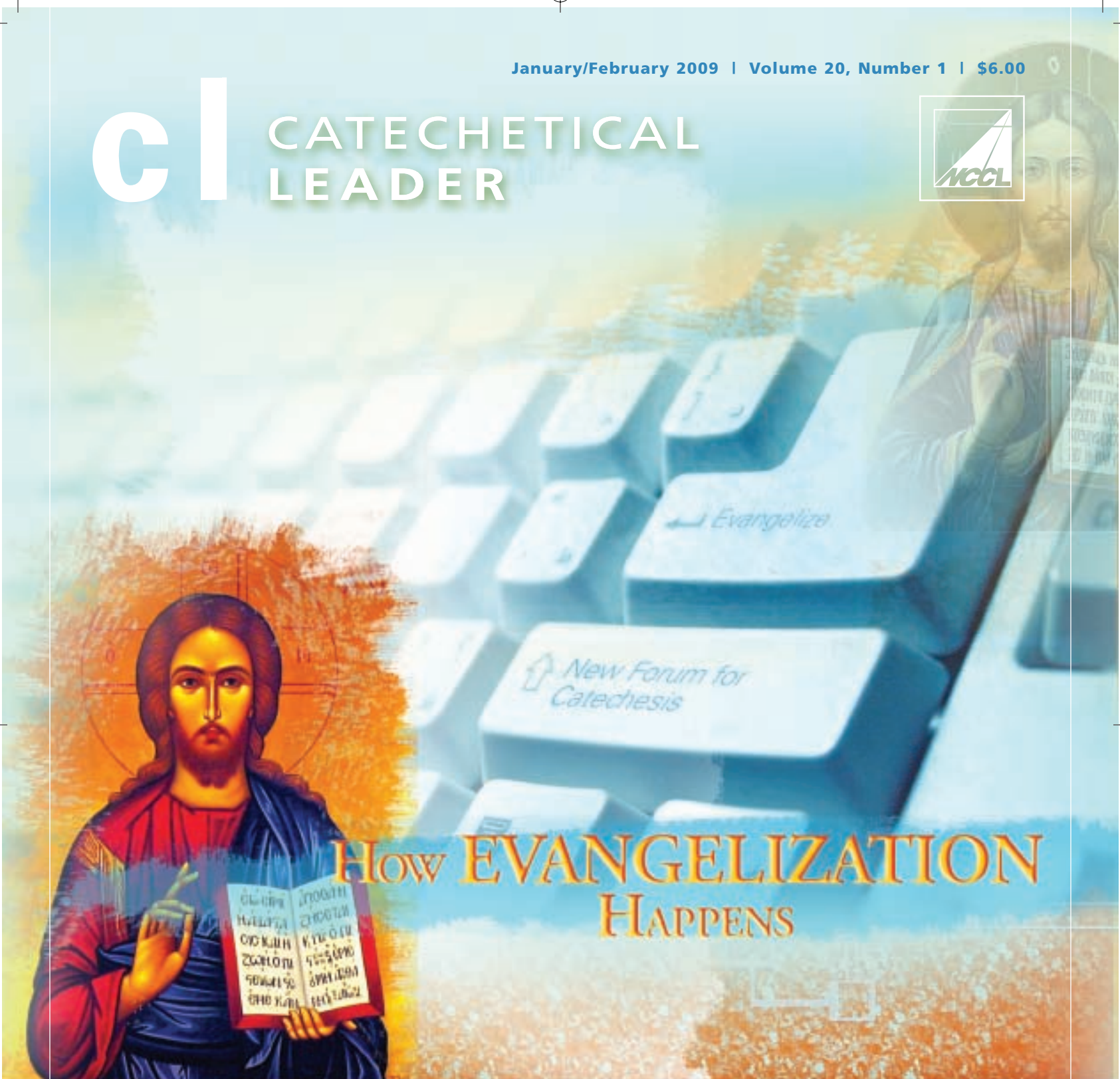


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cl CATECHETICAL LEADER



HOW EVANGELIZATION HAPPENS

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IN THIS ISSUE:
*The New Evangelization
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CATECHETICAL LEADER Table of Contents

January/February 2009

IN EVERY ISSUE

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------------|
| 2 | From the President
Let Our Own Light Shine | Mary Ann Ronan |
| 3 | From the Executive Director
From Welcoming to Homecoming | Leland Nagel |
| 11 | Books in the News
<i>The Way of Faith: A Field Guide for the RCIA Process</i> | Reviewed by
Kathy Kleinlein |
| 12 | Echoes of Faith
Echoes of Faith Plus and Adult Faith Formation | Jo Rotunno |
| 16 | Adult Faith Formation
Enthusiasm, Invitation, and Witness | Rose L. Bennett |
| 18 | Diocesan Directors' Forum
How Evangelization Works in a Parish | Bryan Reising |
| 19 | Notable Resources | Dan Pierson |
| 20 | Crossword
Internet Evangelization | Megan Anechiarico |



Catechesis and Evangelization: It's All One
page 4



Preach Always — and Sometimes Use the Internet
page U1



The New Evangelization: Mind the Gap
page 6

FEATURES

How Evangelization Happens

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------|
| 4 | Catechesis and Evangelization: It's All One | Susan Wolf, SND |
| 6 | The New Evangelization: Mind the Gap | J. Brian Bransfield |

CATECHETICAL UPDATE

The Internet: A New Forum for Catechetical Leaders

- | | | |
|----|---|------------------------|
| U1 | Preach Always — and Sometimes Use the Internet | Greg Friedman, OFM |
| U5 | InternetWeb 2.0: A New Forum for Catechetical Leaders | Caroline Cerveney, SSJ |

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FROM THE PRESIDENT ■

LET OUR OWN LIGHT SHINE

Mary Ann Ronan



We all know the adversity Nelson Mandela lived through, but he was given the gift of hope to allow his experiences to shape who he would be for the world when he was given physical freedom. He said this in his inauguration speech:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, “Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?” Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory that is within us. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone, and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

In the midst of an economic downturn we laid out a huge agenda for these next few months.

His words support an overwhelming sense I had at the last Representative Council Meeting of the gift that NCCL is to the church. We laid out a huge agenda for these next few months. We set this agenda in the midst of an economic downturn that will effect parishes and dioceses, our own bottom line, and a small staff.

I believe we challenged ourselves based on our ends policies, strategic directions and values: We set in motion a reconstituted and energized Development Committee. We brainstormed pro-

jected products for the Publication Committee, with members offering their own products to NCCL. Forums entered into dialogue with each other to assist *all* members of the forums. We established a Theoretical Foundations Task Force to actively reconstitute this committee to keep alive catechesis and its story and its impact today on our ministry. We challenged each other as members to get involved in the committees of NCCL and reach out to our own constituencies to get them involved.

Charleen Katra, chair of the Development Committee, led us in a powerful exercise in which we named what we are grateful for in NCCL; what we most appreciated about our membership in NCCL; the membership benefits that would serve our constituencies in deepening/strengthening/enhancing our belonging to NCCL; and what in the mission and values gives us energy and hope for the future of catechesis. We named what contribution we would make to assist NCCL in its mission and ministry of catechesis and what would be our dream that NCCL could do consistently and superbly well to enhance catechesis and evangelization. Mr. Bill Bannon of Bannon Associates, Inc., assisted in the formulation of this process. The committee will be keeping all the members updated on a regular basis. We were reminded that stewardship is rooted in gratitude and even the smallest offering of our treasure makes a difference to NCCL.

Underlying the whole meeting was prayer for wisdom. The Leadership Discernment Committee — Karen Pesek, Rebecca Titford, Michael Wagner and April Dietrich — shaped our reflection and prayer and we unanimously affirmed Dr. Lorraine S. De Luca and Dr. Anne Roat as the two presidential candidates. The committee came back to us several times as the discernment of the slates continued through prayer and dialogue.

I am most grateful for the insights and grace your Representative Council brought to this meeting. They brought an energy and light to each deliberation. They grasp the purpose of NCCL and want each and every member to catch their fire to make NCCL a preeminent catechetical voice in our country. It is a privilege to chair such a council. ■

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ■

FROM WELCOMING TO HOMECOMING

Leland Nagel



At many parishes, parishioners sing “All Are Welcome” with great vigor and enthusiasm. While the statement may not be accurate, it is our vision, our goal, our mission. And just because its not entirely true doesn’t mean we are being hypocritical, nor does it mean that we should stop singing the song. In fact, it might mean we should sing it even louder and

with more gusto so as to believe it in every bone in our body. There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind that we want every single person (Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man) to be part of the body of Christ. This singing is part of evangelization — evangelization of our own minds and hearts and wills to accomplish God’s desire.

Henri Nouwen understood this well when he wrote these words:

Can we only speak when we are fully living what we are saying? If all our words had to cover all our actions, we would be doomed to permanent silence! Sometimes we are called to proclaim God’s love even when we are not yet fully able to live it. Does that mean we are hypocrites? Only when our own words no longer call us to conversion. Nobody completely lives up to his or her own ideals and visions. But by proclaiming our ideals and visions with great conviction and great humility, we may gradually grow into the truth we speak. As long as we know that our lives always will speak louder than our words, we can trust that our words will remain humble.

*We are a universal church and not
everyone prays in English.*

My own words of welcome and my understanding of baptism were challenged at the National Symposium on Adolescent Catechesis. The issue of welcoming Hispanics to our parishes was being discussed when someone said, “It’s not about welcoming, it’s about homecoming.” I came face to face with the truth I preach and I came up a little short.

I have professed that when we are baptized, when the priest or deacon

proclaims, “Now you belong to God. Now you are part of God’s holy family,” that water is thicker than blood. In other words, once baptized, we are all part of the same family. Whether you were baptized in Puerto Rico or Mexico, in Asia or Africa, you’re coming home when you come to celebrate the Eucharist. Who am I to welcome you to God’s house? You are already part of the family... I should be welcoming you home.

I really had to stop and think about my actions. When my sister brought her future husband home for the first time to meet our family, we *welcomed* him. He was from a different country, spoke little English, and ate his salad at the end of the meal. Now, when we hear that they are coming to visit, we say, “Colleen and Francis are coming home this summer.” While we will definitely welcome them, it will be different because we are all part of the same family. He knows a lot more English and we know a little French. We shake hands and we kiss on both cheeks. Some of us join him and eat our salad at the end of the meal, others still eat theirs first. We’ve been to his country and celebrated liturgy in the parish church. In fact, one Christmas the worship aid listed the Alleluia as *à la Kansas City*. I was home. I sang out loud and strong.

If we understand the true meaning of *Catholic*, English would not be the only language used at Masses, especially in our singing.

The reason we sing bilingual hymns isn’t that there might be someone Hispanic or of some other nationality in church; it is an effort to remind ourselves that the family of God is not just made up of white, English-speaking Americans. The reason I like singing “*Oye nos Señor*” in response to the prayer of the faithful is that it’s a reminder that we are a universal church and not everyone prays in English. The Catholic Church belongs to all of us. We have to do more than sing “*Stille Nacht*” at Christmas or “*Kyrie Eleison*” during Lent or “*Agnus Dei*” on special feasts. Our celebrations could always contain languages other than English.

This little step could be a giant leap towards changing our mindset. After all, it truly is a homecoming, is it not?

Let this house proclaim from floor to rafters:

All are welcome,

Todos son la bienvenida.

All are welcome in this place. ■

Catechesis and Evangelization: It's All One

by Susan Wolf, SND



Catechists are evangelists first, as are pastors, stewards, liturgists, parents, administrators, those engaged in works of justice and charity — in short, as are all the baptized. If this is true, and it is, why are so many Catholics reluctant to accept their evangelizing mission? Is it the word *evangelization*? I often hear that evangelization is too hard to say; it has the wrong connotations; it is not Catholic. To those objections I say: evangelization is not any harder to pronounce than catechesis or liturgy; it has the connotations we give it; and it comes to us from the Gospel we profess to live. So what is the difficulty?

For one thing, today's adult Catholics did not grow up perceiving themselves as evangelists. It is true that the word has certainly received more ink and more emphasis in Catholic circles since 1975, when Pope Paul VI wrote *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, and 1992, when the U.S. bishops published *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization*. But its meaning and application have escaped many of us. That

Why are so many Catholics reluctant to accept their evangelizing mission?

doesn't mean we haven't been evangelizing, but it does mean that we are, for the most part, not consciously or structurally committed to it.

AN EVANGELIZING CULTURE

Let's look at the culture in our dioceses. Many dioceses have staff and annual campaigns for Catholic Charities; staff and annual or ongoing training for catechists and administrators of religious education programs and Catholic schools; staff and resources for training leaders of the RCIA, Eucharistic ministers and lectors; staff and resources for promoting stewardship and financial development. These are all very important and necessary ministries and they support our internal structures and services. But at

the same time, how many dioceses have staff and ongoing formation for the Sunday homilists and diocesan-wide campaigns for outreach to those with no church family and those who are inactive? How many provide training for parishes to welcome, invite, and help inactive members to become active? I think it is safe to answer not very many. The same questions could be posed about parishes. How many preachers get feedback and more training for their preaching? How many parishes have an ongoing ministry to inactive members and to those in the larger community who have no church family? How many would be perceived as welcoming to outsiders or newcomers? These are the signs of an evangelizing culture.

In the course of my travels, I have the opportunity to visit many parishes. What I have experienced as a visitor is sometimes hard to believe. One parish that I visit two or three times a year has a beautiful worship space, very fine music, well-trained liturgical ministers, good homilists, and generous people. They also have greeters at the doors who seem to talk only to one another and to greet people they know. In all the times that I have visited there over a number of years, only one person spoke to me; he was outside the church selling raffle tickets for the parish festival and he asked me if I wanted to buy a ticket. I also noticed that this large suburban parish has a sizable parking lot and a number of exits, but nearly a quarter of the people left after communion and by the last stanza of the recessional only a few of us were left. I had no trouble getting out of the parking lot — it was nearly empty by the time I got to my car.

At another parish I visited, I went to the coffee and doughnuts gathering after Mass expecting to meet some parishioners. I sat at a table with a group of people who I came to realize sat together every week in this same place to catch up on the news. I introduced myself and then was ignored. I tried to start some conversation, only to find my questions answered briefly by someone at the table (as if I were interrupting) and then they went back to their own conversations. I was clearly an intruder. It was embarrassing. I know this is not just my experience or this one parish. I have heard people who moved into a new parish say that "breaking in" was a challenge and sometimes painful.

While most of my visiting experiences have unfortunately been similar to the two I have described above, I have gone to parishes where I experienced genuine welcome. Most often that occurred at weekday Masses where visitors are more easily identified. In those cases parishioners welcomed me, introduced themselves, asked if I was visiting or a new resident, and asked if

there was any way they could help me. After learning that I was visiting, they said I was welcome any time and that they hoped I would have a wonderful visit. It was a nice feeling.

I wonder what would happen if our diocesan newspapers had a “welcome critic,” like some of our secular papers have a food critic. They would visit a parish on different weekends, “sample” different Masses, and give stars for welcoming based on specific, observable criteria. I wonder how many parishes would get five stars. I wonder how long that column would last.

Why am I sharing these stories in an article on catechesis and evangelization? We cannot expect catechists or any other ministers to be able to effectively evangelize in a culture that does not overtly communicate “welcome.”

CATECHESIS

The seeming lack of welcome and hospitality in many Catholic parishes, however, is not an excuse for failing to promote and encourage an evangelizing perspective in all of our catechetical ministries.

In my early ministry years, I taught in Catholic schools, was a catechist, and served as a director of religious education in several parishes. I know the challenges and the joys of these ministries. I can also say that the catechists I worked with were some of the most self-sacrificing, dedicated, and apostolic people I have ever met. I have belonged to local, regional, and national networks of religious education directors. I know their commitment to providing the best catechesis to their students, quality formation to their catechists, and support for the families they serve. I know the creativity and the professional preparation they bring to their ministry.

There are so many examples of catechists who did more than “teach religion.” They reached out to students and families, went the extra mile to show love and care, and often were the bridge that brought inactive members back to the church.

One catechist I worked with taught the first communion class and would also work with older students who had not yet made their first communion. It was not unusual for her to visit homes to instruct these special students. After a few of her visits, whole families would be involved in the lessons and eventually return to the sacraments. She was a very joyful and caring person who, I believe, loved these families back to the church.

Evangelizing catechists were the ones who made it a point to meet in person, or at least speak on the phone to, the parents of students and who went out of their way to greet them when they saw them in church, or any place for that matter. These catechists gave the students and their families a personal connection, a life line, so to speak, to the church community.

I know catechetical leaders who applaud, affirm, and support catechists who find ways to teach “as Jesus did.” When it comes to administrative deadlines and rules, they reasonably accommodate the families and they provide options. It takes extra effort to provide alternate meeting dates and to allow exceptions, especially when one is dealing with large programs. But it is that kind of compassion and understanding that says to parents, we know life can be messy. We are here for you. Such kindness goes a long way. Program requirements that accept no excuses and allow no exceptions have caused harm to already fragile people and have sometimes turned them away from the church. We can never know the burdens that the people we meet are carrying. It is not for us to judge; it is for us to work with what we have. I love the quote from Isaiah 42:3: “a bruised reed, he will not break.”

It is a common complaint that some parents who send their children to Catholic schools and religious education programs do not attend Sunday Mass, and neither do their children. It is clear that these parents are willing to make the sacrifices, whether it is time, money, or both, to send their children to religious education classes or a Catholic school (and it is a sacrifice). Why don't they feel the same way about the Mass and the sacraments? Why don't they feel connected to this community so they would want to participate? On the other hand, if they did come, would anyone notice? Has anyone cared in a loving way that they are not there now? We can sometimes be quick to judge, but slow to show we care.

EVANGELIZATION

Catechetical programs cannot bear all the responsibility for evangelization in a parish or a diocese. Catechesis is one “moment in the whole process of evangelization” (*National Directory for Catechesis, no. 15*) — a very important moment — one full of unique apostolic opportunities. All catechetical ministries, on the other hand, can be carried out in an evangelizing way.

Catechetical leaders can structure their ministries in a way that creates a smaller faith community for students and their families — a community of caring and mutual respect that becomes a bridge to the larger community. The bridge must be explicit, not assumed. There need to be a few occasions during the year when the catechetical community accompanies the students and their families over that bridge. It could be a choir that sings at a parish liturgy, a paraliturgical event prepared for the larger community, such as Stations of the Cross during Lent or a family rosary during October. Whatever the activity, the students and families need to be prepared, acknowledged, and thanked for their participation.

At the diocesan level, all ministry areas need to be operating out of a clear and collaborative evangelizing perspective if any of them

continued on page 10

The New Evangelization: Mind the Gap

by J. Brian Bransfield, STD

U.S. Catholic adults exhibit a notable gap between their identification as Catholic and their commitment to Sunday Mass. Homilists and catechists take heed.



How many Catholics no longer saunter across the parking lot to church on Sunday mornings? How many that knew the familiarity of those steps on Sunday morning do not keep pace with faith anymore and cast a measured, yet polite, look on the faithfulness they once held close?

Parish celebrations and events thrive on predictability. But the parish *mission* expressed within those moments does not. Once mission becomes a routine *function* it quickly becomes more chore than service. Proclamation of salvation in the person of Christ is never routine.

What has created the distance? Could it be that routine itself has so conditioned *the practice* as to constrain it? Could it be that predictable answers were repeated once too often to hearts with wrenching questions? Could it be that the well-intentioned, but nonetheless unimaginative and muted, explanations to the problems of daily life just did not meet the

*Proclamation of salvation in the person
of Christ is never routine.*

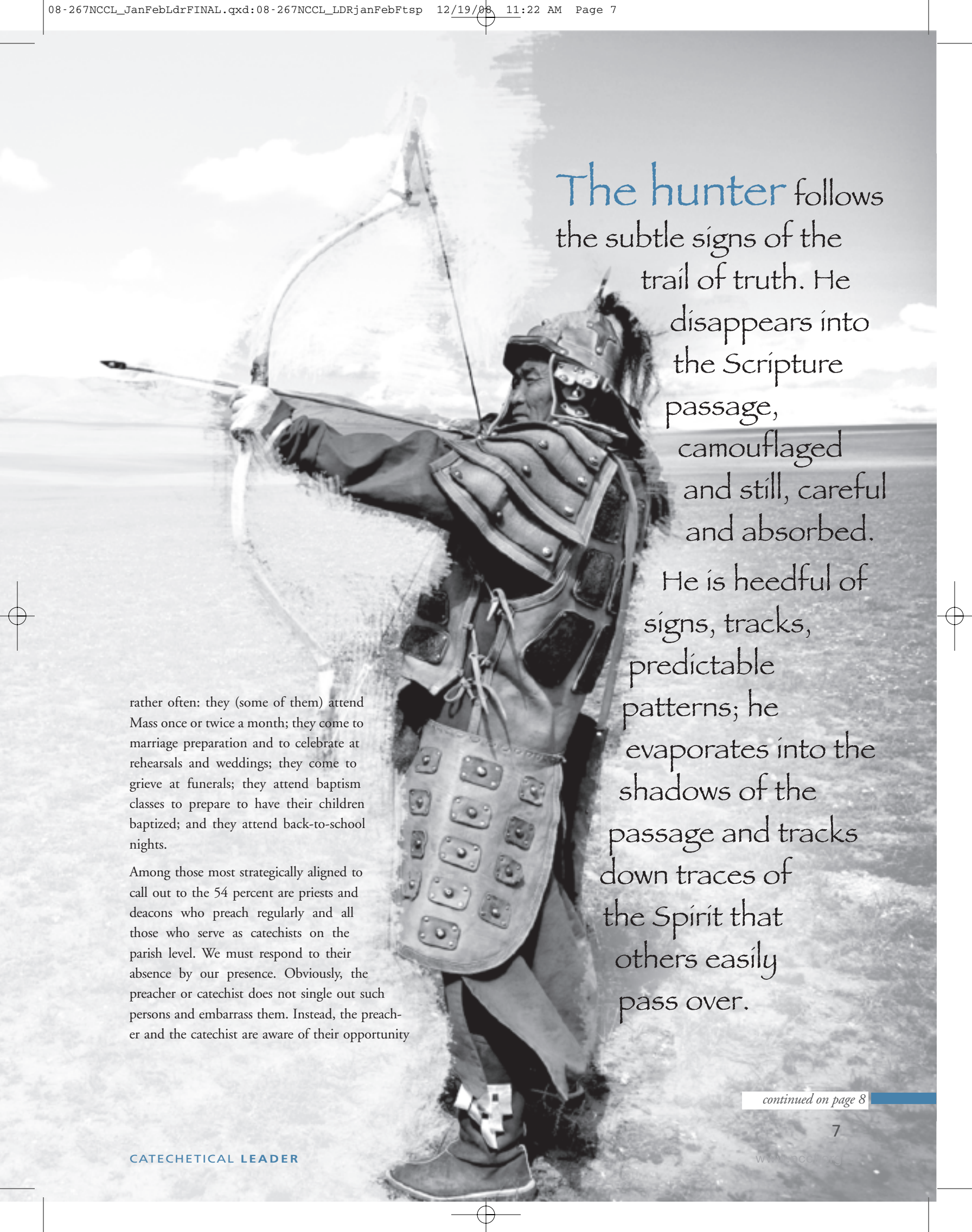
expectations of those who walked through the door on Sunday morning? Do we blame the ones who are not there on Sunday for being lazy — or do we *miss* them?

THE 54/23 GAP

In April 2008 the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) published *Sacraments Today: Belief and Practice Among U. S. Catholics*, a survey of adult Catholics in the United States commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Over 76 percent of adult Catholics say they are proud to be Catholic. Twenty-three percent of adult Catholics attend Mass at least once a week. This means that 54 percent of adult Catholics are proud to be Catholic, but do not practice that pride by weekly attendance at Mass. Fifty-four percent of Catholic adults in the United States experience a notable gap between their identification as Catholic and their commitment to regular practice at Sunday Mass.

The misperception is that those who do not practice regularly are lazy, poor planners, convenience-oriented, want their own way or are ‘writing their own ticket.’ Worse, they may be judged to be skeptics, doubters, fair-weather, or rule-shunning. To label others is to solidify the distance created by fear. Fear does two things: it either condemns or shies away. Love, however, calls and creates. How do we access the 54 percent who are proud to be Catholic? We have more opportunities than we may be aware of. We see the 54 percent

A version of this article will be included in the Catechetical Sunday 2009 materials from the USCCB.



The hunter follows the subtle signs of the trail of truth. He disappears into the Scripture passage, camouflaged and still, careful and absorbed.

He is heedful of signs, tracks, predictable patterns; he evaporates into the shadows of the passage and tracks down traces of the Spirit that others easily pass over.

rather often: they (some of them) attend Mass once or twice a month; they come to marriage preparation and to celebrate at rehearsals and weddings; they come to grieve at funerals; they attend baptism classes to prepare to have their children baptized; and they attend back-to-school nights.

Among those most strategically aligned to call out to the 54 percent are priests and deacons who preach regularly and all those who serve as catechists on the parish level. We must respond to their absence by our presence. Obviously, the preacher or catechist does not single out such persons and embarrass them. Instead, the preacher and the catechist are aware of their opportunity

continued on page 8

THE NEW EVANGELIZATION *continued from page 7*

and build into homily preparation and lesson planning an avenue through which the Holy Spirit can reach the 54 percent. The New Evangelization means we as priests, deacons, teachers and catechists must “mind the gap.” The unique nature of the New Evangelization requires a renewed appreciation for the preparation methods of these two distinct opportunities: the homily and the lesson of the catechist.

A NEW SPRINGTIME

Pope Paul VI called for the New Evangelization in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on December 8, 1975, ten years to the day of the close of the Second Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II frequently referred to Paul VI’s summons. Pope John Paul II’s reference to the new evangelization as a *new springtime* in the church is more than a random variation of wording (see box, page 15). The New Evangelization, he says, seeks *abundance* by proposing the message of Christ with faithful originality to those who have already heard the proclamation of the Gospel, but who have fallen into routine, grown cold, or turned away from participation.

The new springtime arises from a consistent appeal to the fact that we preach and teach not a program, but a person: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took flesh for our salvation and who by the Holy Spirit communicates his grace to the human person through the church so that we may be led to his Father.

“Every preacher is a hunter.”

We stand before his plan with docility in the classical sense: to be receptive to his Word so that we may grow in the life of virtue.

Docility does not lead to a porcelain, fragile existence. It is a robust claim of trust. Docility requires that we approach mystery with active and eager resiliency. Docility is a feature of conscience that facilitates the response in faith to Revelation.

Slate Candidates for NCCL Leadership 2009-2012

Position	DeLuca Slate
	President Lorraine DeLuca , Director of the Office of Lifelong Catholic Formation/Education, Diocese of Beaumont, TX. deluca@dioceseofbmt.org
	Vice President Mike Westenberg , Director of Religious Education, St. Matthew Parish, Green Bay, WI. mwestenberg@stmatthsgb.org
	Secretary Janet Schaeffler, O.P. , Associate Director for Adult Faith Formation, Archdiocese of Detroit, MI. schaeffler.janet@aod.org
	Treasurer Mary Jo Waggoner , Director of the Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry, Diocese of San Diego, CA. mwaggone@diocese-sdiego.org

Position	Roat Slate
	President Anne Roat , Director of the Pastoral Office for Adult Catechesis, Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. aroat@dioceseoflafayette.org
	Vice President Russell Peterson , Associate Director of Religious Education/Catechesis, Diocese of Belleville, IL. rpeterson@diobelle.org
	Secretary Joanie McKeown , Director of Religious Education, Wisconsin Directors of Religious Education Federation (WDREF), Diocese of Superior, WI. jmckown@grantsburgtel.com.net
	Treasurer Kathy Kleinlein , Director of Catechetical Ministry, Diocese of Venice, FL. kleinlein@dioceseofvenice.org

There will be a full presentation by each slate in the next issue of CL.

The homilist or catechist must lure his listener by hunting down the abstract and converting it to the tangible.

Docility enhances and integrates the human person's reception of the grace of God. The preacher and catechist must develop an ability to be docile before the grace of God, and, at the same time, to "read within" the reality and experience of the people. Secularism is the enemy of docility, so the homilist and catechist must be persistent in faithful originality.

The preacher searches continuously with patience for new means of conveying the Gospel. The homilist must transform experience into knowledge and then into an experience laden with the mystery of Christ. The average thirty-second commercial on television takes two full days simply to *film*. This is after the script is written, cast chosen, props set, and the lights are turned on. This is before editing and splicing. If it takes Hollywood two days to film a thirty-second message, how long does it take the homilist to form a seven-minute homily and the catechist a lesson?

THE HUNTER IN THE SPRINGTIME

Perhaps the most concentrated expression of the identity of the preacher, and by extension the catechist, was offered by the Dominican Humbert of Romans in his treatise "On the Formation of Preachers," written in the thirteenth century. Humbert said, "Every preacher is a hunter." Humbert based his image on the Prophet Jeremiah: "I will send them hunters, who will hunt them out of every mountain and every hill and out of the caves in the rocks" (Jer. 16:16). Humbert continues, "So acceptable to the Lord is this kind of hunting that [He] incite[s] the preacher in the words of the Book of Genesis: 'Take up your arms, your quiver and your bow, and go out and catch something, and then make me a dish of it, that I may eat and bless you in the sight of the Lord' "(Gen 27:3, 7).

The preacher as a hunter must pay attention to his preparation in an organic fashion. The ideas of the homilist and catechist must be steeped in the Gospel and fermented in prayer, rather than come in the form of a book report or homily-help. The homilist prepares on several levels at once. Rather than following the mechanistic and generic steps of preparation — "Read the Scripture on Monday... read a commentary on Tuesday...

let the preparation sit for a day... write some thoughts on Thursday... begin a final draft on Friday..." — the preacher as a hunter probes the Scripture passage in a patient and attentive manner. The catechist turns the lesson over again and again to adapt it to the daily life of those who will be before her. While the well-intentioned conventional preacher goes in one direction with a ceremonial theme, the homilist as a hunter escapes from alignment with ideology and the obvious.

The hunter follows the subtle signs of the trail of truth. He disappears into the Scripture passage, camouflaged and still, careful and absorbed. He is heedful of signs, tracks, predictable patterns; he evaporates into the shadows of the passage and tracks down traces of the Spirit that others easily pass over. The hunter gets dirty and wet. He hides not out of fear, but out of expectancy, and by instinct picks up the scent of a passage. Likewise, the homilist senses the fears and burdens of the human race. The catechist senses the pain and bewilderment which easily hides behind the pleasantries. The memory lends the homilist an agility so as to follow the trail of a Scripture passage and that of the daily traps of the congregation. He weighs the words in each passage. His skills have been developed in the school of the Fathers of the Church. Like the psalmist he can call out, "You have upheld me, trained me with care..." (Psalm 18).

HUNTING DOWN THE CORE

In *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, Chip and Dan Heath outline a highly effective, yet simple system of communication for the advertising industry. The Heath brothers' framework also captures the central task of the preacher: relentless prioritization. So too, the preacher or catechist must "spark unexpected connections" and "tailor" many ideas to "find the core of the idea" without dumbing down the content into sound bites. To "find the core" the preacher or catechist must discard "a lot of great ideas" and "filter incoming ideas" from the perspective of the core idea. The French aviator and author Antoine de Saint Exupéry said, "A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

In the twenty-first century the homilist or catechist cannot demand attention; he must attract it. He must appeal to and lure his listener by hunting down the abstract and converting it to the tangible. In the thirteenth century Humbert said, "In the primitive church there were few preachers, but they were

continued on page 15

CATECHESIS AND EVANGELIZATION *continued from page 5*

are to be fully effective. In dioceses where evangelization is a priority in terms of the departmental structure and resources, the ministries of the diocese are more likely to be on the same page when it comes to mission and ministry.

Pope Paul VI wrote, "Evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity..." (*On Evangelization in the Modern World*, no. 18). For catechetical leaders, this means bringing the Good News into the lives of those they serve and bringing them into community with the larger church, which then sends them out to serve and invite others.

THE PARISH, AN EVANGELIZING COMMUNITY

Catechetical leaders serve most often, but not exclusively, in the context of the parish, which is a life-long learning community. All members are learning to be disciples of Jesus Christ and, as disciples, learning to bring others to Christ. Catechesis includes religious education for children, adult faith formation in every stage of life, sacramental preparation of adults preparing for the sacraments of initiation, marriage, and the baptism of their children. The same norm applies: bringing Christ to the learner and the learner to Christ. When a spirit of welcome, understanding, acceptance, and care for the learner supports the message that is

communicated, the message can be heard and embraced more readily.

Parish communities have been working at catechesis for a long time. The *Catechesis Workbook in Best Practices for Parishes* by Rev. Robert D. Duggan and others identifies seventy-seven best practices for catechesis that evangelizes. The workbook can be viewed at www.bestpracticesforparishes.org. What is important in looking at these best practices is to realize that we can improve the quality of what we do in catechesis when we see it in the context of evangelization, the essential mission of the church. Evangelization is the reason we teach, preach, and witness. That is evident in how we function as a parish, how we open ourselves to ongoing formation, how we lead and form our catechists, and how we administer our catechetical services and programs.

The more evangelizing a parish is, the more meaningful and effective catechesis will be. The more effective catechesis is, the better the learning community will be at evangelizing. It is all one mission. |

Sr. Susan Wolf, SND, is the executive director of the Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association in Washington, D.C. www.pncea.org



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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



PREACH ALWAYS — AND SOMETIMES USE THE INTERNET

by Greg Friedman, OFM



Growing up in the 1950s and '60s, I was a part of the weekly television audience who tuned into the broadcasts by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. I was captivated by his powerful voice and the dramatic sweep of his bishops' robes. My mother even made a skullcap — like the one Bishop Sheen wore — for me to wear while watching him on TV.

I am sure that I did not understand, at that age, a lot of his message, rich as it was in theology, philosophy, history, psychology and the politics of the time, including his strong stance against Communism. More than anything else, what captured me, and I suspect many Catholic viewers, was that here was one of our own on television. We'd "arrived" — in terms of the culture's validating medium of the times.

In the history of popular culture, as well as in the field of religious communications, Bishop Sheen's place is assured. He used the medium at hand to communicate his faith and invite millions to attend to the message of Jesus.

Not long ago, I was asked to record the narration of a forthcoming audiobook version of Bishop Sheen's autobiography, *Treasure in Clay*. Little could I have dreamed as a youngster watching him on television all those years ago that I would someday be voicing his life-story — and in his own words! But even more: As a weekly homilist on the Web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, where each day you can view a short video Gospel reflection, I work in a medium that has a potential far beyond the one on which Fulton J. Sheen historically triumphed.

A person with access to a computer, anywhere in the world, can hear my presentation. And he or she can access it by typing in my name or a number of other key words — just as I can now have access to the voice of Bishop Sheen and information about his life, his writings and his possible canonization. It all is possible through the Internet.

I write this article not as an expert in the technology which makes possible the small miracle of communication I've just described. How my face and voice get onto the world-wide Web is a mystery to me. How they get from wherever we send the videotape to the computers of those who access the USCCB video spots is another mystery to me.

Nor am I a catechist by profession, although I have been privileged for most of my 30-plus years as a priest to be involved in the writing and production of faith-formation materials for a major Catholic resource provider.

Rather, I am a priest who teaches by the media he finds at hand, whether it is the pulpit at my parish or the recording studio and computer terminals at Saint Anthony Messenger Press. In that ministry I am blessed to be following in the footsteps of my hero, Bishop Sheen. And it is with those credentials that I offer these reflections.

They will be neither exhaustive nor necessarily new to many NCCL members. I'm certain — from my associations with this organization and my involvement with its affiliated group, the National

Association of Church Media Professionals (NACMP) — that many readers are far better qualified to write this article!

Rather, I hope simply to tease out some of the themes and tools which I've found helpful. What's worked for me and what I understand about the power of the Internet for faith formation is borne of my experience in trying to do what the ritual for the ordination of deacons expresses so well: "Receive the gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach."

WHERE THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL BELONGS

As a Franciscan, I come naturally by a passion to preach the Gospel. Although I don't always follow the admonition attributed

continued on page U2

PREACH ALWAYS *continued from page U1*

popularly to St. Francis, “Preach always and sometimes use words,” I do follow our founder’s use of the media at hand.

Francis preached in churches, in town squares, in the papal court and in front of the Sultan of Egypt. He drew on the popular songs of troubadours and the romantic literature of his day. He wrote letters, prayers and rules for his religious community. And he made use of the imagery and drama — as in his popularization of the Christmas crib.

I would hope St. Francis blesses my use of present day media — at hand today to Franciscans or anyone seeking to preach the Gospel — especially the Internet. I believe that Francis would have embraced it as a way to get the message out, by virtue of its wide reach and its accessibility to nearly everyone.

How the church has usually embraced the media at hand is part of an interesting history. French media expert Father Pierre Babin has chronicled, in his ground-breaking work on religious communication throughout history, how the Gospel message has found a place in oral, print and electronic media. But that embrace has not always come easily. There are times when the church has been skeptical or even frightened of the newest media. We have not always been among the “first adapters.” Perhaps that’s wise!

Nor have we always used new media well or to the greatest advantage. The history of Catholic radio and television in the U.S shows us a rather disorganized and unrealized adaptation to those media. We’re doing better, especially in Catholic radio. But we’ve missed opportunities we may never recover unless they come to us again in new formats such as the Internet.

We’ve missed opportunities we may never recover unless they come to us again in new formats such as the Internet.

The Gospel belongs on the medium at hand. And the world-wide Web is surely a medium suited to the spread of the Gospel. Pope John Paul II, in his statement for World Communications Day in 2002, said, “For the Church the new world of cyberspace is a summons to the great adventure of using its potential to proclaim the Gospel message. This challenge is at the heart of what it means at the beginning of the millennium to follow the Lord’s command to ‘put out into the deep’: *Duc in altum!* (Luke 5:4).”

The pope also had cautions about this new technology, among them: “The Internet offers extensive knowledge, but it does not teach values; and when values are disregarded, our very humanity is demeaned and man easily loses sight of his transcendent dignity. Despite its enormous potential for good, some of the degrading

and damaging ways in which the Internet can be used are already obvious to all . . . Moreover, as a forum in which practically everything is acceptable and almost nothing is lasting, the Internet favors a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes feeds the flight from personal responsibility and commitment.”

Pope Benedict XVI has echoed his predecessor’s careful endorsement and cautionary warnings about the Internet. With the guidance of these two papal teachers, we can, in John Paul II’s words, “cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world ‘the glory of God on the face of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 4:6).”

THE OFFICIAL PRESENCE

Indeed, the church has already established its presence on the Web. Perhaps you watched the live broadcast via Internet on the Vatican Web site when white smoke heralded the election of Benedict XVI. It was an historic first, which served as a symbol of how well the encounter of the timeless presence of the Body of Christ in the world and this new medium has progressed.

The Vatican Web site, www.Vatican.va, is now well-established as a place for information — whether current or archival — about the papacy and the church. Crucial to Catholic faith formation is the availability of papal and conciliar statements. We can access them electronically and direct those we are helping form in the faith to these resources.

The U.S. bishops’ site, www.usccb.org, provides a similar valuable service at the national level. The availability of liturgical resources, especially the daily Scripture readings, and the New American Bible in particular, are reasons I visit there frequently. In my parish ministry, I can direct worship commission members to find lectionary references or engaged couples to search wedding readings online.

Especially for those who have not had an easy familiarity with the Bible — much less church documents — the Web offers “friendly access” to these important sources of faith formation.

Local diocesan and parish sites have also become the foundation of a reliable network of knowledge and news. Not all are of equal value. Neither are they all equal in design or ease of “navigation.” In particular, a real stumbling block on some of the official sites is the often-cumbersome and widely differing search engines in use. The lack of quick and easy search engines is something Web surfers are slow to forgive!

Despite their diversity and limitations, official church Web sites allow Catholics to have a “place to go” for the authentic presence of the church — from the most local, at the parish level, to the center of church government and teaching in Rome.

We’ve “arrived” on the Web, we are there to stay.

NO NIHIL OBSTATS ONLINE

Beyond the official sites is that immense and troublesome ocean of information where anyone can look for religious information. I remember the surprise and shock of a first-time Internet user, a bishop I met at an international church communications exhibit in Munich some years ago. He had asked me to search for a term — I think it was “Eucharist.” The thousands of hits (today it would be millions) astonished him.

The problem is, of course, the unregulated — and therefore unverifiable — nature of this information. The Web is too big for any of the traditional means of certifying orthodox doctrine. Outside of official church Web sites, there’s no possibility of a “nihil obstat,” the declaration used in years past to assure that print materials were free of error. Some Web advocates would even argue against such regulation, to preserve the freedom of expression represented by the Internet.

The open nature of this medium is challenging us to a mature approach to our use of it.

Although there have been suggestions that some type of official certification system be developed for church-related sites, such regulation has not been practical. With the spread of the Web it will be less and less possible.

Perhaps the nature of this medium is challenging us to a mature approach to our use of it. We must exercise both the freedom and the responsibility the Gospel calls us to have. Faith formation leaders must help those who use the Web to find reliable sites and to discriminate between accurate and erroneous information, and to use opinion sites and blogs responsibly. Education in the use of all our new and emerging technologies is now an essential component of faith formation.

EXTENDING THE VESTIBULE

I’ve referred so far to just one use of the Internet: as a library or reference room. Like the fabled Vatican library and museums, and

medieval monasteries in previous ages, which have through the centuries preserved information and culture, the Web can function well as a repository of our rich Catholic heritage of doctrine and tradition.

But it can do so much more: In church terms, the Web is a vestibule where Catholics can gather. In most of our parish churches, the vestibule is the transition point between our daily lives and our Sunday encounter with Christ and each other at Eucharist. Practically speaking, the vestibule is traditionally the place to find information racks, copies of the bulletin, and notices of parish life. It is also a gathering place for believers.

With “social networking” Web tools, such as Facebook, Twitter or MySpace, we can explore this “gathering” or communal function of the Internet. Other powerful communication tools, such as webcams and Skype, or other conferencing software, in combination with the Internet, can facilitate our coming together.

As you would remind those in your religious education programs, RCIA participants, or adult Bible students in small groups to check out the church vestibule’s resources, so these “cyber vestibules” are essential places to find and to conduct faith formation.

The Web can also bring us to people previously untouched by our traditional faith formation methods. I am intimately familiar with one such example. More than seven years ago (an “age” in cyber-time!) I helped to develop www.OnceCatholic.org, a site for alienated or inactive Catholics sponsored by St. Anthony Messenger Press. Since then, it has been a place where those who still have a “Catholic connection,” despite either perceived or real forms of alienation or distancing, come and ask questions, express opinions and find an appropriate pastoral response.

Using the image of a house, we created “rooms” based on areas of alienation identified by the U.S. bishops — issues with church teaching, abortion or marriage cases; disputes or hurts from church personnel; a lack of “spiritual nourishment” experienced in homilies or the classroom; and a host of others.

We provided a reading room and a help room for reliable information and a dining room for daily inspiration. And most important, we have engaged a staff of qualified “companions” to screen,

continued on page U4

Catechetical Update Is Now Available Online

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

PREACH ALWAYS *continued from page U3*

For those who have not had an easy familiarity with the Bible, the Web offers “friendly access.”

respond to and post messages directed to the site. Their interaction is found in our conversation corners, which allow online discussion to take place.

In our “Marriage Issues” room alone, conversations moderated by our canon lawyer — companions have dealt with over 14,000 postings from those seeking reliable canonical advice about tribunal process, annulments and other marriage-related questions! In many cases, these individuals might not feel comfortable personally approaching an official church representative.

We believe that our “Once Catholic” site — and others like it — can be a stepping-stone to eventual face-to-face contact. It cannot replace in-person interaction, but it can be the “vestibule.”

EXTENDING THE PULPIT

My other image for what the Web can offer besides the vestibule is a new kind of pulpit. Because of the high cost of producing television programming or maintaining a Catholic radio station and because the technology of the Internet can interface with video and radio, it can extend the reach of these traditional media.

Bishop Sheen’s legacy is bearing fruit! The USCCB Web video project I mentioned at the beginning of this article is just one example. The live streaming of Catholic radio is another, as are marketing sites such as www.MyCatholicVoice.com. The many Catholic podcasts now available are a third.

If you’re Catholic and haven’t yet discovered Dutch priest Roderick Vonhögen and his “Daily Breakfast” — just one example — you need to sample his outstanding contribution to the “new evangelization.” He has a rare gift for understanding the power of the Web to capture a simple, unaffected, yet thoroughly Catholic and reliable daily dose of teaching and interaction. Each podcast is seasoned with Father Roderick’s personal interests in pop culture, movies, computer games and tech tools. We have similar efforts at our own www.AmericanCatholic.org.

Podcasts and other forms of “Web pulpits” provide another valuable avenue for faith formation. Of course, the usual caveats apply. As I said above, the Web’s ability to connect Catholics in the “new evangelization” challenges us to a new maturity as the sons and daughters of God.

Finally, the Web offers us catechists a new way to share information with one another, and with our searching faithful. Our

WebCatholic (blog.webcatholic.org) outreach here at St. Anthony Messenger Press is but one example of ways that faith formation leaders are sharing catechetical features with both diocesan and parish websites — the “parish bulletins” of the next generation.

A WISH FOR WEB FAITH FORMATION

One aspect of my priestly work which I most enjoy is adult faith formation. I especially cherish the opportunities I have had to work with catechetical leaders over the years. In one of my first assignments, I was blessed to meet and share ministry with a creative parish teacher who taught me more about faith formation (although the term was not yet in wide use) than I had learned in the seminary.

What this catechetical leader helped a rather uptight young priest experience was the ability to “stay loose” and not be locked in to any one way of doing things. With an amazing group of lay leaders, he led us in crafting a powerful, innovative program of catechesis for young people in our parish. I’m told it still exists nearly thirty years later! But I never knew from one Monday morning to the next where our planning might go! He always had surprises for us, always challenged us to be open to new methods.

The worldwide Web and its accompanying technology force us to have a similar attitude to this gifted teacher. My wish for all of us who are working with the Internet and its many opportunities for faith formation is that we always remain flexible and open to possibilities.

The Gospel has stayed ever-new in its power to convert us to the person and message of Jesus. It has found a place on the Web and with the many gifts of human creativity can touch the lives of countless millions in the new evangelization which our church has blessed and our people have embraced. May we use this tool wisely and with the help and guidance of the Spirit! ■

Franciscan Father Greg Friedman is creative director in the Electronic Media Department at St. Anthony Messenger Press. In that capacity, he helps produce audio and video programs for broadcast, parish use, and the Web. He is host of American Catholic Radio, a weekly program of Catholic information and inspiration sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, through its Catholic Communication Campaign. He is also pastor of St. Francis Seraph Parish, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

INTERNET WEB 2.0: A NEW FORUM FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERS

by Caroline Cervený, SSJ



Visualize for a moment that you are standing in the midst of a public square — the marketplace of an ancient city such as Corinth, Ephesus, Rhodes, or Rome. In your mind's eye see how the citizens of these towns have gathered in the public place, the *agora*, for doing business, meeting friends and spending hours in conversation. This physical location became the *forum* for all sorts of social interchange.

Now fast forward to the twenty-first century! Yes, it is still possible to linger in our local marketplaces for food, beverage, and conversation. However, we are now also *digital citizens* in an evolutionary as well as revolutionary forum: Internet Web 2.0!

Fortunately or unfortunately, we can no longer wait to step into this new digital world.

All of us have read Web pages and some of us have even created our own websites. In addition, we know how to send e-mail — and how to use many of the programs that used to challenge us because we were not raised with these tools. Cell phones are ubiquitous. Now the Internet forum is becoming a normal part of our daily lives as we move from a static environment to an ever more dynamic and collaborative environment. In technical jargon, we speak of moving from Web 1.0 technologies to Web 2.0 technologies.

I'm sure some of you are probably scratching their head and wondering, *Web 2.0 technologies — what's that all about? What can Web 2.0 do for me?* Or maybe you are saying *I don't even have time to find out.*

WEB 2.0 — WHAT IS IT?

Web technology can now take us beyond its familiar uses: finding information and purchasing plane tickets or books via the Internet. This technology provides us opportunities to gather

and meet with one another across time zones without traveling outside the comfort of our homes or offices. When I first began catechetical ministry in the 1970s, I never imagined that I would ever have access to other ministry professionals across the world via an Internet tool like Skype! With an Internet service provider (ISP), a computer and monitor, headphones and microphone, and a mini-video camera I both see and talk to colleagues in Australia on a monthly basis as if they were sitting in a chair next to me.

WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY IS...

...a trend in the use of World Wide Web technology and Web design that aims to facilitate creativity, information sharing, and, most notably, collaboration among users. These concepts have led to the development and evolution of Web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies (the practice of categorizing content through tags). Although the term suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specifications, but to changes in the ways software developers and end-users use the Internet.

— **The Stilton Glossary**
(www.stiltonstudios.net/glossary.htm)

WEB 2.0 IS...

...the name which has been given as an umbrella term to what is considered to be the next phase of the evolution of the Internet, encompassing technologies such as blogs, wikis and other forms of interaction, development and innovation above and beyond the Web technologies which have been around since its inception.

— **Absolute Digital** (absolute-digital.co.uk/glossary.php#w)

WHAT MAKES THIS MAJOR ADVANCE SIGNIFICANT IN THIS EVOLVING WEB WORLD IS ACCESS TO TOOLS THAT . . .

...are often free,
...fun to use,
...allow others to be part of the process, and ultimately
...provide ways for ministers to easily share information

continued on page U6

continued from page U5

with others.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

If you are saying to yourself *I don't have time for this. I'm already overwhelmed*, I would like to invite you to stop for a moment and think about the digital natives of this Net generation, the folks that range in age from six to about thirty. Remind yourself what they are doing in their everyday electronic world: using cell phones, texting and IM-ing their friends, downloading MP3 music and podcasts to their computers and iPods, downloading videos to watch on their computers, uploading their personal digital videos to *YouTube.com*, downloading their photos to interactive websites like Flickr, Picassa, and Snapfish and more. Those over thirteen are interacting socially with their friends via MySpace, FaceBook, and other social networking tools, as well as video talking to family members across the world using tools like Skype and ooVoo.

When the Gutenberg printing press revolutionized the fifteenth century world, ministers utilized this new technology to teach the faith and to evangelize church communities. Now Internet Web 2.0 is revolutionizing our church world. Learn we must! Or we will miss opportunities to share our faith, and to evangelize our people young and our not so young.

I recently asked Tammie Gildea, a recognized catechetical leader in a local Tampa, Florida parish, "What stops you from using technology in your ministry?" Tammie said, "What stops me is pure ignorance! My nieces and nephews tell me what I can do with my phone or an iPod. But I really don't know how!" I would venture to say that many, many ministers are in the same predicament.

If you want to catch on easily and quickly, I would encourage you to find a young adult to mentor you in the ways of the digital world. Historically we are at a point where the Internet provides us with a forum for evangelization like none before. This evolving Internet forum allows us to connect and collaborate more than ever before with one another in ways that go beyond the dusty, noisy Roman *agora*. We may appear to be digital Luddites to the natives of the digital world. However, as we minister, we need to "walk their walk, and talk their talk" by becoming "digital immigrants." (If you want to learn more about "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," go to www.marcprensky.com and click on "Writings" to find Marc Prensky's fine article by this title).

If you want to catch on quickly, find a young adult to mentor you.

THE CHALLENGE

As a forum, Internet Web 2.0 possesses numerous possibilities. What remains essential as we move to integrate these technologies into our ministry is imagination. I once heard a webinar presentation by educator Janni Black, in which she said that the last two years had been the best in her professional development. Why? Because she has taken time to learn from others via blogs and wikis! Not only have these opportunities advanced her career but have given her relationships with other creative educators. In turn she is sharing this creativity with her students. I wondered, what it would be like if we would maximize our time and ministry by doing likewise.

The challenge confronts us daily — "the medium is the message!" This new media challenges us in our ministry as well as our commitment to our young people. Our young people are evangelized and inculturated at many different levels. If we leave out the Internet world they live in, we find we have a missing link in the evangelization of our youth. The time is now to involve our students in the blending of this new media into the depths of their faith life. Only in this blended reality of *tradition with technology* will our emerging faith learners from kindergarten through young adulthood make sense of their Catholic faith tradition.

Fortunately or unfortunately, we can no longer wait. We must step into this new digital world with our hopes and dreams. (See the next page for some steps you might take right now.) Take time to share what you are learning. We are in this new digital frontier of catechetical ministry together. ■

Caroline Cervený, SSJ, D. Min., president of Interactive Connections (www.intconnect.org), specializes in online catechist/ministry formation and the applications of new media to adult and youth evangelization and formation. She would like to hear your comments at c.cervený@verizon.net.



WHAT CAN I DO WITH WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES?

Web 2.0 technologies focus on online collaboration between participants who could be at their desks or at home, perhaps in different cities, states, or countries, and now, with wireless technology — even sitting on a park bench or taking advantage of Wi-Fi hotspot connections at McDonald's or Starbucks, or waiting at an airport for a plane. The possibilities for using Web 2.0 tools are now left to our imagination. While we navigate what may appear to be uncharted waters, many options are readily available to us right now. Allow me to share two:

COLLABORATE WITH YOUR TEAM

The possibilities of wikis go beyond the well-known Wikipedia, the world's largest encyclopedia, written and edited by hundreds of thousands of contributors from all walks of life. Today, we can utilize a wiki (a type of website that allows the visitors to add, remove, and sometimes edit the available content) by signing up for a free account at www.jotspot.com/learn, www.pbwiki.com, or www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers.

Now you say, why would I want to use a wiki?

Imagine that your bishop has invited you to rewrite the diocesan religion curriculum standards. You have a committee of three persons per grade level from grades K-12. So you may have thirty-nine persons involved in creating this document. Let's compare two different communication styles.

Pre-Internet Forum Communication Style: The committee initially meets and talks about the project, and perhaps several writers begin a first draft. They forward their first efforts via snail mail to those on the committee. This process goes back and forth between the writers and the participants for several drafts. Phone calls may be sporadic, as members leave messages and try to figure out the best time to connect with each other. Think of how many revisions a document goes through as they continue to write and develop the content. Finally all involved come together at the end to celebrate their hard work with one another after hours of reviewing documents and processing many revisions — often typing and retyping.

Internet Forum Communication Style: The committee would meet initially to bring people on board with the curriculum task, introduce them to developing documents via a wiki, and offer brief training in the tool they will use. Over the designated time frame, folks could do the following:

- Participants at the same grade levels, in the comfort of their offices or homes — or on park benches — could discuss what they are working on via Yugma (www.yugma.com), an easy-to-use Web conferencing service that allows users to host or attend online meetings. This service allows them to conference on the phone while

looking at the same content on their computer screens. In this case, the content would be a draft Wiki document of the curriculum they are working on (using a service like jotspot, nbwiki, or wikispaces). During the discussion, any member of the team could edit this content while all could see the editing as it is happening, or —

- If they were not sharing a phone conference option, then each could simply go into the Wiki document and make whatever changes they would care to at anytime of the day or night. The overall curriculum editor would enter the document, just like everyone else, tweaking and developing the content from comments and suggestions already posted by those involved on the committee.

Remember — you do not need to know any programming language, or work with any technology persons in order to set-up this type of interactive and collaborative technology.

TELL STORIES WITH NEW TOOLS

Digital tools offer another option for storytelling. We often involve our students in re-telling Scripture stories by drawing, dramatizing, pantomiming, and using other storytelling methods. This ancient art of storytelling is now possible in a contemporary digital format. Oh, I can hear the rustle in the background. You're saying quietly to your neighbor — we don't have a computer, video cameras, software, or any of the tools that are needed to create digital stories!

Even though we may not have access to the tools that would allow us to do these types of projects when we meet face-to-face during class time, we do not need them. There are Web 2.0 tools on the Internet that are usually free and provide ways for students to work at home either alone or collaboratively with others using the Internet. In my research, I've discovered that there are approximately fifty online tools for digital storytelling. Go to Allen Levine's article on [fifty ways to tell a story](http://fiftyways.com) at cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/Dominoe+50+Way. This site lists the many online webtools that are free and available to use to create a story. I will highlight three of my favorites:

- Bubbleshare (www.bubbleshare.com)
- PhotoShow (www.photoshow.com)
- ScrapBlog (www.scrapblog.com)

To see how these tools can be used to tell a story around the celebration of the sacrament of baptism and get some idea of what you can do using these websites, go to delicious.com/ccerven/Ex_DigitalStory for examples of a baptism project using these tools.

— Caroline Cerveney, SSJ

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RCIA ALL THE WAY

The Way of Faith: A Field Guide for the RCIA Process by Nick Wagner. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2008. Paperback, \$16.95.

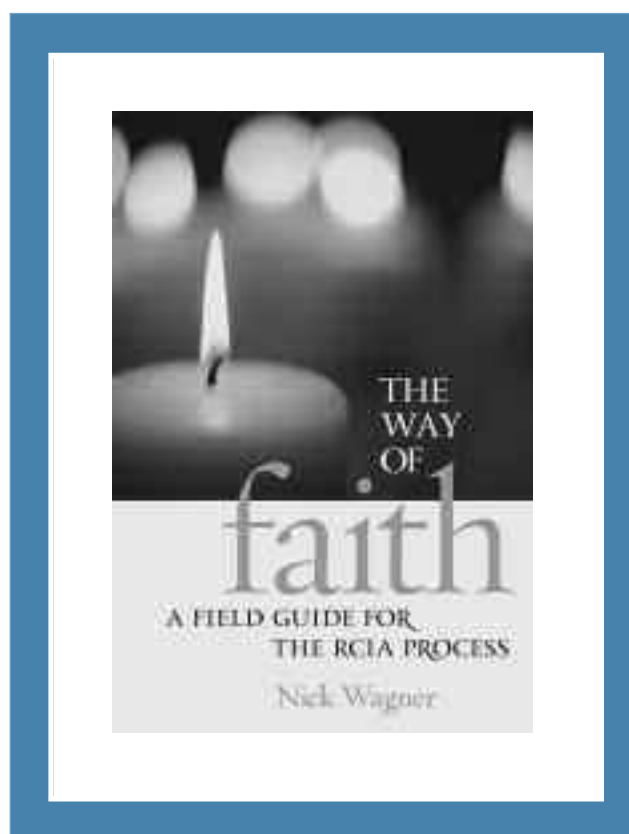
Reviewed by Kathy Kleinlein

At the beginning of each catechetical year, I give the parish catechetical leaders of my diocese a book that will add to their spiritual and theological development. This year that book was *The Way of Faith: A Field Guide for the RCIA Process* by Nick Wagner.

For more than twenty years Wagner has been exploring the connections between liturgy and catechesis. *The Way of Faith* is no exception. In it, Wagner discusses the RCIA in simple and practical terms. To call the book a guide is an understatement. It is simply the best book on the market for anyone who wishes to understand and appreciate the RCIA as the model for all catechesis.

The book is laid out in five sections with several helpful appendices. Wagner uses easy-to-follow metaphors and lots of practical lists — trademarks of his previous books. While his theology is always unquestionably on the mark, his easy, free-flowing style of writing allows catechists to translate the RCIA process from something which can seem daunting into an invaluable asset for catechesis.

At the outset of section 1 and continuing throughout the book, Wagner invites us to re-examine our RCIA process in order to move it from being simply acceptable or good to one that will lead “the entire parish to an experience of profound, intimate communion with Christ.” If we respond to this invitation diligently, the RCIA process will most definitely make a positive impact on all our parishioners. This, however, will take work and Wagner is up to the task of putting us through the due diligence required to make a difference.



In section 2, Wagner methodically and adeptly moves through each of the four stages of the catechumenate: evangelization and pre-catechumenate, catechumenate, purification and enlightenment, and mystagogy. Careful not to stipulate inflexible formulae for each period, Wagner instead challenges us to extend to each catechumen a passionate, humble, and caring attitude attuned to

continued on page 17

ECHOES OF FAITH PLUS AND ADULT FAITH FORMATION

by Jo Rotunno



In 2009 the church is celebrating the tenth anniversary of the promulgation of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*. All involved in the catechetical ministry hope that this will be an occasion to

place renewed emphasis on the primacy of adult faith formation called for in all recent church documents. I hope you will take this opportunity to review the resources available to you through *Echoes of Faith Plus*. *Echoes* offers two kinds of assistance. The five theology modules, of course, are a great source of enrichment for all the adults in your parish. The Adult Faith Formation module of *Echoes of Faith Plus* offers a resource to enrich all of the adult faith sharing groups in your parish through the training of group facilitators. Even a seasoned facilitator can draw new insight from the contents of this module. I'd like to offer a few observations from my own life to illustrate this point.

A number of recent events in my own life have driven home to me the great gift that I have been given through my own opportunities for adult faith formation. The most significant of these events was the death of my mother last August 15. Even as I mourned the loss of her daily presence in my life, for she lived with me for the past sixteen years, I was grateful for the formation in faith that I have been blessed to receive and the many ways that this formation supported me in this time of great transition.

Jane Regan talks about this in the first segment of the Adult Faith Formation module. She comments that many people think that faith conversations have to be about God or theological issues. But she corrects this perception, reminding us discussions about the things that are important in our lives are the real stuff of faith conversations. As I have shared stories of my mother with friends and relatives over the past months, I have learned once again how true Jane's perception is. God is not

always named in these conversations, but God is deeply present.

I also had the good fortune to attend a conference last November in Los Angeles led by David Wells, Director of Faith Formation in the Diocese of Plymouth, England, who also appears in the adult module. As David reminded us that day of the importance of shared faith, or the conversations on "Tuesdays in November," as he calls them, I recalled his many insights throughout the module. He reminds us there that we would not see as clearly the deeper significance of our life events without the opportunities for formation we have been blessed to have and that we want to help others to have.

Recently, I decided to join a small faith community in my parish. I opted not to serve as the group facilitator, but simply to belong to the group. One evening, as we reflected on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, I listened within a ten-minute period as one person commented on her experience speaking in tongues, another spoke of her anger toward the church for not accepting her gay son as wholeheartedly as she wished, and another spoke of his ongoing struggle to find a job. Even though I was fully engaged with the conversation, I couldn't help reflecting to myself on the great challenges that group facilitators face. Reflections fly off in all directions sometimes, and it takes skill to weave all those threads into a pattern that can lead the group members to greater insight.

The Adult Faith Formation module certainly won't teach facilitators everything they will ever need to know, but there is no facilitator who won't gain insight from moving through the module process. In addition to the insights of experts, the module also shows good facilitators at work leading group members in processes of learning and reflecting together. If you haven't already, give this resource a try in your parish. |

Jo Rotunno is director of marketing and electronic media for RCL Benziger.

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St. Paul
Rev. Rick Cassidy
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Living Your Strengths: Building Communities of Stewardship and Joy
Dr. Greg "Dobie" Moser

God calls us to build the Church through the strengths and talents given to us to serve those entrusted to our care. A strengths based approach is a powerful and loving way to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ while inviting others to do the same.



Tuesday, April 28, 2009 8:15 AM

Belonging and Belief: The Engaged and Evangelizing Community
Lesia Anslinger

Explore the importance of engagement, a deep sense of belonging to the parish, and consider ways we can more effectively draw people to Christ by becoming a more engaged and evangelizing community.

Wednesday, April 29, 2009 3:45 PM followed by a workshop

Building A Firm Foundation
Dr. Jane Regan

This presentation proposes that a community that supports faith filled living rooted in life-long and parish-wide formation is marked by intentional hospitality and meaningful conversation and is furthered by attention to spiritual practices and by a revitalized understanding of faithful followership.



Thursday, April 30, 2009 11:15 PM

Scott Appleby

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THE NEW EVANGELIZATION *continued from page 9*

NEW EVANGELIZATION: WHAT'S IN A WORD?

so good that they converted the whole world. Now there are preachers too many to count, but they achieve little.” In a survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, only 18 percent of laity rated preaching by Catholic clergy as “excellent.” Protestant ministers rated their ministers as “excellent” at almost double the rate as Catholic laity rated their preachers.

If the preacher or catechist is a hunter, that means the homily or lesson must be aimed, says Humbert. It cannot be mere target practice. If the homilist, in the words of Humbert, “achieves little,” it is because instead of the thrill of hunting, the homilist or catechist is confined to the safety of the shooting range relentlessly firing ideas upon a silhouette. To aim one must look, gaze, scan, track, learn the signs of the times, learn the characteristics of one’s congregation, stand by them in their pain, read the newspaper, and discern the categories at work within the culture. Aware of the characteristics of the culture,

the catechist or homilist works subtly to direct the listener away from self-centeredness, acquisition, and individualism to other-centeredness, gift, and the communion of persons.

The dedication of the homilist and catechist provides muscle and sinew for the New Evangelization. The faithful originality of the hunter in the end becomes the plowshare, cultivating a deep layer in the conscience into which the proclamation of the New Evangelization can more easily take root, especially in those who experience a gap between their identity as Catholics and their commitment to practice. The commitment to ‘mind the gap’ is transformative because it responds to the summons of the Good Shepherd. Under his guidance, the gap becomes a furrow into which the new seed is cast, and from which the new springtime emerges. ■

Rev. J. Brian Bransfield, STD, is a specialist in The Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis of the USCCB, and the incoming Executive Director of the Secretariat.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION ■

ENTHUSIASM, INVITATION,
AND WITNESS

by Rose L. Bennett



Are the adult faith formation efforts in your parish producing adults enthusiastic in their faith, sustained by and supportive of the community and able to be Christian disciples to the world? If so, you are truly engaged in evangelizing catechesis. Let us briefly examine how evangelization happens when the goals of adult faith formation dovetail with the goals of evangelization. Evangelizing catechesis focuses on fostering conversion to Jesus Christ, calling adults to live as active members of a community of believers, and equipping Catholics to witness to their discipleship.

At the heart of catechesis, wrote John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae* (5) is the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Effective evangelizing catechesis enables us to grow in intimacy and communion with Jesus. As this relationship develops and deepens we become more and more enthused about our faith. As with any good news, we just have to share it with someone. Thus, *enthusiasm* is the keyword in the first goal of evangelization.

EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES

What kind of adult faith formation leads to this kind of enthusiastic embrace of opportunities to share our faith? If we look to Jesus' example we could determine that small faith sharing communities definitely play a role. Jesus gathered twelve fishermen, business people, and blue collar workers and spent three years engaging them in intensive faith formation. They shared meals, listened to Jesus' stories and accompanied him as he healed and taught. Toward the end of this apprenticeship, Jesus announced that he was handing over the proclamation of the reign of God to them.

Whenever Catholics gather in small groups we need to include opportunities to share faith, pray, break open the word of God, delve more deeply into our tradition and support one another on the journey to deeper conversion to Jesus. Sometimes these meetings take the form of intentional small Christian communities; more often they might be a meeting of the parish council, a catechist training session, or a Bible study group. Evangelization happens when we do not neglect the spiritual growth of parishioners for the sake of the "real" work of the gathering. We call everyone to ongoing conversion and holiness.

STORY AS CATALYST

We Catholics live out our faith as members of a faith community. What transforms us from an army of individuals into a community that sees ourselves as members of the Body of Christ? How do we identify with the church so that we are motivated to reach out to the unchurched or to those no longer practicing their faith? According to William V. D'Antonio in *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*, a majority of respondents, when asked to define their Catholic identity, said that helping the

poor, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the sacraments and the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and Mary the Mother of Jesus were "very important" to their sense of being Catholic.

Evangelizing adult faith formation presents these elements of our Catholic heritage in the forms of stories and celebrations, moving through the liturgical cycle, eliciting from these the theology and beliefs that we profess together. Andrew Greeley, writing about "The Church's Changing Face," in *America* magazine in August 2007 says, "These key stories and symbols are enormous and indeed invincible resources for the church's work of evangelization, and they are there for the taking, if only we can realize that religion starts with image and story and not theological dicta and rules, however necessary these activities are." A community is a living body, renewed and invigorated by the addition of new members. Story becomes the catalyst as we *invite* to our parish Catholics no longer practicing their faith as well as those who are unchurched and looking for answers to their life questions. Evangelizing catechesis helps people discover their own stories of faith integrating them with the larger story of our tradition. Returning and newly initiated members in turn inspire and evangelize the larger community.

LIVING THE CALL

Evangelization and adult faith formation merge as we unpack the third goal for each — to equip Catholics to *witness* to gospel values, acting as disciples in mission to the world. In *Re-Imagining Evangelization: Toward the Reign of God and the Communal Parish*, Patrick Brennan writes that evangelizing parishes "help people re-imagine their life's work as participation in the co-creation of the world and the Kingdom of God." A person's job is also a vocation "because the goal is not just for profit but to bring Christ and God's Reign into the marketplace." Adult catechesis helps people identify their gifts and sends them forth to use their gifts for the common good and for the glory of God. Evangelization happens when we form people in the principles of Catholic social teaching. When concern for the environment, love for the poor, and solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the world become the values we live by and not just the platitudes we preach, we live out our baptismal call to complete the mission of Jesus Christ.

The fabric of parish life, interwoven with opportunities for faith sharing, celebration of our stories through prayer and ritual, and working for justice nurtures and sustains adult faith. As we plan for adult faith formation, let's look at everything we strive to do through the evangelizing lens of *enthusiasm, invitation, and witness.* ■

Rose Bennett is the former coordinator for evangelization, adult catechesis and adult initiation for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. As a parish DRE for more than 20 years she is experienced in both catechumenal and catechetical ministry. She is author of Evangelization in the Parish Catechetical Program, published by NCCL.

BOOKS IN THE NEWS *continued from page 11*

each individual's needs, so that eventually they all arrive by way of their personal journeys at the same time and place, ready for initiation.

With frequent references to the RCIA ritual book, section 3 is an in-depth exploration of the rites, their meaning, and their implementation. While Wagner is explicit in offering down-to-the-minute time schedules for facilitating each ritual, he recognizes the need for parish flexibility within the process. Here Wagner emphasizes how the relationship between the parish community and inquirer and catechumen must change in order for parishioners to become more intimately involved with the process. His treatment of mystagogy and life-long formation are two chapters in this section that catechists would do well to take to heart.

Section 4's title, "Nuts and Bolts," is no misnomer. In possibly the most practical part of the book, Wagner delineates ideas about how to recruit team members and sponsors and what qualities should be sought among such volunteers. Wagner proposes a well-thought-out seven week plan for team formation with

plenty of suggestions for resources. Finally, Wagner offers insightful comments on liturgical practices that are especially noteworthy including how to implement the catechetical process of RCIA, the liturgical connections, and the pitfalls of not understanding the process.

Section 5 is aptly named "Keeping It All Straight." Here Wagner reinforces the lists of what RCIA is and is not. There are chapters on the RCIA with children (not RCIC), a year-round process, and several other adaptations of the process including suggestions for shut-ins.

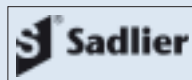
Wagner believes that every RCIA process should be "the best initiation process your parish is capable of." *The Way of Faith* will go a long way towards helping parishes to achieve this goal. Whether you've been involved with RCIA for two months or twenty years, you owe it to yourself and your fellow catechists to read this book. ■

Kathy Kleinlein is the diocesan director for catechetical ministry for the Diocese of Venice in Florida.

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HOW EVANGELIZATION WORKS IN A PARISH

by Bryan Reising

“A sower went out to sow... some fell on the path... other seed fell on rocky ground... some seed fell among thorns... and some seed fell on rich soil...” (Mark 4:3-8).



PREPARING THE SOIL

Growing up on a farm in Illinois, my father would maximize yields by preparing the soil ahead of time. If he had been the sower in the parable noted above, he would have plowed up the hardened ground of the path, taken out the rocks, and with heavy-duty work gloves pulled out the thorny weeds.

In a similar way, “preparation of the soil” can happen within the parishes of our dioceses. In some cases, we need to first prepare the soil of our pastors and pastoral leaders so they are ready. Then our parishes can prepare the hearts and minds of those who participate in our Sunday worship as well as all who live within our parish territory. The Vatican II document *Christus Dominus* explains that our pastors and others in the parish need to reach out to all within the parish territory (30, 1).

How can we reach out? We can use various means of communication, such as mailings, radio, phone calls, the Internet. However, these methods only support the best means of communication, namely, person-to-person. Many parishes around the world make home visitation a regular ministry within the parish. With this effort, visitors are able to find those who are in need, those Catholics we miss, and those who have no church home. In addition, they can visit with Catholics who do participate actively and with those of other faith traditions to build ecumenical and interfaith relations. Diocesan offices can provide training for home visitation and other means of reaching out.

PLANTING THE SEED

The seed in the Parable of the Sower is indeed the Gospel, the *kerygma*, the proclamation of the person of Jesus. The U.S. bishops’ document, *Go and Make Disciples (GMD)*, describes the *kerygma* as the essence of evangelization (*GMD*, p. 2). It goes on to say that this proclamation changes our lives, producing a “germination” called conversion (*GMD*, p. 2). Conversion is a turning away from sin and a turning toward God and his ways of love.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* affirms the planting of the seed: “Evangelization proclaims explicitly the Gospel, through

‘first proclamation’ calling to conversion. It initiates into the faith and the Christian life, by means of catechesis and the sacraments of Christian initiation, those who convert to Jesus or those who take up again the path of following him” (48 — see also the *NDC*, 17 C).

Those with no church home hear the Gospel proclaimed, and they respond in faith and conversion through the sacraments of initiation. For those who have been away from the church, a process for returning Catholics can facilitate a “replanting” so that they can become reconciled with the church and the church with them. For those who are active in the faith, a renewal of this proclamation can lead to a deeper relationship with Christ and a new way of being and living. Diocesan offices can support parishes in their efforts: the RCIA, processes for returning Catholics, and parish renewal experiences.

NOURISHING THE PLANT

After the seed is planted, it requires care and nourishment. In a similar way, we need to provide opportunities for nourishment following the *kerygma*. The sacraments, prayer, permanent catechesis, and community building are the means to nourish our faith life (*GDC*, 48 and *NDC*, 17 C). Permanent catechesis nourishes the faith of believers throughout their lives (*GDC*, 51 and *NDC*, 17 C). Catechetical methods for evangelization can include intergenerational gatherings and small Christian communities. Diocesan offices can help parishes with resources for catechesis that is evangelizing and permanent.

SHARING THE FRUITS

A plant that is well cared for and nourished bears fruit. Evangelized and catechized persons can discern their “fruits,” receive further training from their parish or diocese, and share those fruits within the home, in the parish, and in society.

They in turn become the new sowers as they prepare more soil, plant more seed, and nourish others so that more and more can encounter Christ, learn about the faith, and live that faith every day! ■

Bryan Reising is the director for religious education and adult faith formation for the Diocese of New Ulm. He has many years of experience with evangelization at both parish and diocesan levels.

NOTABLE RESOURCES

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

Websites of Interest

Speaking of Faith with Krista Tippett, winner of a Peabody Award, is public radio's weekly program about "religion, meaning, ethics, and ideas." It is produced and distributed by American Public Media and currently heard on over 200 public radio stations across the U.S. and globally via the Web and podcast. Tippett is the author of *Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters — and How to Talk About It*. Together with the six-page discussion guide (pdf), *Speaking of Faith* is an excellent choice for parish reading groups.

Zondervan Bible Search is a very clean and easy to use search engine for the *New International Version* and *Today's New International Version*. Search by book, chapter, verse or key words.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers information about the work of the conference, departments and staff. There you will find many excellent documents and resources for all areas of ministry. The New American Bible is a click away.

The Center for Liturgy Sunday Web Site: The Center for Liturgy at Saint Louis University warmly invites all members of the assembly to prepare for Sunday Mass by using this site. The site is definitely not just for clergy and not just for those who lector or play music. Sections include praying toward Sunday, spirituality for Sunday, get to know the readings, etc. The link section presents a comprehensive directory and description of web sites of "all things liturgical."

CathNewsUSA, a service of Paulist Press, digests Catholic news from home and abroad. *CathNewsUSA* delivers headlines by email and presents them on the *Paulist Press* website, free of charge, before breakfast each weekday. To receive the weekly email, register at the *CathNewsUSA* website.

PastoralPlanning: Bill Huebsch, author and national presenter on a variety of catechetical topics, has created a resource-rich and creative website that supports lifelong faith formation. Before you plan your next adult formation program in Scripture, RCIA, or sacraments, the pastoral council, liturgical seasons, parents and families. And check out *Growing Up Catholic*, a complete sacrament preparation program for Reconciliation, Confirmation in the restored order, and Eucharist for children in grades two, three and four.

Catholic News Services and Catholic News Service Blog: Since 1920 *Catholic News Service* has been a news agency specializing in reporting religion. It is the primary source for news that appears in the *U.S. Catholic press* and is the leading source of news for Catholic print and broadcast media throughout the world. The *Catholic News Service Blog* presents daily features and links to variety of other news stories and archives.

Powell's Books: One of the finest independent bookstores in the country is Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon. Founded in 1971, Powell's offers new and used books, with an excellent collection in religion and spirituality. In addition to visiting their excellent website, I receive in my daily email *Powell's Review-a-Day*. These are featured reviews from leading publications (*Atlantic*, *New Republic*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Review of Books*, etc.) This is an excellent service that keeps me informed on the "best books of the day."

Bibles, Bibles and More Bibles

With the recent synod in Rome on *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, I look forward in the next few years to the publication of Bibles focused on specific themes, audiences and formats. Today publishers are cre-

atively developing Bibles "so that 'young men and women, old people and children together' (Ps 148:12) may hear, understand, glorify and live the word of God." (12) In this issue we feature Bibles by *HarperOne*.

HarperOne, formerly know as Harper-SanFrancisco, is the publisher of a variety of Bibles in the New Revised Standard Version. Here are promos for two recent Bibles.

The Green Bible (Protestant Edition) will equip and encourage you to see God's vision for creation and help you engage in the work of healing and sustaining it. This first Bible of its kind includes inspirational essays from key leaders such as N. T. Wright, Barbara Brown Taylor, Brian McLaren, Matthew Sleeth, Pope John Paul II, and Wendell Berry. As you read the scriptures anew, *The Green Bible* will help you see that caring for the earth is not only a calling, but a lifestyle. (From the publisher)

The *NRSV* has been grossly under marketed and undersold. In our efforts to provide new and innovative editions of this beloved translation, we now introduce the **NRSV XL Catholic Edition**. Targeting those who appreciate an easier-to-see setting, we have combined the latest trends in design with a larger print size. The *NRSV XL* offers beautiful and hip styling with a wonderful reading experience. No one will feel that they have been relegated to ugly and bulky larger print editions by purchasing an *XL*. It also includes a concordance index to help people find key passages. This special Catholic edition includes all 73 books of the Catholic canon. (From the publisher) |

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

CROSSWORD

INTERNET EVANGELIZATION

by Megan Anecharico

ACROSS

- 1 Evangelization must attend to this
- 6 Sacramental warrant for evangelization
- 11 Delivery room M.D.s
- 12 1,150
- 14 Computer data letters with CD
- 15 Internet segment of the evangelization market
- 17 Altoona, PA airport abbr.
- 18 Accumulate
- 20 "No questions asked" in cyberspace
- 21 HTML tag for 9D
- 22 "Get well soon" in cyberspace
- 23 Jumble for :-)
- 25 "Can't talk" in cyberspace
- 27 Electronic data card
- 29 Adolescent skin blemish
- 32 Break in sports action - abbr.
- 33 Catechize
- 35 Genetic molecule letters
- 37 Environmentally friendly
- 39 Evangelization cooperation
- 40 Collaborative websites
- 41 Perform a role on stage
- 42 Tribute
- 44 Computer sign-on with 4D
- 45 Magnesium oxide formula
- 47 "I am sorry" in cyberspace
- 48 "Reply" in cyberspace
- 50 "The Itsy ___ Spider"
- 54 Cyber "enemy"
- 57 102
- 59 Swiss mountain
- 61 ___ a good note - 2 words
- 63 "In order to" in cyberspace
- 64 Ski resort building

- 66 "I am tired" in cyberspace
- 67 Opposite of SSW
- 68 New Zealand activist Tāme
- 69 To 33A & 40D are examples of this in evangelization
- 70 Key role of the evangelizing community

DOWN

- 1 Effective evangelization helps people do this with each other
- 2 The diocese as a church unit
- 3 "To be honest" in cyberspace
- 4 Computer sign-on with 44A
- 5 Cyber-correspondence
- 6 On-line journals
- 7 Enter into deeper relationship with God
- 8 Actor Hanks
- 9 Pictorial or metaphorical tool of evangelization
- 10 Evangelization is the church's this
- 13 Essential for evangelization is effective this
- 16 Intelligence #
- 19 Opposite of NE
- 23 On-line chat letters
- 24 "Easy" in cyberspace
- 26 Lukewarm
- 27 Semitransparent theater curtain
- 28 Jumble for vision
- 30 Jumble for strength and power
- 31 The Pointer Sisters & Bee Gees
- 32 Pavarotti, Domingo, or Carreras
- 34 "Alive and kicking" in cyberspace
- 35 U.S. electronics co.
- 36 Fitting

1		2	3	4		5		6		7	8	9		10
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		49			50	51		52				53		
54	55			56		57				58		59	60	
61			62			63				64	65			
		66				67				68				
69								70						

- 38 Age
- 40 Evangelize through personal testimony of faith
- 43 Esteem necessary for evangelization
- 46 "Obligatory" in cyberspace
- 47 "Including you" in cyberspace
- 49 Electronic and print tools of evangelization
- 51 Cake frosting
- 52 WWW locations
- 53 Audio form of 49D
- 55 Postal code for Minneapolis' state
- 56 "How nice that is" in cyberspace
- 58 Slide involuntarily
- 60 Common cell phone letters
- 62 Rowboat implement
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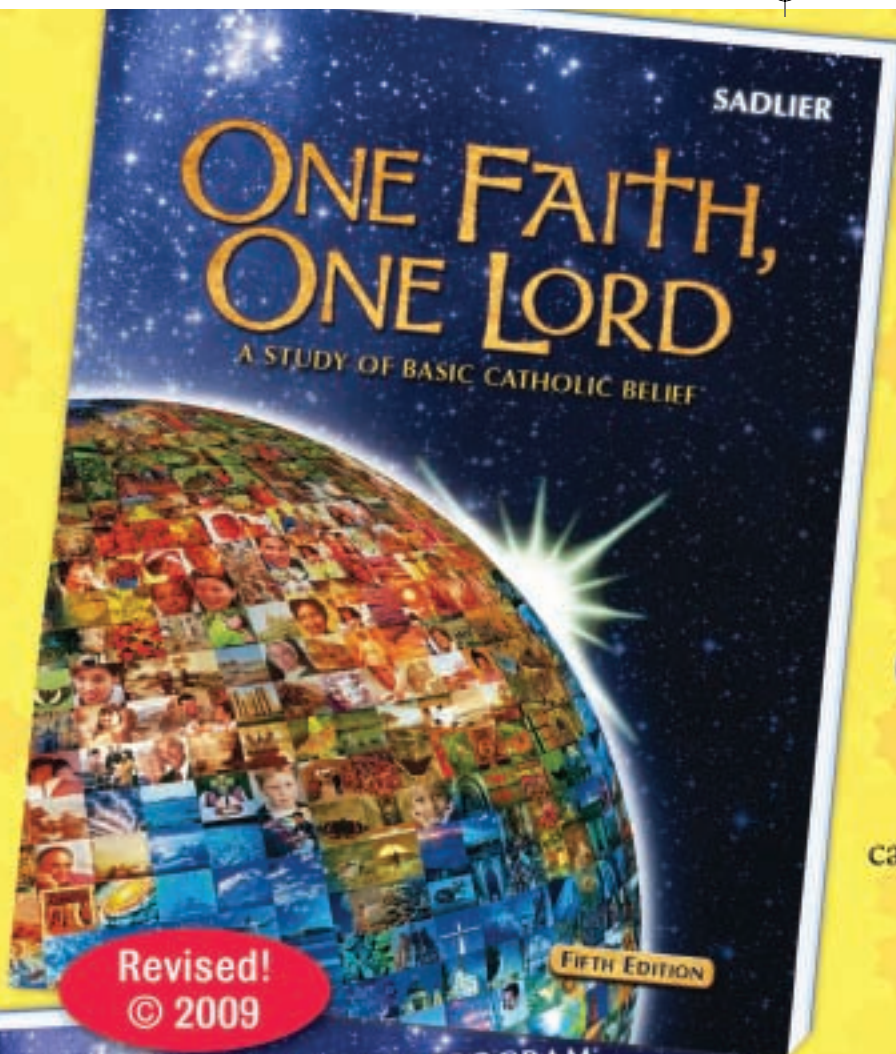
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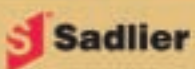


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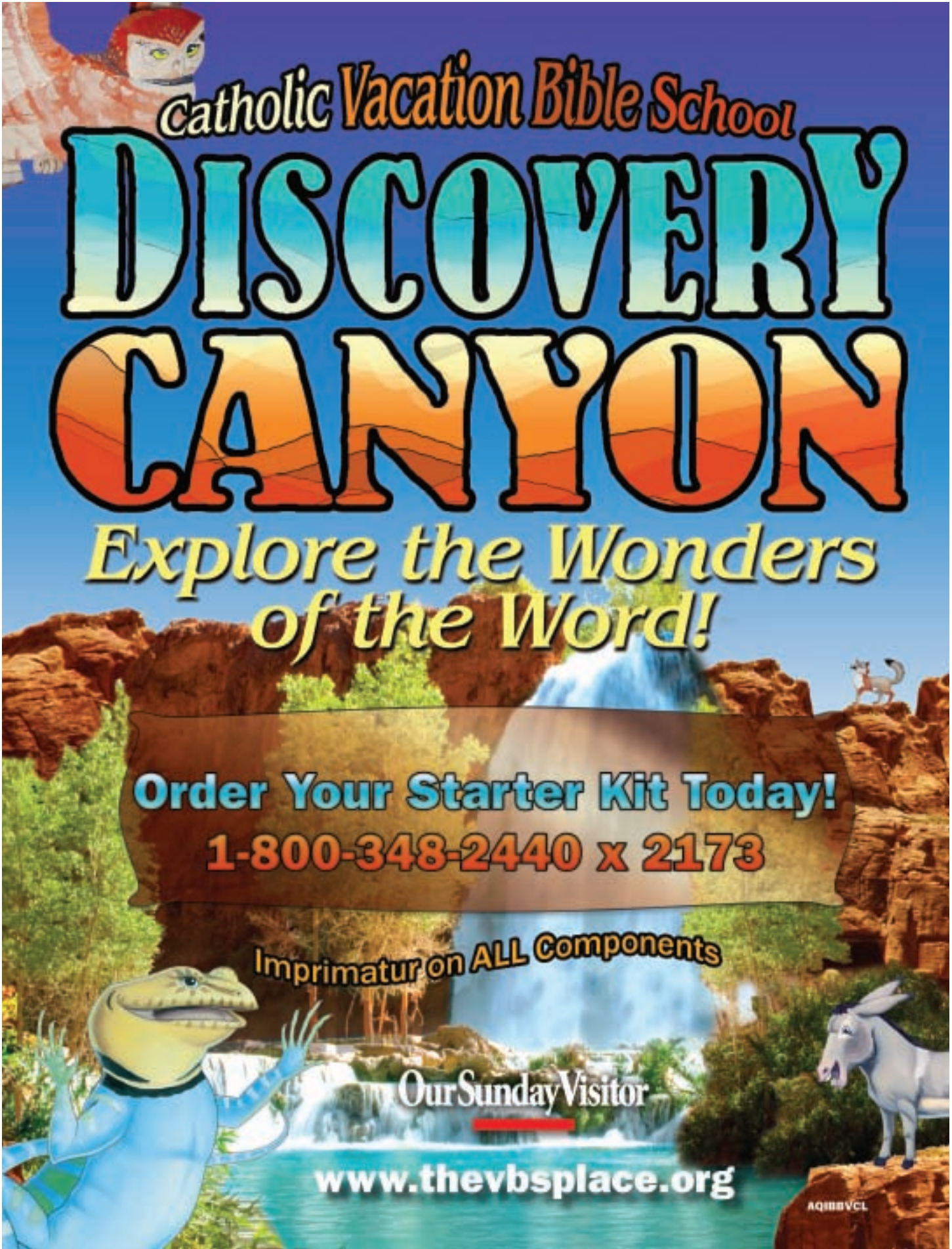


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