "must have" consumer items for many who come to us for faith formation. During a recent diocesan religious education conference, a catechetical leader approached me expounding on the reality that her catechetical students are multimedia sponges. They spend significant time with images, video, sound, music, and animation. She wondered if catechists can realistically expect that walking through the doors of our catechetical centers that primarily focus on traditional teaching environments, books, stilted lesson plans, exercises, and techniques could seriously communicate with digital era students. "Can we use 19th or 20th century techniques for a 21st century person?" she queried. I think we know the answer, no! This reality does not mean some elements of traditional teaching cannot be applied, but what exists today are new 21st century learning fluencies that require catechesis to embrace a dramatic new fresh perspective. Yet, catechetical learning environments cannot shift until our catechetical formation programs prepare the ground for 21st century catechists.

Prensky indicates that young people have not just changed incrementally as has happened between generations in the past; a really big discontinuity has taken place. He calls it a "singularity," an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back. This is the rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decade of the 20th century. Research indicates that young people's lifelong immersion into the vast digital milieu has changed how they think and process information, which is fundamentally different than the past. These differences go far deeper than we realize for understanding catechesis in the 21st century.

According to Dr. Bruce Perry of Baylor College, "It is likely that our students' brains have physically changed — and are different from ours — as a result of how they grew up." The brain constantly reorganizes itself throughout our child and adult lives, a phenomenon technically known as neuroplasticity. Brain plasticity, at a neuronal level, is now clear and incontrovertible. I cannot stress enough the point that research indicates that something fundamental has shifted as young people's thinking patterns have changed. I agree with Prensky who believes that the single biggest problem facing education today is that our digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language. I see this every time I am invited to visit a Catholic



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school's religious education, or parish catechetical program classroom observing both the catechists' teaching style and the student's responsive, non-responsive behavior.

### WE ARE IN A NEW REALITY

The expanding 21st century digital fluency research is documenting the escalating characteristics of those who spend extensive quality time navigating the Internet with digital apparatuses. Attention and retention is strengthened because they (digital cyberzens –those spending extensive amount of time in cyberspace) prefer: to receive information really fast; engage with parallel processing and multitasking; be entertained by graphics before text; engage in random access (hypertext); discover learning best when networked; thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards; finally, prefer games to serious work! These digital learners have little patience for lectures, step-by-step logic, and for sure responding to written out tests, or assignments! Folks, whether we agree or disagree, like it or not, this is the new reality! Digital fluency is much more a perspective than simply a technical set of skills. This we need to remember!

Let me take this one step further to clarify the rationale for radically shifting our catechetical instruction for the 21st century. Social psychologists indicate that growing up in a different cultural context does not simply mean one thinks about different things, they actually think differently. The 21st century digital fluency learning environment is affecting and even determining new thought processes. I think we can all agree that changing life patterns does not occur overnight. A key finding of brain plasticity research is that brains do not reorganize casually, easily, or arbitrarily. It requires continuously repeated familiar action in order to produce the desired results. There is one scientific learning program that requires students to spend 100 minutes a day, five days a week, for five–ten weeks to create desire changes, because it takes sharply focused attention to rewire a brain. Imagine the impact on the quality of our spiritual lives, faith formation, and animated

faith (parish) communities if this allotment of time was given to study of the scriptures and growing in intimate relationship with Jesus! As young people spend copious hours each day texting, and on Twitter and Facebook, their brains are being re-wired; they are morphing into a new human consciousness, a new way of thinking, learning, and being. As catechists, we cannot ignore this deeper transforming reality among those we strive to evangelize and catechize. It simply is the reality! We can understand this shift of reality and apply this knowledge to our advantage for communicating faith in a new way. Keep in mind we are living in a new digital culture (Pope John Paul II), or a new digital civilization (Pope Benedict XVI). Either way it involves “a new language, psychology and techniques” (*Aetatis Novae*) that is already imbedded into how 21st century humanity communicates.

### CAN WE BECOME DIGITALLY FLUENT?

What I am sharing here can be very overwhelming for catechists. Many hardly have time to do what they are doing without thinking about a radical comprehensive shift into new methodological directions requiring resources they may or may not have.

Catechists who are truly digitally fluent blend creativity and innovation into lesson plans, assignments, and projects. They understand the role that digital tools and resources can play in creating meaningful faith formation learning experiences that engage the whole student. Here are a few examples of what I have observed in my visitations around the country.

It is amazing how simple or sophisticated the process of digital storytelling can be for communicating faith. I observed an excellent demonstration of this when a young adult group was assigned to design a contemporary interpretation of the Beatitudes using their personal digital tools. The enthusiasm with which the students embraced the exercise, incorporating all the elements of quality digital storytelling along with critical biblical reflection and discernment, stimulated an enlightening faith-filled conversation. Their enthusiasm ran

high as stories, images, music, and sound evolved into an inspiring video composition of Beatitude Living within their community. Both the students and the parish benefited from the experience as their productions were posted on their parish's website accompanied by a parish beatitude blog. The fact that the overall experience stirred the minds and hearts of the parish into a new pastoral plan of action for Beatitude Living demonstrates the effectiveness of the new media approach.

A follow-up conversation with seventh and eighth graders engaged in the parish's Digital Ministry for Faith Formation shared their bi-monthly "Good News" stories located on their parishes YouTube private channel. The students were introduced to a few key themes located in Benedict XVI's *Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. They found inspiration in the Holy Father's words: "Young people need witnesses and teachers who can walk with them, teaching them to love the gospel and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers." Through video biblical skits, musicals, power points and music voice over reflections, a steady stream of hopeful Good News is available manifesting a Catholic YouTube presence. I assure you that these students spent more than one hour in a catechetical classroom to create these productions! They spent hours in their faith work groups each week tweaking, honing, and re-defining their message for excellence and impact. The last I heard they wanted to invite young people from other parishes to explore creating a collaborative Catholic YouTube community presence!

### BREAKING THE BORDERS

The idea of designing borderless catechetical environments sparked the imagination of a catechist when her daughter was serving a year of ministry in the Caribbean. While Skype-ing several times a week with her daughter and listening to her missionary experiences, she decided to pioneer a border-

less faith formation experience with same age children from a Caribbean parish. The youth identified a common faith experience, or question they wanted to explore, or implement in both countries. The two groups met every other week via Skype, sharing the development and alternative approaches for implementing their pastoral initiative. The bridging of their common activity nurtured a deeper appreciation of the universality of the church and the Mystical Body of Christ. In a final Skype session, the students from both sides decided to become e-digital ministry pals for twinning their projects for the coming year.

The progressive application of iPods within another catechetical program is called *Tune in Your iPods: Announcing the Corporal Works of Mercy*. By complimenting background music with brief inspirational real life corporal works of mercy faith stories, students awakened a new faith perspective for their local community. The experience required hours of student's time, but the student's didn't falter. They were enthused, engaged, and celebrated. Weeks later the students continued to remember and recount their faith discoveries while exploring other initiatives that would kindle their faith. Students did not wait for the catechetical leader to call them to action, but collaboratively began to imagine alternative digital expressions (approaches) for incorporating the iPod experience into their faith formation. In one sense the students were becoming engaged in self-directed faith formation for a lifetime!

Online adult faith formation is exploding through webinars, e-courses, and e-seminars. Asynchronous, synchronous, and blended e-learning experiences are offering a cornucopia of life-long faith learning opportunities anytime, anyplace, and anywhere! In addressing the importance of adult faith formation *Our Hearts Were Burning* states, "We are entering a period of new vitality for the church, a period in which adult Catholic laity will play a pivotal leadership role in fulfilling the Christian



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mission of evangelizing and transforming society.” What better way to accelerate adult faith formation learning opportunities to prepare for these roles than to ensure consistent, immediate, and ongoing opportunities that are easily accessible to Catholic adults amidst a diversity of lifestyles, personal and professional commitments. Time, distance, and a limited selection of parish adult faith learning opportunities no longer are barriers when a vast menu of e-courses, e-seminars, and webinars flower across the country. No longer does a diocese or parish need to be strapped with limited adult faith formation opportunities due to restricted funds, or personnel when a collaborative approach of partnerships inter-parish, diocesan, regional, and national offer rich harvests of opportunities.

Our own experience with the *Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation* - vlc.udayton.edu (The University of Dayton) demonstrates that collaborative partnerships do make a difference. With 100 e-courses available, in over 500+ sections in seven cycles per year, the diversity of opportunities enables partner dioceses to implement a variety of models of implementation. Currently VLCFF Diocesan Partners have developed 19 models which enable dioceses to merge individual courses, or ministry certificate programs into diocesan ministry formation plans. Thus, the VLCFF captures OHWB spirit: “Given the broad scope of content, the diverse range of adult interest and responsibilities, and the availability of learning resources, no single approach can meet everyone’s needs. Consequently, a comprehensive, multifaceted, and coordinated approach to adult faith formation is necessary.”

E-learning has already demonstrated that when e-learning communities are formed, stimulating e-conversations blossom, critical reflection expands, comprehensive learning is realized, and one’s spirituality is stirred into flame. When e-courses are grounded in sound Catholic teaching, adapt to particular cultural contexts, consider a diversity of learning styles, and animated by faith filled facilitators, e-adult faith formation is truly transformational! We have yet to fully visualize, or experience what is to be the future of e-adult faith formation in the 21st century.

“The Year of Faith challenges us to discover ways to enliven and energize the church in undertaking a new evangelization, which will lead to a rediscovery of the joy of believing and a rekindling of enthusiasm in communicating the Faith” (*Instrumentum Laboris*—The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, 9).

We are only beginning to perceive the “tip of the iceberg” for the diversity of models and opportunities the digital culture is to offer faith formation. There are portals opening every day demonstrating and directing us toward new possibilities. Already researchers in e-adult learning are piloting new e-learning initiatives that will dramatically make a difference for how we think about learning and motivate a deeper mature adult faith within our parish communities.

What are national catechetical associations, catechetical leaders, and catechists to do in this shifting digital milieu? We need to think outside the box! Time is not so much running short as opportunities are passing us by as we slumber and wait for the “right moment.” The right moment is now, not tomorrow! Tomorrow will dawn a new assortment of digital tools and resources evolving at nanosecond speed. Collaborative pioneering initiatives are critical for designing new catechetical learning experiences and preparing our catechists to be stellar catechists for the 21st century. Our catechetical learning spaces and places need to be rethought in light of the lived reality of a digital civilization. There are more digital opportunities around us than we realize. We cannot be held hostage to only having elaborative bells and whistles of technology. Look around! See what digital tools and resources currently ground your students and families and integrate these into a Pastoral Digital Plan for the New Evangelization and Catechesis. Catechetical leaders and catechists do not need to be gurus in the digital milieu. There is a wealth of digital personnel expertise around you; invite them into your parish’s digital ministries agenda!

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# CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



## FAITH FORMATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

John Roberto



For Catholic parishes, the goal for faith formation is clear and challenging “to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith” (GDC no. 66) and to “put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (GDC no. 80).

The National Directory for Catechesis states it this way: “The object of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ. Catechesis leads people to enter the mystery of Christ, to encounter him, and to discover themselves and the meaning of their lives in him” (NDC 19 B, 55). Catholic parishes want faith formation that helps people grow in their relationship with God throughout their lives; live as disciples of Jesus Christ at home, in the workplace, in the community, and the world; develop an understanding of the Bible and the Catholic tradition; deepen their spiritual life and practices; engage in service and mission; relate the Christian faith to life today; and participate in the life and ministries of

the parish community (see GDC nos. 85-87 and NDC 20, 60-63). Parishes want faith formation that informs, forms, and transforms; and immerses people into the practices and way of life of a tradition-bearing community where they can be transformed spiritually. And parishes want faith formation that engages all ages and generations in a lifelong process of growing, experiencing, celebrating, and living the Christian faith throughout life.

### THE CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

The reality today is that Catholic parishes, like all Christian churches, are finding it more and more difficult to accomplish these goals in the 21st century world. First, the religious landscape has changed dramatically over the past two decades and we see this in our parishes and in our families. Consider the following trends and how they impact your parish and your family or household:



- ❖ A growing *generational* diversity in America and in our church as a result of people living longer. We now have five distinct generational profiles, each with their own religious and spiritual needs, and unique learning preferences and styles: the iGeneration (born since 2000), Millennials (1980-1999), Generation X (1961-1979), Baby Boomers (1946-1960), and Builders (born before 1946).
- ❖ An increasing number of people in America (and many of our family and former church members) who are *no longer affiliated with any religion*. This represents 15% of all Americans and almost 25 percent of those in their 20s.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ An increasing number of people in America who are *spiritual but not religious*—many with a vibrant relationship with God and living a spiritual life, but not engaged in an established church (denomination). This represents almost 20 percent of all those in their 20s and 30s.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ A much greater *acceptance and embrace of diversity* among the younger generations (40s and younger)—ethnic-cultural, religious, sexual—that is transforming American society at large, especially the attitudes of the older generations.
- ❖ A much greater acceptance in America of the *diversity of family structures* today: married couples with children, single parents with children, unmarried couples with children, same-sex couples with children, same-sex couples without children, and unmarried couples without children.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ A *declining participation* in Sunday worship and sacraments/rites of passage (marriage, baptism) among all generations, but especially those who are 40 and younger.
- ❖ A *declining level of family faith practice and socialization at home*—reflecting the increase in parents who are non-affiliated or spiritual but not religious, and the lack of continuous connection to a faith community among young adults, young married couples, and parents with young children.

1 Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008)*, March 2009, Program on Public Values. (Hartford: Trinity College, 2009), [www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS\\_Report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.americanreligionsurvey-aris.org/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf); and Pew Research Center, *Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.* April 27, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1204/religion-changes-affiliations-survey>.

2 Ibid.

3 Pew Research Center. *The Decline of Marriage and the Rise of New Families*. November 18, 2010. p. 40 <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families>.

A second reason it is more difficult to accomplish these goals is that parishes continue to use models of faith formation, such as weekly classes or youth meetings, that were developed for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century world—a world quite different socially, culturally, economically, technologically, and religiously from the one in which we live today. These older models, built on assumptions about the world that are no longer true, struggle to be effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Parishes have tried to “fix” the problems of weekly classes and the older church-based models with new curriculum, new resources, new facilities, new schedules. Yet most parishes are frustrated that no matter what they try, it doesn’t seem to fix the problems of the older models. The world has changed, and we need to begin with life today and develop models, practices, and resources for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### THE GROWTH OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND RESOURCES

According to Lee Rainie and Barry Welman we are in the midst of a “triple revolution”—the rise of social networks, the personalized Internet, and always-available mobile connectivity (see *Networked: The New Social Operating System*). In the past 10 years, we have seen the rise of new information and communication technologies: Google, Facebook, Wikipedia, Google+, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and blogging. People today have immediate access to the growing digital content. Consider that 88 percent of homes have broadband; over 75 percent of people 65 and younger use the Internet (58 percent of those 66-74 use the Internet); over 71 percent of those 49 and younger are involved in a social network (52 percent of those 50-64); over 50 percent of those 18-46 have smartphones (and 35 percent of 47-56 year olds); and 67 million iPads have been sold since 2010 with an additional 120 million tablets projected to be purchased in 2012.<sup>4</sup> The best part of these new technologies is that people already own them—computers, smart phones (iPhone), and tablets (iPads)—and they know how to use them!

Together with the growth of information and communication technologies, we are experiencing the growth of new digital resources that utilize these technologies: online resource centers, online courses, digital books, videos, apps, blogs, wikis, to name a few. Universities, such as MIT and Harvard (edx-online.org), are making all of their courses available online for free; the Khan Academy (khanacademy.org) is providing over 3,000 instructional videos for elementary and high school education for free, Ted (ted.com) is making available the videos of all their world-class presenters for free and developing TedEd (ed.ted.com) as a platform for creating customized lessons around Ted Talks and any video presentation.

There has also been a tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form—the Bible and Bible studies,

4 Pew Internet and American Life. *The Rise of Network Information*. May 31, 2012. <http://pewinternet.org/Presentations/2012/May/The-Rise-of-Networked-Information.aspx>

prayer and spiritual practices, daily devotions, online courses, online marriage preparation, online wedding planning, parenting skills and practices, family/household faith forming activities, to name only a few examples.

We are experiencing a *convergence* of new information and communication technologies with digital resources that are beginning to transform contemporary life and learning, *and* have the potential to transform faith formation. Just as an earlier era adopted the technology of schooling and the printing press to produce instructional educational models using catechisms and textbooks, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has new digital technologies, approaches, and content that can transform faith formation in a parish.

### FAITH FORMATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

It is now possible, like never before, for a parish to provide faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere, 24x7x365. It is now possible to customize and personalize faith formation for all ages around the life tasks and issues, interests, religious and spiritual needs, and busy lives of people. It is now possible to engage people in a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources that incorporate a variety of ways to learn—on your own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the parish, and in the community and world—delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings. It is now possible to connect people to each other whenever and wherever—in physical places and virtual spaces.

***The basic shift means that we have the ability to fashion faith formation around the people; not to get people to “fit” into our programs and activities.***

Imagine the possibilities of the convergence of new technologies and the variety of learning formats with the diversity of religious content and experiences for lifelong faith formation. Today a parish community can . . .

- ❖ Create an online faith formation center (website) where people of all ages and generations can find (and link to) high quality religious content and experiences—worship, prayer, spiritual practices, Bible study, Catholic beliefs and traditions, rituals and milestones, music, and so much more.
- ❖ Offer a wide variety of online Bible and theology courses for individual and small group adult study by selecting the best offerings on iTunes University and from college and seminary continuing education programs, cataloging and linking to them on the church’s faith formation website, connecting adults who want to study a particular course together, and then creating a blog or wiki for people to share their reflections and learning with each other and whole church community.
- ❖ Give parents access to the best knowledge for parenting through their church’s website (print, audio, video) and starting a parenting wiki or blog to share

their experiences and insights—and inviting all parents from the parish (and around the world) to join them.

- ❖ Redesign children’s faith formation so that children are doing projects and activities with their parents online (at a secure site, such as Edmodo, [www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com)), and then refocusing “class time” on presenting projects and demonstrating their learning.
- ❖ Offer “versions” of a confirmation program—with online and face-to-face activities—so that young people (with the help of a guide/mentor) can select the content and activities most appropriate to their religious and spiritual needs.
- ❖ Provide online Bible study to small groups of young adults who can connect virtually through Skype or Google+ each week, and share their written reflections in their Bible study blog.
- ❖ Offer a small group of young people who want to learn more about Catholicism by taking an online college-level theology course.
- ❖ Offer people who love art a way to explore Christian artwork by virtually studying art in the great museums of the world and meeting online and in-person to share their reflections.
- ❖ Offer a six-week program for youth or adults on understanding the history, tradition, and practices of world religions with guest speakers from around the country/world presenting live via Skype, Google+, or YouTube video, and using the Patheos world religions website ([www.patheos.com](http://www.patheos.com)) as a “text” for study.
- ❖ Develop a justice and service center where people of all ages can learn about pressing social issues, explore biblical and church teaching on justice, and find ways to act together through local and global projects and organizations.
- ❖ Develop an online prayer/meditation center where people could access daily prayer experiences (e.g., 3-Minute Retreat from Loyola Press), offer prayer intentions, pray for others, learn about spiritual practices, download prayer activities for the home, and so on.

The amazing thing is that all of these resources and technologies already exist, most are *free*, and almost all children, adolescents, adults (and even mature adults), and parents already have the technology tools to make this possible. This is a revolution in the making.

### DEVELOPING NETWORKS OF FAITH FORMATION

The new “organizing system” for parishes in the 21st century is a *faith formation network*. We live in the age of networks.



We are all part of networks: our families, our schools, our workplaces, our religious congregations, our social circles. Networks—collections of people (and their resources) connected to each other through relationships—aren't new. They're as old as human society. What is new is that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century this understanding of networks has been expanded to include the digital network of the Internet and World Wide Web. (How many of you are on Facebook or use Twitter or participate in an interest-based online social networks or take an online course?) New tools and technologies—video chat and conferencing, blogs, wikis, Facebook, and Twitter—are changing the way we communicate and connect. Religious network provide a rich set of connections each of us can make to people in both our online and offline worlds who can help us with our spiritual development and faith growth pursuits. Today we can turn to people, organizations, and resources anywhere in the world to help us answer questions, connect to relevant content and resources, or just share their own experiences with us.

Instead of being the center of faith formation experiences, programs, classes, and books now become nodes on a much broader faith formation network that is lifelong and lifewide. The shift to networks will be transformative in how we imagine and organize faith formation for all ages and generations. Parishes can create faith formation networks around 1) *ministries and activities* such as Sunday worship, service and mission projects, and programming (children's faith formation, youth ministry, Vacation Bible School); 2) *age groups and generations*: children, adolescents, emerging adults, young adults, midlife adults, Baby Boomers, older adults; and 3) around *families and households* across the life cycle.

Now imagine developing an adult faith formation network around the life issues, transitions, and spiritual and religious needs of adults using the abundance of resources available to you, including online and digital resources, programs, and activities, and programs and activities sponsored by your parish, surrounding community, and local and national organizations. With the great diversity among the ages of adulthood (20s-90s), adult faith formation needs to target a particular life stage or generation, and then provide a wide variety of content, experiences, and faith formation formats for that life stage of generation. An adult faith formation network would engage adults in a wide diversity of programs, activities, and resources that incorporate a variety of ways

to learn—on their own, with a mentor, at home, in small groups, in large groups, in the parish and in the community and world—delivered in physical gathered settings and virtual online settings.

The following example focuses on an adult faith formation network for Baby Boomers (50s-60s) and is designed around several significant life issues and spiritual/religious needs in the lives of Baby Boomer adults: 1) religious enrichment, 2) spiritual enrichment, 3) justice and service engagement, 4) life issues and transitions, and 5) intergenerational relationships and community (see *Baby Boomers and Beyond* by Amy Hanson for a good description of the hungers and needs of Baby Boomers). Imagine the potential for reaching, engaging, and involving Baby Boomers in faith formation tailored to their interests, needs, and life styles.

## 1. Religious Enrichment

- ❖ Online theology courses for individual study using offerings at Catholic colleges and on iTunes
- ❖ Small group theology courses or Bible study using an online course, digital resource, and/or video program as the primary resource delivered to wherever people want to gather
- ❖ Bible and Bible study apps for individual use
- ❖ Trip to the Holy Land organized by the experts at Road Scholar ([www.road scholar.org](http://www.road scholar.org))
- ❖ Book of the month club (or video of the month)
- ❖ Sunday Worship reflection activities: after-Mass reflection, *Lectio Divina* (<http://lectio.americanbible.org>), and at-home activities
- ❖ Discovering faith programs for those who are returning to the Catholic faith (*Discovering Christ from ChristLife*, *Awakening Faith* and *Seeking Christ from Paulist Evangelization Ministries*)

## 2. Spiritual Enrichment

- ❖ Retreat experiences including online retreats (e.g., Creighton University Online Retreat) and programs at retreat centers

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- ❖ Spiritual book of the month club (e.g., Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*)
- ❖ Spiritual practices course such as Mindy Caliguire's *Soul Care* books and videos (on YouTube), or online courses at SpiritualityandPractice.com
- ❖ Spiritual practices series with guest presenters
- ❖ Monastery trip
- ❖ Online daily prayer, devotions, and liturgy of the hours; daily Lectionary readings at USCCB.org; Praying with the Saints app; liturgy of the hours app, and so much more

### 3. Justice and Service Engagement

- ❖ Mission and service opportunities, already organized by justice and service organizations, that provide a range of options for service: local mission projects for a day, short-term mission trips of 2-5 days, weeklong mission trips (US or international), global expedition trips of 10-14 days that provide the opportunity to be immersed in a community and culture, and personalized small group mission trips, organized around the interests and time of the group
- ❖ Links to websites to learn about pressing social issues, explore Biblical and church teaching on justice, and find ways to act together through local and global projects and organizations.
- ❖ Connection to national service opportunities focused on engaging Baby Boomers such as Ignatian Volunteers ([www.ivcusa.org](http://www.ivcusa.org)) and Encore Careers ([www.encore.org](http://www.encore.org))
- ❖ Faith and action programs such as *Just Faith* and *Engaging Spirituality* from Just Faith Ministries
- ❖ Intergenerational service and mission trips that bring mature adults together with teens and young adults

### 4. Life Tasks and Transitions

- ❖ Adult milestones and life transitions (such as retirement, becoming a grandparent): celebrating rituals and blessings at home and parish; a blog for sharing stories and ideas, and online information about adult transitions

- ❖ Life tasks and issues (such as children getting married, grandparenting, retirement, finances in later life, caring for an aging parent, dealing with illness): online programs and resources that address adult life tasks and issues, such as AARP.org; programs sponsored by churches or community organizations on adult life issues

### 5. Intergenerational Relationships and Community

- ❖ Opportunities for Baby Boomers and the younger generations to get to know each other: social events, service projects, or educational experiences
- ❖ Connecting different ages, such as Boomers helping young adults and new parents with money management and household management, or young people helping Boomers navigate the online world
- ❖ Intergenerational learning programs that involve all generations in learning, relationship building, faith sharing, prayer, and celebrating.
- ❖ Mentoring relationships between youth and Baby Boomers, such as prayer partners, learning-to-pray spiritual direction, service involvement, and confirmation mentors
- ❖ Intergenerational service programs

Imagine developing similar networks for every age group in your parish: children, adolescents, emerging adults, young adults, midlife adults, mature adults, older adults; and for families and households across the life cycle. An easy way to develop the online network is to use a website creator like *Weebly.com*. The pre-designed templates make it simple to create a powerful, professional website without technical skills required. Content elements (like text, photos, maps, and videos) are added by dragging and dropping them into place. Text is edited just like in a word processor. Building a website is done in real time, right from within a web browser. Weebly.com is a free service that also includes free website hosting with no ads (a premium upgrade is about \$50 per year).

A great example of an online faith formation network is *Vibrant Faith @ Home* from Vibrant Faith Ministries (<http://vibrantfaithathome.org>)—an interactive resource is designed to give individuals and families across the life cycle access to

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*The primary task of the faith formation curator is not to create more content and programming, but to make sense of all the content that others are creating.*

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easy-to-use tools, tips, faith forming activities, blogs, forums, and advice to build a stronger and deeper faith life. This online network provides activities for caring conversations, reading the Bible, rituals and devotions, serving, praying, and learning the basics of the Christian faith. And it's *free*. Study *Vibrant Faith @ Home* to see how all the elements of an interactive website—content, blogs, feedback for users, etc.—can work together.

## BECOMING CURATORS OF FAITH FORMATION

Fashioning faith formation networks shifts the role of church leaders from *designing* programming and *attracting* people to participate (although programs will be a part of a network) to *curating* religious content, activities, and experiences for all ages. We are all familiar with curating—museum curators collect art and artifacts and identify the most relevant or important to be displayed in an exhibit for the public. Museum curators are subject-matter experts that guide an organization's overall art collection.

*A Faith Formation Curator is someone who continually finds, groups, organizes, and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific subject to address the religious and spiritual needs of a specific group of people.* The primary task of the faith formation curator is not to create more content and programming, but to make sense of all the content that others are creating. Church leaders will still engage in a variety of roles: teaching, helping people reflect theologically on their lives and faith experiences, and guiding them in living as Christian disciples today. As curators, the primary task will be to research, aggregate, evaluate, and deliver religious content and experiences that others are creating (publishers, websites, seminaries and colleges, religious organizations, and so on) and connect people to this content via their online faith formation networks. As religious content and experience curators, faith formation leaders will become less focused on providing “one size fits all” curriculum *for* people, *and* become more focused on addressing people's spiritual and religious growth by offering a wide *variety* of religious content and experiences that they find, group, organize, and share through a faith formation network.

## CONCLUSION

*“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete”* (Richard Buckminster).<sup>5</sup>

We live in a remarkable time for Christian faith formation. We are experiencing a *convergence* of new web and digital technologies that are transforming life and learning *and* the tremendous growth of religious content and experiences in digital form. And the vast majority of these new technologies and digital resources are *free*! We can expand faith formation to reach all ages and generations by wisely using these new free resources and the knowledge and skills of our faith communities. There's never been a better time to be involved in faith formation!

## LEARN MORE ABOUT FAITH FORMATION NETWORKS

- ❖ One of my major projects is developing 21st century faith formation through writing, research, and conducting training programs. I will be posting reports from churches across the U.S. that are creating new models of 21st century faith formation using a network approach on my website: [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com).
- ❖ To learn more about faith formation networks and to download free articles and materials, go to my website: [www.LifelongFaith.com](http://www.LifelongFaith.com). You can download a free copy of “A Lifelong Faith Formation Network” (*Lifelong Faith Journal*, Volume 5.2) which includes principles, practices, and illustrates of a network approach. Go to: [www.lifelongfaith.com/lifelong-faith-journal.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/lifelong-faith-journal.html).
- ❖ To download the PowerPoint of my 2012 NCCL presentation, “Embrace Faith,” which presented the key concepts in this article, go to: [www.lifelongfaith.com/presentations.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/presentations.html). Scroll down to the May 8 presentation.

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*John Roberto of LifelongFaith Associates is the editor of the Lifelong Faith Journal and author of Faith Formation 2020: Designing the Future of Faith Formation. He also works on the Vibrant Faith Ministries team in Minneapolis coordinating the Faith Formation Learning Exchange ([www.FaithFormation-LearningExchange.net](http://www.FaithFormation-LearningExchange.net)). John works as a consultant to churches and national organizations, teaches courses, and conducts workshops in faith formation, and has authored books and program manuals in youth ministry, family ministry, and intergenerational faith formation. John designed and teaches the “Vision and Practice of 21st Century Faith Formation” in locations across the country. For more information go to the Vibrant Faith Ministries website: [vibrantfaith.org/faith-formation-training.html](http://vibrantfaith.org/faith-formation-training.html).*

<sup>5</sup> Accessed at: [http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/165737.Richard\\_Buckminster\\_Fuller](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/165737.Richard_Buckminster_Fuller)

# Young Adults, Baptismal Preparation, and the Invitation to Belong

Catherine Cornue



We have read the statistics. We have heard the stories of parents bewildered by their adult children's lack of connection with the faith community in which they were lovingly raised. As we read in last month's *Catechetical Leader*, John Roberto cited the following:

- ❖ *A declining participation* in Sunday worship and sacraments/rites of passage (marriage, baptism) among all generations, but especially those who are 40 and younger.
- ❖ *A declining level of family faith practice and socialization at home* — reflecting the increase in parents who are non-affiliated, or spiritual, but not religious, and the lack of continuous connection to a faith community among young adults, young married couples, and parents with young children.

Given all of this, how do we change the situation? It's easy to get overwhelmed by the thought given the disparate groups within the young adult population. However, what if we were to focus on expectant and new parents? How might we use this time of life as an opportunity for evangelization — or pre-evangelization?

Pre-evangelization ordinarily builds on basic human needs, such as security, love or acceptance, and shows how those basic human needs include a desire for God and his word (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 49). In that light, one of the biggest challenges then is how to invite young adults to connect with a community where those needs are met. With our very mobile society, it seems to be increasingly rare for young adults to stay in or near the homes and parishes where they were raised. Moving to large cities for jobs, for example, can make the very idea of finding a parish overwhelming and for many, not high on their list of priorities. How might parishes be more proactive in reaching out to this group? They might begin with baptismal preparation.

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*It's easy to get overwhelmed by the thought given the disparate groups within the young adult population. However, what if we were to focus on expectant and new parents?*

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Many parishes have baptism preparation teams, which may include mentor couples or individuals, who meet with the parents to prepare the family for the baby's baptism. These mentors can be an invaluable connection for new families who may have been seeking, even unknowingly, a place to belong. But how do we begin to reach out to these young adults?

The new evangelization states that this is the responsibility of *all* the baptized, not only those who have a specific calling. How can parish leadership offer opportunities and ideas for this to be lived out?

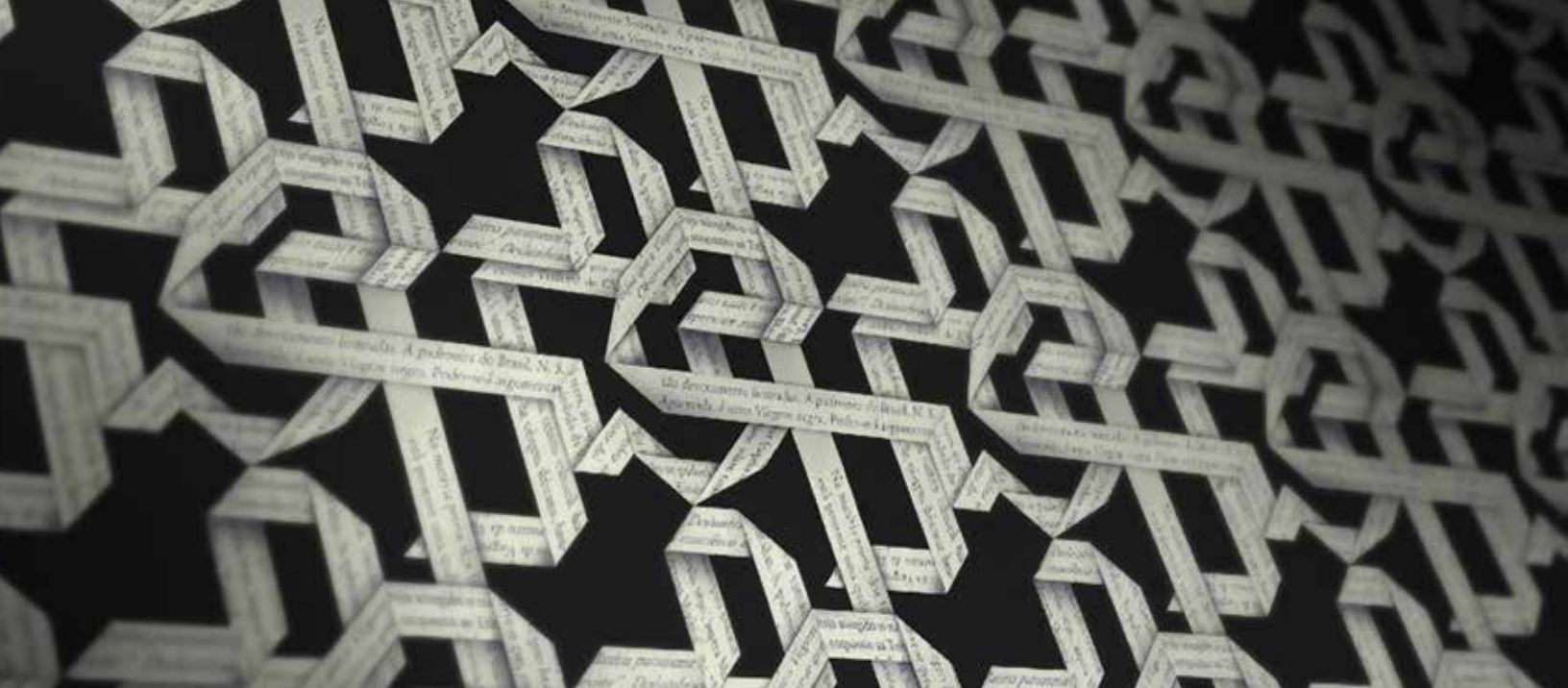
Invite parishioners to let the pastor or baptism team know about families they know, who are expecting, or have new babies. Pray for them by name in the general intercessions. Once the parish has names and contact information, a team member can send a warm, personal note congratulating the families on the impending birth or on the new little person who has been welcomed into the world. Invite them to a gathering with other expectant and new parents, and include details about time and place and the name of a contact person, email address, and phone number.

A few days before the event, if possible, have a team member call the couple/mother and follow up on the invitation. Invite

other parishioners to prepare a light brunch, if on a Sunday morning or a dessert for an evening gathering. Make sure to extend personal invitations to parishioners who have babies or pre-school children too. This can be a wonderful opportunity for the prospective parents to connect, to begin to form friendships, to feel a sense of

belonging.

It can also be a time to offer information about baptism and invite the parents to an upcoming information session. Prepare a gift package with a parenting resource, parish activities and Mass schedules, and future events. Follow up notes, phone calls, or emails are essential! And when the next event is planned, continue to invite the families, even if there is no outward sign of their interest in baptism. When Jesus said,



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“Follow me,” not everyone responded immediately. But, as his words and works were lived out by his disciples, more and more people responded to his invitation.

In too many instances, after the baptism of a baby, the parents are not seen nor heard from again, until, possibly, the child is ready to start faith formation classes. Rather than seeing baptism as something to be “done,” this time becomes an opportunity for ongoing faith formation for the parents.

In one parish, the week after a baby is baptized and the family celebrated during a weekend liturgy, the baptism team places a white rose in a vase near a statue of Mary. A “Congratulations” note is placed in the bulletin and on the website, with the names of the baby and the parents. A parishioner brings the rose to the family, along with a small gift for the baby, after the last liturgy of that weekend.

In another parish, all who have been baptized during the past year, whether babies, children, teens, or adults, are invited to one of the liturgies on the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus. They are given a special blessing and the entire parish family is invited for refreshments after Mass. Children preparing to receive Eucharist that year have made cards and/or gifts, and teens preparing for confirmation “adopt” a family to keep in prayer during the year.

The RCIA documents speak about the post-baptismal time as one in which the neophytes “should experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful. The faithful, in turn, should derive from it a renewal of inspiration and outlook” (RCIA, no. 246).

Although this is speaking about adult neophytes, in some sense this can also be true of the parents of the newly baptized, especially those who have been inactive Catholics. It is essential, therefore, that parishes continue to reach out to these families, offering support and opportunities for sharing with others throughout the pre-school years. Whether in gatherings

at the parish, by mail and email, or through a parenting wiki, blog, or connections on the parish website, we continue to evangelize. When we provide resources to help parents teach their children about God, there is the added gift of nurturing their own relationship with God.

And isn't that what our baptismal journey is all about? |

*Catherine Cornue is the Diocesan Director of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Syracuse, New York.*



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# My Family Isn't Catholic Anymore

Terrie M. Baldwin



At a recent adult faith formation program entitled “Help! My Family Isn’t Catholic Anymore,” I asked a room of faithful Catholics if they knew a family member or friend who is currently away from the church. Nearly every hand was raised. It is unfortunate that so many know this pain. We want to ask, “Whose responsibility is it to aid in the healing?” The answer is, it is everyone’s, and it can occur in many settings.

During a Christmas party, a young man asked his sister, “How can you belong to that church?” The sister, not understanding, said that she loved her parish community and wouldn’t belong anywhere else. The brother, said, “No, I mean the Catholic Church.”

## “THEY THREW ME OUT”

The sister explained how she felt loved and at home in the Catholic Church and would go nowhere else. The brother finally replied, “Well, they threw me out.” Surprised, the sister told him that people do not get thrown out of church, to which he loudly exclaimed that his catechist threw him out of class in fifth grade. He continued to portray his memory of a catechist who could not answer the hard questions he had about their mother’s illness and God’s presence, so she threw him out.

Stepping back, the sister considered her brother and the story she knew all too well. He struggled growing up from age nine to now thirty caring for an ill mother, rather than being cared for by his mother. He had not been to church since he left home at the age of 19 and wanted to be welcomed back, but this barrier of pain and suffering stopped his return. She quickly felt a burning sensation of the love of God in her heart and the love of her brother. She knew that she was the one in front of him being called to be the hands, feet, and now voice of Christ.

She took a deep breath and quietly said to her brother, “On behalf of the Catholic Church, of which I am a member, I am sorry. This should have never happened to you. Please come back. We love you.” The brother’s face softened and they embraced. In this moment, the brother reconciled with his family and with God.

## STORIES REQUIRE HEALING

It is our loved ones who are most in need of evangelization. Some of their painful stories we know, and some we do not, but all suffering requires healing. The ministry of evangeliza-

tion is one of love and courage. We must find love in our hearts to be the voice of healing. We must find courage to speak the words. It is not an easy task, but a necessary one.

As catechetical leaders, God presents opportunities to make families whole and to be reconciled with the church. A few years ago, when I was a catechetical leader in a parish, a woman who had recently returned to her hometown, shared her desire to “straighten out her life” with the church. She had four children: one was fully initiated, the second desired confirmation, the third hoped to be confirmed and celebrate Eucharist, and the fourth, from her most recent marriage, was not yet baptized.

## A FAMILY JOURNEY OF FAITH

I listened intently and then offered her the opportunity to join in our family process for sacramental preparation. The mother and children participated. Through their journey, I discovered the mother had not been confirmed, and I invited her to consider celebrating with the children. The youngest was inspired by the sessions and longed to be baptized. Remarkably, he convinced his father, also not yet baptized, to join the catechumenate process. At the Easter Vigil, the initiation celebrations took place. The mother thanked us for bringing her family together. I will always remember the grandmother’s face beaming with love for her daughter and the family. She cried tears of happiness for her “prodigal daughter,” and a reconciled family.

Catechetical leaders are fortunate to journey with people making God’s presence known through the sacraments, while also being agents for healing and evangelization. We are blessed to know the families’ stories even when they are painful. It is only through God’s grace that we are offered the opportunity to evangelize, to restore, and to heal. We must find courage to be like the sister, the mother, the grandmother, or the catechetical leader who offered a healing presence and an opportunity for God’s work to be done.

## EVERY SUNDAY CAN BE LIKE CHRISTMAS DAY

During a question and answer period at the conclusion of “Help! My Family Isn’t Catholic Anymore,” a gentleman asked, “What would the church look like if each of us brought one person back?” Shrugging my shoulders I replied, “I don’t know.” He exclaimed, “It would be like Christmas Day Mass!” We can empower ourselves and the people we serve to make our churches looked like Christmas every Sunday. ■

*Terrie M. Baldwin is the director of the Office of Evangelization for the Diocese of Cleveland.*

# Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus

by Sherry A. Weddell | Reviewed by Rebecca Barclay



Sherry A. Weddell's main thesis is that one's personal relationship with Christ cannot be assumed, even amongst practicing Catholics. This is why we may have full pews but not the fiery love of God in our hearts. Weddell writes, "The majority of Catholics in the United States are *sacramentalized* but not *evangelized*.

They do not know that an explicit, personal attachment to Christ—personal discipleship—is normative Catholicism" (46).

Weddell asks the question that fuels the rest of the book: how can Catholics reach out to others and share the love of God when many Catholics themselves need to foster their personal relationships with God? Her book examines the cultural climate we find ourselves in right now, and the key moments of conversion provided in our everyday living.

Intentional disciples are those who have "heard the Gospel message and renew[ed] their baptismal promises, [and now]

consciously choose Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, commit[ting] themselves actively in the life of their Church" (66). Weddell continues to describe intentional disciples as those who pray with passion, worship, love the church, want to learn more about the faith, discern vocations, and evangelize (81). She explains, "The presence of a significant number of disciples changes everything: a parish's spiritual tone, energy level" (80).

A large part of Weddell's description of intentional disciples is founded on finding and fostering people's charisms. She writes,

Charisms are supernaturally empowered ways in which God's mercy, love, healing, truth, beauty, and provision will reach others through us...In short, charisms tend to show up at the mysterious intersection where the Church and the world cry out to God in need and a disciple takes up his or her call to follow Jesus (93, 95).

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Again and again Weddell links the personal and individual choice to follow Christ with serving Christ's Body, the church.

At the forefront of the normative Catholicism that Weddell describes is the question, "What is God calling me to do?" This question captures the essence of *intentional disciples*. On one hand, a person does not ask this question unless he believes in a personal God who desires relationship with him. On the other hand, a person also does not ask this question unless he/she is desiring to take up his/her cross, follow Jesus, and serve others by doing what God has called him/her to do.

At this point, the author switches gears and goes from describing intentional disciples to answering her own question of "Now what?...How can we deliberately and effectively help ordinary Catholics in the pew make the journey to intentional discipleship?" (123). Weddell answers this question by briefly examining the five "thresholds of conversion": initial trust, spiritual curiosity, spiritual openness, spiritual seeking, and intentional discipleship. Weddell argues that these are the five stages, or characteristics, to look for in others in order to respond with the gospel message according to their needs. The rest of the book examines each of these stages of conversion. Each stage builds on the previous until intentional discipleship is formed.

The last few chapters equip the reader with questions, conversation starters, and key responses to know and use on the road of forming intentional disciples. Weddell's book begins with a series of problems and observations about the current state of evangelizing others and living out discipleship with Christ in the church. She ends her book with practical steps towards her conclusion of forming intentional disciples. In this way, Weddell succeeds in setting forth a problem found in evangelizing in the modern world and providing the beginning of an answer.

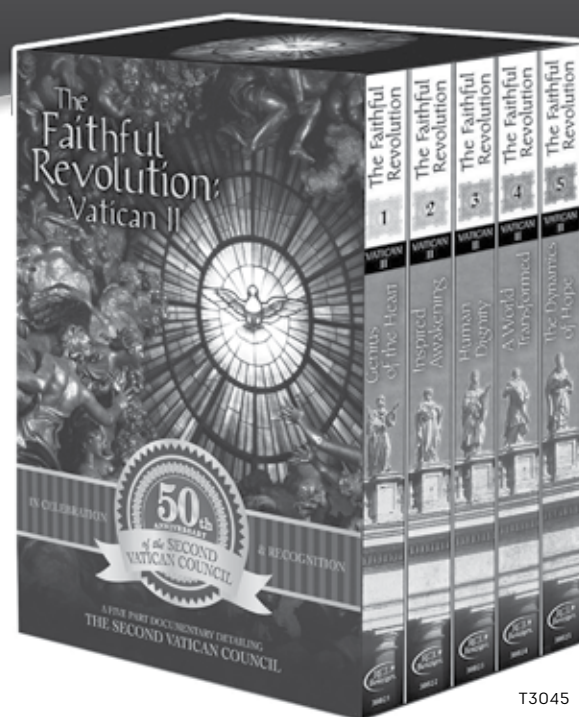
Weddell has an amazing capacity to make the reader ask questions: How must I change in order to become an intentional disciple? How am I living out my baptismal calling? What is God calling me to do or be? How can I share my faith more with those I meet? These questions should not only be at the forefront of those in a position of catechetical leadership, but at the forefront of the hearts of all those who are seeking to know, love, and serve God. |

*Rebecca Barclay graduated from Ave Maria University in 2010 with a degree in Catholic Theology. She spent two years as a Director of Religious Education and now works as the Administrative Assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral in Fargo, ND. She can be contacted at [rsbarclay@gmail.com](mailto:rsbarclay@gmail.com).*

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# What's It All About?

Leisa Anslinger



Remember the song, “What’s it all about, Alfie?” Maybe I am showing my age, but that song always left me a bit melancholy, as I entered into the sentiments of the character in the song for a few moments. Catechetical leaders may be at a “what’s it all about” moment with ministry as we

begin this new year. What might we resolve to do or to consider at this time? Pastoral leaders throughout the world have been focusing particular time and attention recently on the Year of Faith and the new evangelization. As we begin this new year of our Lord, 2013, we continue our exploration of the ways we may engage parents in ongoing conversion in Christ, bringing them to deeper and lasting faith.

## SPARK OF FAITH

What’s it all about? One of the most important realizations I hear parish leaders articulate as they reflect on the call to the new evangelization is that many who are already with us need to be drawn more deeply to Christ. They may physically be in our pews on Sunday, their children may be in our parish programs or school, and they may even be occasionally involved in some organization or ministry, yet when we talk with them, we realize they need to have the spark of faith re-ignited. (Or perhaps ignited for the first time!)

Interacting with parents with this understanding, and seeing our ministry to and with them as a means for evangelizing them and their families, provides us with clearer focus. This may even help some of us find the strength to try new strategies or alter existing programs in order to more effectively reach the parents we encounter.

## SPIRITUAL NEEDS

What’s it all about? When we read and learn from the many studies about religious belief and practice in the United States, there are several common themes to which we should attend. Among those who leave active practice, or become “unaffiliated” with Christian churches, especially Catholicism, are people who say they no longer believe what we teach, that they find those who go to church to be hypocritical, judgmental, and too focused on power and money.

Among those who move from one denomination to another, a large majority of them say they did not feel their spiritual needs were being met in the church of their childhood.<sup>1</sup> As we consider these perceptions among those who leave, we gain insight that may help us reach those who are still with us, as well as draw some back who have left, keeping in mind that the overarching goal of our ministry is to evangelize, to draw people to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Within many of the studies is evidence that shows the importance of the community in walking the faith journey with one another. This is especially true as we help to form youth who need strong faith lived at home and the presence of caring adults who walk alongside the teen and his or her parents.<sup>2</sup> The research on engagement also points to the importance of people believing that their spiritual leaders care about them as a person.

In other words, people wonder, “Does the community and its leaders value me and care about me? Is the community committed to me and my family and our spiritual growth?”

So where does this lead us as catechetical leaders who are committed to evangelize and

engage parents and all in our communities? What *is* it all about, catechetical leader?

## RENEWED FAITH

Let us resolve to make 2013 a year of renewed faith for everyone, knowing that this will require us to think deeply about the people we serve, to listen to them, and to reconsider our practices in light of the call to reach those who are not already clearly on the journey of faith. In speaking with many catechetical leaders about the new evangelization, it is clear that we are in a time of challenge and opportunity.

The challenge is to find ways to go out to those we hope to evangelize, rather than hoping they will come to us, and in that, there is opportunity as well! Evangelization, drawing people to Christ, in new and personal ways, through a strong community of faith, now in this Year of Faith and for eternity: that’s what it’s all about, catechetical leader. ■

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*One of the most important realizations I hear...is that many who are already with us need to be drawn more deeply to Christ.*

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1 Pew Forum Religious Landscapes Study, found here: <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.

2 See Christian Smith with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition*, and Albert Winseman, *Growing an Engaged Church*.

# Why Collaboration is Essential to Being an Agent of the New Evangelization

Wendy Scherbart



Pope Benedict XVI has launched a Year of Faith to “help the faithful develop the gift of the faith received from the Lord, to live it and transmit it to others.” The primary place for the transmission of faith has been identified in the family. The Bishops recognized that other bodies within the church have to support the family in its evangelization.

In order to support the family in its evangelization, diocesan departments must collaborate and embrace a common vision; this Year of Faith is an opportunity for diocesan directors and staff to model this for parish and school staff.

Here are four examples of how collaboration can promote evangelizing parishes:

## COLLABORATION WITH PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS

Last year I led our diocesan catechetical advisory board in a consultation with the parish catechetical directors and coordinators to identify three goals based upon the challenges and joys they expressed in their ministry. They chose: Strong Catholic Families, Evangelizing Catechesis of Culture, and Cultures and Catechist Formation. A grant was written and strategies for training, best practices and resources were designed after consulting the parish catechetical leaders. We will implement the strategies in a coordinated effort with the diocesan pastoral ministry departments.

## COLLABORATION WITH THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

In August, the director of youth and young adult ministry, John Rinaldo, and I were invited to lead a parish staff day on youth ministry in the context of total parish ministry. We structured the day as a conversation connected to the parish mission statement and invited the staff to reflect on their ministry’s purpose and hope for young people and families. Citing data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, the guiding principle of the conversation was “The *single most important influence* on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.” John and I highlighted three best practices to grow youth and family ministry. We connected our best practices to the strategies generated by the diocesan council of priests’ subcommittee on youth ministry. In small groups, the staff reflected on the strategies and brainstormed new ideas. In a large group, they shared their best ideas and prioritized the top three to be implemented within their parish. The results were interesting; the staff began the day

focused on youth ministry and ended focusing on becoming an evangelizing parish. They chose to use sacramental preparation as an opportunity for evangelization of families, provide mini-retreats for adults, and enhance their liturgy to make it engaging for youth, realizing the best way to enhance youth ministry was to become a more vibrant parish that understands its role as an evangelizing community.

## COLLABORATION WITH THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP

Diana Macalintal, the director of worship, and I collaborate on catechist and catechumenate formation. We both are members of the diocesan catechumenate committee and provide formation workshops with the committee for team members. Diana recently taught the basic catechist formation session on liturgy. I have learned from her the importance of mystagogical reflection in helping people uncover the presence of God in their lives. Diana highlighted in her teaching that “we can’t know what liturgy/Eucharist means unless we participate in it and live it.” Diana’s conviction about the use of mystagogical reflection in catechesis to unleash the power of liturgy has had a profound effect. Our collaboration to provide formation for catechists has helped me understand how to do evangelizing catechesis through the lens of mystagogical reflection and lead others to do the same.

## COLLABORATION WITH DIOCESAN DIRECTORS OF CATECHETICAL MINISTRY

The animators of the Diocesan Directors Forum have chosen the topic of how diocesan departments can foster collaboration among parish staff and ministries to become an evangelizing parish at our next forum at NCCL. We look forward to the conversation this forum will produce. I recommend the following articles published by Boston College C21. <http://issuu.com/church21/docs/spring-2010>

Evangelization is the foundation of every ministry. It is the common mission that binds our ministries together. As diocesan directors, let us respond to Jesus’ directive to “go therefore and make disciples” in collaboration with our colleagues. It will make all the difference! ■

*Wendy Scherbart is the Director for Catechetical Ministry at the Office for Parish Services in the Diocese of San Jose and is responsible for the formation of the parish catechetical leaders. She has 29 years of experience as a catechetical leader. She is a certified master catechist and holds an MA in Catechetics and an MA in Education Administration from Santa Clara University.*

# What does a cardinal tweet?

Claire M. McManus



Bishop Fulton Sheen once said, “Jesus’ first word was ‘come.’ His last was ‘go.’” That statement is a good starting point for a discussion on the value of social media. It’s also a quote I found on Fulton Sheen’s Twitter account. (Yes, he has long passed, but he has a fan club that tweets for him.) Bishop Sheen was reminding us that the call to follow Christ comes with an equally compelling mandate to spread the Good News in our present age with our modern tools. It is fitting then that the theme for the 2013 World Communications Day is: Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization. The theme is both an endorsement and a reflection on the role of social media. Does it lead men and women to Christ? We can only find out if we immerse ourselves into its space. Perhaps we should make an attempt this year to explore the many forms of social media at our disposal and test their evangelizing potential.

Twitter is one of these areas of social media that has caught on very quickly, but may not be utilized to its full potential at the parish or diocesan level. Twitter was developed as a means to send short messages in real time. It definitely is an acquired taste with its little tidbits of information and random thoughts, but since its inception in 2006, it has become a global phenomenon. Twitter can be an extremely valuable means for sparking interest in a cause or raising the public’s awareness of an issue. Granted, Twitter is rife with the vacuous and banal tweets of celebrities, but you don’t need to follow them. For catechizers and evangelizers, Twitter can be a sounding board, a pulpit, and a resource wrapped into one neat, web-based format.

Twitter usage among adults has almost quadrupled in the past few years, largely because of the increasing popularity of smartphones. The adults who make the most use of this social media are between the ages of 18 and 29. This is good news for those of us concerned with reaching out from inside the church to the young adults who no longer come within.

The church’s hierarchy is slowly recognizing that Twitter can offer direct access to Christ’s scattered flock. Most of the tweets from our church leaders are pretty mundane reports on where they have been spending their time around their respective dioceses. Good start, but they haven’t even begun to tap Twitter’s potential.

Some of our cardinals have seized the medium and have taken their message to the TweetDeck. When cardinals “tweet,”

what do they say? This isn’t the musing of an ornithologist, but a serious question about how the church intends to use Twitter in her effort to evangelize. In the Archdiocese of Boston, for example, Cardinal Séan O’Malley uses his Twitter account sparingly, but during this past election season he tweeted every day for a month in order to inform his followers about the physician assisted suicide question that was on the Massachusetts ballot. Twitter allowed the cardinal to present the church’s teaching on end of life issues directly to the people without the filter of the various media outlets. Cardinal Timothy Dolan from the Archdiocese of New York is a very active tweeter. He uses Twitter to promote his blog, to report on his various activities, but mostly to evangelize. Cardinal Dolan’s tweets engage us in conversation with Augustine or Chesterton, or offer reflections on how to increase vocations: “How best do we increase vocations? You can begin by being happy! Be joyful!” If we are feeling too self-important, his tweets can bring us back to reality: “When we fret and worry that all depends on us, remember: Cemeteries are filled with folks who thought the world couldn’t go on without us.” This is great use of just 140 characters.

Even if you have no desire to be an active tweeter, Twitter can still be a tremendous resource for news and information that can be woven into your catechetical content. This is where your role as “curator” of information comes in. There are many thousands of people, bloggers, and organizations that are using Twitter to promote their views, so be prepared to spend some time browsing before deciding whom to follow. Start with a trusted source, such as a diocese, bishop, cardinal, or the USCCB. Once you begin to follow, you will see who is also following. This is when you start branching out and finding sources that you may never have known existed. Your next step will be to send out your own tweet. Twitter can be used to get the word out about an event happening in your parish or diocese, or you can simply re-tweet (RT) something that you found helpful or enlightening.

Time will tell if Twitter becomes a great tool for evangelization, or if it will give way to yet another form of social media not yet invented. While it is still available to us, we must grab hold of its potential and unleash Christ’s powerful message into the world, with only 140 characters, please. ■

*Claire M. McManus, STL, is the Director of Faith Formation for the diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts.*

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

Here are four resources to assist your catechetical ministry.

**Vibrant Faith @ Home** supports families who are intentional about their faith. Go to [vibrantfaithathome.org](http://vibrantfaithathome.org).

We seek to equip and empower households to:

- ❖ TALK with each other about their faith
- ❖ PRAY together in ways that are comfortable and comforting
- ❖ RITUALIZE their important moments
- ❖ REACH OUT in service and support of others.

The resources on Vibrant Faith @ Home are free to registered users. More than 60 faith activities are published each season – spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Additional features of the site include:

- ❖ Advice and support for parents, grandparents, families, young adults
- ❖ How-to videos for sharing faith @ home
- ❖ Bible basics, prayer basics, faith basics
- ❖ Special activities just for kids — lots of them!
- ❖ Opportunities to share about your faith-forming experiences @ home
- ❖ Creative tools to customize and personalize your use of VF@Home

Leif Kehrwald is team leader and general editor for Vibrant Faith @ Home.

**The Center for Ministry Development** is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 as a response to the need in the Catholic community for training, resources, and consultation for pastoral ministry and catechesis with youth, young adults, families, as well as the inter-generational community.

Through its partnership with ministry leaders, CMD strives for excellence

and innovation by providing practical, field-tested ministry solutions and resources such as Youth Ministry Access, Fashioning Faith, Young Neighbors in Action, and Just5Days. Rooted in Catholic vision, the Center for Ministry Development inspires and equips leaders to ensure a future of exemplary ministry.

Tom East serves as director of the Center for Ministry Development ([cmdnet.org/](http://cmdnet.org/)).

**Kathy Hendricks — “The Blogger”**

I write the blog, *We Believe and Share*, for Sadlier Publishing. It is addressed to anyone interested in faith formation and spirituality. Each one includes a downloadable resource.

In addition to the blog, I continue to speak around the country for diocesan and national conferences, and am serving as an editorial consultant with 23rd Publications. Each opportunity to collaborate with creative people is a true joy.

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**Team RCIA**

TeamRCIA.com is a free online resource for Catholic parishes that want to form Christians for life.

- ❖ We provide accessible and relevant resources through articles and conversations initiated by five national leaders in the United States church, who have been serving in RCIA ministry for more than two decades.
- ❖ We offer a variety of online training for church ministers and volunteers, through webinars, e-mail courses, downloads, and discussion forums.

❖ We make the best printed resources available to RCIA ministers that helps ministers serve the mission of the church.

To read ten free articles on building and sustaining an RCIA team, go to [teamrcia.com/rcia-teams](http://teamrcia.com/rcia-teams). Nick Wagner is founder of [TeamRCIA.com](http://TeamRCIA.com).

**Additional Links**

- ❖ Catechesis 2.0 - <http://catechesis20.wordpress.com/>
- ❖ The Story and You - <http://www.thestoryandyou.com/>
- ❖ Thinking Faith - <http://www.thinkingfaith.org/>
- ❖ Catholic Web Solutions - <http://www.catholicwebsolutions.com/>
- ❖ Janet Schaeffler, OP – Faith Formation Matters - <http://www.janetschaeffler.com/>
- ❖ The Englewood Review of Books - <http://weblog.inglewoodcc.com/?p=203>
- ❖ Read the Spirit – All About Spiritual Connection - <http://www.readthespirit.com/>
- ❖ Daily Meditations from Richard Rohr, OFM - <http://www.cac.org/richard-rohr>
- ❖ Catholic Family Faith - <http://www.catholicfamilyfaith.com/>
- ❖ Strong Catholic Families – Strong Catholic Youth - <http://www.nfcym.org/programs/training/strongfamilies.htm> ||

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

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