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CATECHETICAL  
LEADER

The background of the cover is a photograph of a rolling green landscape at sunset. A dirt path winds through the fields, leading towards a small stone building on a hill. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene.

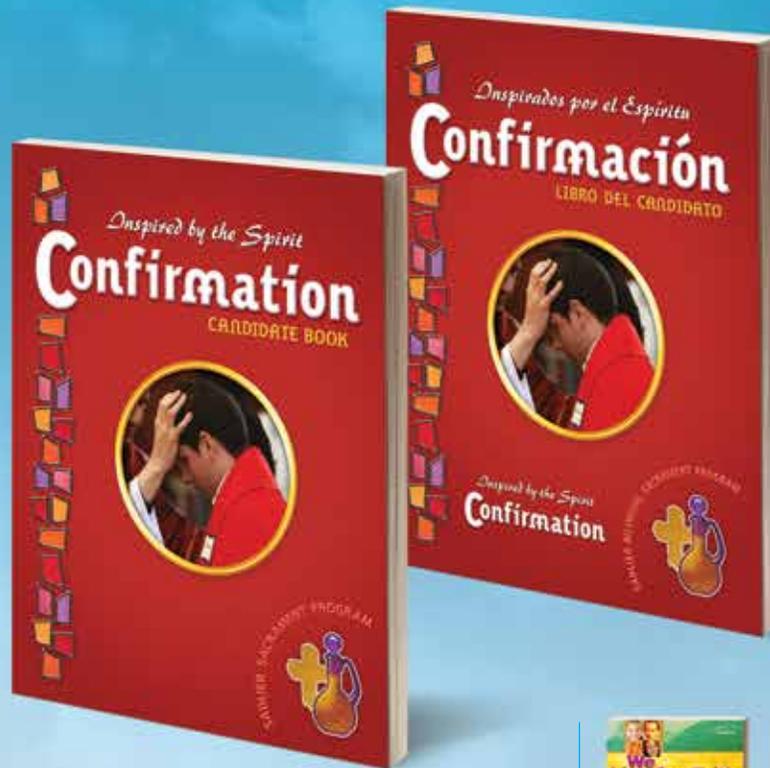
# preparing for the journey

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The Catholic Imagination

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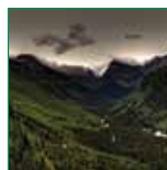
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# NCCL — MD

Bill Miller



## National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



The annual NCCL Conference and Exposition was a wonderful week. We gathered to “Ignite the Fire of Faith!”

I thank everyone who contributed to making the 2013 conference a stirring success, including those who worked tirelessly, in front and behind the scenes, as well as all who attended.

During our days together we shared beautiful liturgy and prayer experiences and wonderful “table fellowship.” We listened to knowledgeable, motivating keynote speakers, and had the opportunity to participate in numerous learning sessions and “quick fires” designed to provide all kinds of practical ideas and techniques. Our publishing community greeted us with their amazing, hallmark hospitality and provided us with examples of the latest catechetical tools and resources. The people of Cleveland, including Bishop Richard Lennon, his staff, the wonderful PCLs of the diocese, and the staff of the hotel welcomed us with open arms.

This annual conference and all that it represents only works because we are truly a “member-driven” (MD) organization. The annual conference and NCCL in general is only as strong and vibrant as are its members...all of us, working together, “echo” the message of God to all with whom we interact.

There is no question that, as heralds of the faith, we face challenges that would be absolutely overwhelming to those who do not have the gift of faith that we have received from our Lord. However, I sense a new spirit of hope, born out of that faith and the love that accompanies it. The inspirational words and actions of Pope Francis are a great example of this new era of hope. *Never* were we promised that the road of evangelization and catechesis would be an easy road. But we have been promised that our loving God would be with us always... *always*. There is no greater promise than that.

The Representative Council of NCCL (including the members of the NCCL Board), which drives the dynamic committee structure accomplishing much of the work

of the organization, is in the midst of a renaissance of activity. Several committees, such as the Evangelization Committee, the Committee for Adult Faith Formation, and the Rural Life Committee, have been extremely active in the past 12 months and are moving forward with exciting initiatives, such as webinars and a newly created website featuring evangelization resources that is linked to our NCCL website. A new (and much needed) Intercultural Committee has been formed, and the group met for the first time in Cleveland. This Committee, working closely with the FCH (Forum for Catechesis with Hispanics) and other groups, will help NCCL to better represent the many cultures that are part of the rich tapestry of the catechetical landscape of our faith.

One of the most important initiatives is a new focus on publicity and marketing, including special invitations to those who are not currently members of NCCL. We hope our efforts will instill, in many catechetical leaders at all levels, a desire to join NCCL.

As we begin another catechetical year, please consider the possibility that *you* are being called to take a more active role in this, *your* national catechetical organization. In the true spirit of discipleship, please consider how you might best use your talents and gifts...your charisms... for the greater glory of God and the good of us all. Never has there been a better time to become more active. If you are interested in learning more about the NCCL committee structure, I invite you to contact Lee Nagel at the NCCL Office, [lnagel@nccl.org](mailto:lnagel@nccl.org), or me (Bill Miller) at [snowtopbm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:snowtopbm@sbcglobal.net). You can also call me at 330.388.3828, or speak with any Board member if that is more convenient for you.

For an entity such as NCCL, your commitment to be involved in the work of the organization through one of our vitally important committees is what makes NCCL a successful member-driven (MD) organization. Believe me, it is “*just what the doctor ordered!*” ■

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# “OPEN THE DOOR!”

Leland Nagel



It's a desperate call, often from a caregiver who can't get a response; it's a demand associated with a parent to a child or a teen. It can even be followed by another word: "Police." Rarely is it seen as an invitation to come out because I am worried or come out because I love you and I want you to feel my love. In fact, even in family quarrels, it can sound like law enforcement yelling, "Come out before I break down this door!" If only that yell could be softened and followed by the true feelings of the heart: "I want to stop you from hurting yourself or harming others."

I can't recall Jesus ever saying, "Open the door," but I can recollect him saying to Lazarus, "Come out." The emotion and feelings behind those words might be worth a long conversation, but more important was the desire of Jesus when he spoke those two words. We don't know if Lazarus had been seriously ill for a long time; we only know that Jesus didn't depart immediately when he heard "he whom you love is ill." In fact, he remarked that "this illness does not lead to death..." Jesus knows that love conquers death. In C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan also understands this when he says, "If the Witch had looked back before the dawn of time, she would have known that when a willing, innocent victim is killed by a traitor, the Stone Table will crack and death itself will be reversed" (179).

When Jesus arrives we learn that Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days. He is dead and now we will discover that love is stronger than death. First, he weeps tears of love as he hears them say, "Could not he...have kept the man from dying?" That is precisely the point. He enters our place of grief and pain in death and he brings love. He is the resurrection and the life.

And so in a loud voice, reminiscent of Moses saying to the Pharaoh that God commands him to "Let my people go," Jesus, one with his Father, calls him by name and says, "Lazarus, come out!" Here it is important to note that Jesus didn't unbind Lazarus. Those who had wept tears of love for him did that as they believed he was dead.

If for no other reason, this speaks of the importance of the community to catechize. Children, adolescents, young adults, and adults can come to faith formation and spiritual activities all bound up in the non-essentials of life. They come searching, seeking the one who called them to "Come out." The

whole parish community shares the responsibility to unbind and to support those who are called to the esteemed role of catechist, those who echo the call of God to "come out." As catechists, we have a special responsibility to cry out their names and invite them to "come out."

As we contemplate the message of Catechetical Sunday, it's important to remember that this year's theme, *Open the Door of Faith*, is an invitation — an invitation from Jesus Christ to enter into the fullness of life.

Imagine Jesus standing at the door and after extending the invitation to come out, one hears, "Who's there?" Now imagine him saying:

"I AM the One who loved you before you were even in your mother's womb."

"I AM the One who gave his life so that you might join me and the communion of saints when you leave this earth."

"I AM the One who always forgives, always consoles, always shows compassion and mercy."

"I AM the Way, the Truth, the Life. Come, follow me."

We are a people of hope. We believe that love conquers death. It is at Mass that together as a whole community, we declare in a loud voice, "We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection, until you come again." Until the second coming, we are called to open the door of faith, to call them by name, to support them, and foster courage to come out of the darkness and faith to walk into the light.

We are catechists. We open the doors of faith and invite others to listen to our stories of life after death, to hear God's call to "come out." Hear God's call to "come out." We open the doors of faith and invite others in to see how we love one another.

"Open the door" is not an ultimatum, though it is a challenge. "Open the door" is not an obligation, although it is an option. "Open the door" is not a demand, but it is an invitation; an invitation to "come out! Come out, wherever you are." ■

# Catechesis: Equipping for Encounter

Carole Eipers



Sister Mary Jacqueline asked the question, “Where is God?” and we second-graders, having dutifully memorized the Baltimore Catechism responded, “God is everywhere.” God’s omnipresence should make it easy for us to help people meet God. And since we believe in the Blessed Trinity, it follows that

facilitating people’s encounters with Christ should be equally as easy. The aim of catechesis, as we read in *Catechesi Tradendae* is “to put people not only in touch, but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (5). It’s simple then, right? If you hesitated, or answered, “No, it isn’t,” you are certainly not alone; our colleagues and the stories of many who have catechized before us would agree. So, if God is everywhere and we are to put people in touch with him and to support their encountering the Christ, how might we make it easier? Or, if not easier, how might we be more effective in doing this, with the help of the Holy Spirit?

## DO NO HARM

If I were to offer a starting point for facilitating people’s encounters with Jesus Christ, it would be the guiding principle that physicians embrace, “First, do no harm.” While we may always have the best intentions, the fact is we sometimes offer obstacles rather than opportunities. I learned this from the parent and catechist team when I was a parish DRE, and from the Parent Advisory Committee I formed as a Diocesan Director. Even the procedures I especially designed with families in mind were often the very ones that the families found difficult. So, first, do no harm and listen to those affected by our decisions and policies to be sure no unintended harm is done.

## STUDY SCRIPTURE

The second suggestion I would make is to study Scripture. In *Healer of Shattered Hearts*, Rabbi David Wolpe writes, “The scholar Dr. Louis Finkelstein once remarked, ‘When I pray, I speak to God. When I study, God speaks to me.’ Study enables one to hear the voice of God as mediated by history and tradition.” But study alone does not necessarily reveal God’s voice so we pray with Scripture, and reflect on when and how people encountered Jesus. If we are to facilitate encounters with Jesus, it helps to understand what led to such encounters in the past. For the Magi, it was journeying far and following a star that led

to their encounter with Jesus. For Simon and Andrew, it was fishing — their daily work — that began their discipleship. For James and John, it was their work too that led them to hear Jesus call as they mended their nets. Matthew was at the customs house collecting taxes when he encountered Jesus. Some met Jesus because they hungered for his teaching and others needed his healing touch: the lepers, the two blind men, the woman with the hemorrhage, the mute person, and so many others. The centurion whose servant was suffering, the official whose daughter died, and the father whose son was possessed all encountered Jesus because they sought Jesus’ help for someone else. The woman at the well met Jesus through conversation and confession. And Zacchaeus went out on a limb.

## LOOK WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION

Of course, each person was open to Jesus. Each was searching and/or brought some degree of faith to the encounter. Are we aware of people’s daily work and of those who are eager for teaching, those who need healing, those who seek help for others, those who converse and even confess in an effort to meet the Christ? And do we spot those who are out on some kind of limb, anxious for a glimpse of Jesus? In *Jesus in America* Dr. Richard Fox wrote, “We don’t know how Jesus looked, but we know how he looked at people.” We find Jesus when we look at people as he did, with love and compassion, and we lead others to him when we teach how he embraced everyone as equals and how his love was inclusive, laced with compassion and forgiveness.

## OVERCOME THE BLOCKS

Jesus also gave us direction as to how one might encounter him — or deepen their relationship with him. He said, whoever receives a child in his name, receives him; whoever takes up the cross, follows him. Whoever loses life for his sake, will find it. We know, too, from the Scriptures, what blocked encounters with Jesus: judging Jesus, questioning his authority, putting the Sabbath before people’s urgent needs, elitism (“Isn’t he the carpenter’s son?”), lack of faith, hypocrisy, having attachment to many possessions, putting tradition over the commandments of God. Part of facilitating an encounter with Jesus is to be rid of these blocks — in ourselves and in those whom we serve. How do we offer assistance with overcoming what gets in the way of conversion of heart?



Photo by Eric Ward

## ENCOUNTER CHRIST IN THE LITURGY

While I was preparing to write this article, I was reflecting on the ways I encounter Jesus and I think that tapping our own experiences of such meetings is key to facilitating them for others. It was Sunday and I went to the 10:00 am Mass. The Eucharistic liturgy, we know, is the preeminent place of encounter with Jesus Christ — and on this morning, I relished every moment. First, I encountered Jesus in the warm greeting of the ministers of hospitality. I felt the presence of Jesus as I saw the catechumens take their place in the front pews eager to continue their journey and in the young violinists who enhanced the liturgy with their gifts of music. I saw Jesus in the faces of the children as they left smiling and skipping for their Liturgy of Word. I heard Jesus in the voice of the priest whose homily called me to reflect on the interweaving of love and grief in our lives and how faith enables us to hope in our loving and through our grieving. Even the offertory collection revealed Jesus as people responded to his presence by giving — many gave, I am sure, like the poor widow of the Scriptures, not of their excess but of their very sustenance.

I have always found the Communion procession to be a time replete with encounter; each person, young or old, singing or silent, walking strong or leaning on a cane, reminds me that Jesus is present. In my own parish, I am moved not only by the vision of those processing, but also by their life stories.

There are those who have experienced times of terrible losses, of debilitating illnesses, of devastating tragedies, and I am reminded that one can encounter Jesus in all of these times. These people continue to believe, and I encounter the Christ anew as I witness their faith and somehow their procession fosters my own belief and makes my encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist richer.

One may not consider the announcements before the final blessing as a moment of potential encounter, but each event named was calling us to a place where we might encounter the Christ. We were invited to work at or donate to the beds shelter; we were asked to participate in a program to provide school supplies for refugee children; we were encouraged to celebrate healing and forgiveness at the parish reconciliation service; we were invited to the parish center to celebrate with fellow parishioners who had prepared a St. Joseph's table to honor his feast day.

When I returned home, I thought about how very filled our parish is with opportunities to encounter Christ. But I realized as well all that I brought to church that morning that enabled my encountering Jesus. One may certainly be touched by liturgy directly — the beauty of the liturgy has evangelized many — and many have been moved by the beliefs expressed in liturgical prayers and actions. Catechesis on the liturgy can deepen both our understanding of our worship and our

encounter with Christ through the liturgy. I know the RCIA and so could appreciate the journey of faith taking place in the pews in front of me, and I know Children's Liturgy of the Word so I could enjoy the children's enthusiasm to hear God's word in an age-appropriate way. I know that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and so am eager for this unique encounter. I know that the social doctrines of the church are integral to our discipleship so I understand the invitation to outreach efforts as opportunities to live as a disciple and to encounter the Christ in those in need. I have been taught about God's mercy and how Jesus forgave sin and so understand the gift that is reconciliation. And I know who St. Joseph is, and how Joseph's intercession may draw me closer to his foster Son and I remembered the importance of devotions as paths to encounter the Lord.

### CATECHIZE WELL

I know all this because I have been catechized. Catechesis, therefore, provides the threshold for me to enter the potential encounter-times. Catechize well.

In my travels to dioceses around the country, I am often told that when I arrive at the airport, a person whom I do not know will meet me. Sometimes I am given a description: he has a moustache, or she will be wearing a purple scarf. When I arrive, I sometimes wish I had more information, especially if there are a dozen men with moustaches! The more I know, the more certain I am that I will meet the right person — he has a moustache, brown hair, and will be wearing a plaid jacket that says "St. John Parish."

Catechesis teaches us who to look for — what he says, what he stands for, what his teaching means for us today — so we can be sure when we meet Jesus. And we meet him in all the ways our Tradition offers. We can meet him in prayer certainly. As Henri Nouwen wrote, "In prayer, you encounter God, in the soft breeze, in the distress and joy of your neighbor, and in the loneliness of your own heart." We meet the Christ in the sacraments, in the community of faith, in those we love and in those we serve. But it is also true that we may meet God in the strangest, most unexpected places. "What's a nice God like you doing in a place like this?" we may ask as we encounter him on the edge of despair, or in time of desperation, or at the peak of incredible joy, and in the humdrum of daily life and boring routine. If we know what he looks like, recognize his word echoing, we will meet him. In *The Preaching Life* Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "Nor is it the preacher's job to send people home with good advice ringing in their ears but with the tools they need to discern God's voice speaking to them in the particular circumstances of their own lives" (Page 75). The catechist too equips us, not just with knowledge of the faith, but with the tools we need to hear and encounter Jesus in every circumstance.

Pearl Bailey said, "People see God every day. They just don't recognize him." In a similar vein, theologian Charles Winters wrote,

The gospel cannot be heard in the streets if we have not heard it in the sanctuary; but if we cannot hear it in the streets, we probably have not really heard what is said in the sanctuary. God cannot be recognized in the multitude of incognitos if we have not met God at the altar; but if we do not know God when met in disguise, our gift at the altar is for naught (*Church, Sacraments, and Ministry*).

Who better to be sure they recognize God in church and outside church than catechists? It requires having and developing in those catechized a sacramental imagination that sees God's presence everywhere no matter the situation. When I travel, folks also tell me where the person who is meeting me will be: just outside terminal two or maybe in the baggage claim area. Part of encountering Jesus is knowing where to look.

### DON'T JUDGE

So, I remind myself, do no harm; reflect on Scripture; remove obstacles; consider your own experiences of encountering Christ; ask always, "What do they need to be able to recognize him?" and do it! Then I offer myself a few other tips for facilitating people's encounters with Christ: affirm their glimpses; get out of the way; don't limit God (e.g. nurture children only if their parents are involved) or try to control God (e.g. require conversion happen according to the parish calendar); like John the Baptist, point always to the Christ, but also be Christ-like; assure a positive first contact (who answers the phone?) and every other contact — we don't need to provide the cross, we help people to carry the ones they have; channel grace. Don't judge where or when or how they have encountered Christ by where or when or how you have met him. We may find silence leads to encounter, but young people may discover their encounter in the midst of sounds; we may find Christ in the alone times, but in some cultures he is most surely encountered in community. There are those for whom the virtual world provides a way toward encounter and those who find reality more conducive. When we listen to the experiences of those who encounter Christ in ways different from what we have known, we learn how to provide those "environments for encounter" for others.

God is indeed everywhere, as the Baltimore Catechism said, but we also know from our encounters with God the truth of that answer. As George Weigel wrote in *Letters to a Young Catholic*, "The ordinary stuff of the world is the material God uses to bring us into communion with the truly extraordinary — with God himself." One final reminder, then: Look like we have met the Lord! Exude the joy and love and hope that comes from discipleship, from fostering the growth of the reign of God, from the Holy Spirit's inspiration, from the promise of eternal life. Why else would anyone who seeks to encounter the Christ come to us? |

*Carole Eipers is Vice President, Executive Director of Catechetics for William H. Sadlier, Inc.*



# Adult Faith Formation: A Lifelong Journey

Daniel S. Mulhall and Neil A. Parent



*The authors recount their early introductions into adult faith formation and outline some of its most important principles that they learned along the way.*

## THE BEGINNINGS

**Dan:** My introduction to adult faith formation (AFF) came unexpectedly in the summer of 1980. After teaching high school religion, I was offered an opportunity to apply for a diocesan position as a consultant for faith formation.

Although I held a MA in Theology from Catholic University and had been in several different seminaries by this time, I knew nothing about adult religious education or adult faith formation, as it is now called. Nowhere in my preparation had I had even a conversation, much less a class on the topic.

Fortunately, there were two weeks before the job interview so I had time to learn something about the field. At the library I came across a couple of books — not many — and a few articles that talked about the concept of adult education. (I don't know if AFF as a field of study even existed then.) Two names dominated the field in those days: Malcolm Knowles and Leon McKenzie.

Malcolm Knowles (1913 – 1997) was a seminal figure in the creation of what we today know as adult education. He served as the executive director of the Adult Education Association of the United States in the 1950s and wrote several books on the topic. He coined the term *andragogy* to differentiate the field of adult education from *pedagogy*, the teaching of children. Knowles truly believed that adults were “self-directed learners,” and so they would be best served by having a variety of learning opportunities rather than a set curriculum as was needed when teaching children. This focus on treating adults as adults shaped Knowles’ theory of adult education, and moved the field from the concept of “educating people” to “facilitating adult learning.” These concepts have shaped all of my work these last 33 years.

Leon McKenzie (1932 –) wrote the book on adult religious education, at least the one that I could find. Leon, whose background was in Catholic elementary and high school edu-

cation, received his doctorate in adult education from Indiana University. He then applied what he had learned about secular adult education to the field of educating Christian adults. What I learned most from Leon was that ARE was not limited to theology or philosophy courses, or to courses of any kind for that matter. Rather, the tag ARE could honestly be applied to any and all gatherings of adults, who came together at the church or because of the church, as long as learning could be an intentional outcome. McKenzie wrote that auto maintenance or income tax planning sessions could be just as important as courses on the Eucharist if, as part of the sessions, people grew closer to the church and its teachings. As Michael Harden writes in his biographical essay on McKenzie that appears on the Talbot School of Theology website<sup>1</sup>, “I also came to understand the roots of his philosophy that education may be religious by virtue of either the content or the intent.”

In later years, I was fortunate enough to meet and study with both Dr. Knowles and Dr. McKenzie, and thank them for their assistance in getting me that first job in the field. (In my later studies with Dr. McKenzie, I learned a great deal about conducting effective needs assessments. If you want self-motivated adults to attend learning sessions you'd better know what they really want and need. This was an extremely valuable skill to learn. How many poorly attended AFF sessions are the result of poorly done needs assessments?)

In 1980, adult religious education opportunities in Covington usually came in one of two types. The most common were talks by “experts.” These were usually done by priests or sisters on theological topics during Lent, (we dutifully maintained a speaker’s bureau for this purpose), although we would also have some parishes request talks on specific topics, most often those of interest to parents. But by the early 1980s, packaged religious programs were starting to become available. The most commonly used program in Covington at that time was Genesis II. This was a series of films that explored what it meant to belong to a Catholic community. A group of adults would gather for food and fellowship, watch the movie (black and white, you needed a movie projector, which the office would lend if the parish didn't have one), and then they would discuss what they had seen. People who participated in Genesis II seemed

1. [http://www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=leon\\_mckenzie](http://www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=leon_mckenzie)

to become very attached to their group, and they seemed to become much more active in their parishes. Some parishes were also doing Christ Renews His Parish. Around 1982 or 1983, the diocese as a whole did Renew. A great deal of my time in those days was spent on finding resources for parishes and providing leadership training for discussion group leaders.

As effective as these renewal programs were, they all had the same basic problem: they eventually ended. People would do 18 weeks of Genesis II or three years of Renew and when the programs ended everyone seemed to ask the same question: What do we do now? Even 30 years later that question is still being asked. I often think this is because of poor planning. Far too often it seems that the goal is to run one of these programs, so when the program is completed, people look forward to doing the next program. I believe the end result would be different if more attention was paid to the goal of creating a living, dynamic faith community, and using the program or programs as tools to create those communities.

Fr. Gerry Weber, one of the creators of Genesis II, once told me that Genesis II had been very successful financially. He thought that he had discovered the secret for creating a successful ARE product. So he invested his profits into creating the next generation of program, Romans 8. Romans 8 followed a format similar to Genesis II, but was different in that the video was in color and used a storytelling approach rather than lecture. Gerry told me that Romans 8 was a dud, and he lost all the profits he had made on Genesis II. What I learned from this tale was that there are NO foolproof formats for successful programs, only well done, well promoted, well run programs that give people what they want and need.

My career in Adult Faith Formation was changed by two events, both of which occurred during my first year working in the Diocese of Covington. The first was a lecture the diocese sponsored on the RCIA, given by Fr. Jim Dunning. Dunning was a true evangelist for the catechumenate. One of the founders of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, Jim was greatly involved in the implementation of the RCIA in dioceses in the USA and around the world. Although I had studied the Rite as part of a liturgy course in graduate school, then it was an academic exercise. Dunning brought the Rite to life for me, and sold me on the Catechumenate as a life-changing vehicle for the church. Because of this presentation, I was given responsibility of helping parishes implement the Catechumenate across the diocese. From Dunning I learned the value of adult-centered processes and that formation was at the center of all faith instruction, not knowledge acquisition.

The second event was attending a reception at NCDD (what is now NCCL) sponsored by NACAC (National Advisory Committee on Adult Catechesis). At this reception I got to know some of the giants of the field, including Jane Wolford Hughes from Detroit, and two men who seemed larger than life, Matt Hayes and Jody Sinwell. Learning that there was a national group interested in adult catechesis and working to make the

ARE field more effective was a great boon. Here was a source of support and learning, here was an opportunity to get actively involved in issues on a national level, and to make a difference — we hoped — in the life of the church. At the center of NACAC was Neil Parent. I'll let him tell the story from here.

**Neil:** My introduction into adult faith formation began in the mid-1960s while I was studying theology at St. Paul's College, the Paulist Fathers seminary in Washington, DC. A faculty member, Fr. Charles McCarthy, CSP, invited me to join him at one of his weekly adult education sessions with some adult couples in Bowie, Maryland. Charlie knew of my interest in adult faith formation and thought that I might like to partner with him for these sessions.

Working with Charlie became an eye-opening experience of the power of adults taking charge of their learning by deciding on their learning outcomes and then working collaboratively to achieve them. At the beginning of the year, Charlie would facilitate a discussion on what the couples wanted to learn. Since the Second Vatican Council was still in session, their thirst for anything having to do with changes in the church's life and mission was especially acute. Armed with this information, Charlie would then gather resources and make those available to the couples in advance so that they could come to the sessions fully prepared to engage in discussion. It became clear to me early on that these avid learners viewed one another not only as co-learners but also as co-teachers.

But there was more to what promoted the couples' learning. Since they met in each other's homes, hospitality and prayer were also key elements of the evening's learning experience. On special occasions, moreover, home liturgies and gatherings that included their children helped cement these adults into a highly committed and effective learning community.

Several years later I began to apply what I had learned from those Bowie sessions in my new role as Director of Adult Education at Blessed Sacrament Church in Alexandria, Virginia. I launched a parish-wide program that invited adults to meet together in their homes to learn about topics of their choosing under the guidance of trained facilitators. For quite a few years, we were able to have more than 100 adults meeting weekly in groups.

As the parish's Director of Faith Formation, I also employed a wide range of other adult learning techniques, such as lectures, panels, inter-generational experiences, family clusters, and skill training on a variety of topics, such as parenting and centering prayer. Even so, I built into all these learning experiences the core principles that I first learned in the 1960s, namely, that the most powerful way for adults to learn is to provide them creative opportunities to tap first and foremost into their own knowledge and experience of a topic, actively engage their fellow learners, and seek ways to put their new insights into practice. When these principles are applied, a synergy often develops in the learning situation that sparks genuine transformation — the precise goal of adult faith formation.



Photo by Bala Sivakumar

Of course, these principles later became *de rigor* in formalized programs such as *From Ashes to Easter*, *Genesis II*, *Renew*, and *JustFaith*. Still, in order for them to have their desired impact, it is helpful, at least at the beginning, to have a convener or facilitator who can inspire and guide the learners' search for wisdom. Once, however, participants gain experience and begin to take charge of their own learning, they are quite capable of moving ahead independently. For example, my wife and I are members of a group of 12 adults who convened originally under *Renew* and now have been meeting on our own for more than 30 years.

When I became the Representative for Adult Education at the USCCB in 1978, I discovered that one of my predecessors, Brother Richard Keressey, CFX, had formed a group known as the Adult Education Regional Consultants. It consisted primarily of diocesan-level adult educators who represented the ecclesiastical provinces into which the US bishops divided the country. Although the group had no formal links to the USCCB or a definitive meeting schedule, it was fortuitously slated to meet just prior to the 1979 NCDD annual spring meeting in New Orleans. I had met earlier in the year with some of these leaders regarding the revision of *Critical Issues*, a USCCB Department of Education publication, but this was to be my first meeting with the entire group.

At that meeting, I recognized the group's potential for advancing adult religious education at the national level and floated the idea of their becoming a more formal committee linked to the USCCB Department of Education. Everyone was enthusiastic about this possibility.

Also at that meeting, Sr. Maureen Shaughnessy of the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey, was elected the new chair of the group replacing Fr. Jim Schaefer, who had been Director of Adult Education for the Archdiocese of Baltimore but was now pastoring a parish. She and I formed a partnership to move the committee idea forward.

Back at the USCCB, the concept of having a committee to help promote adult faith formation was well received by Fr. Tom Gallagher, the Secretary of Education. My argument to him was that if adult faith formation was to become the catechetical priority that the bishops desired and that it needed to be, my efforts alone were insufficient. But if I could expand my efforts by working with a national committee of adult education leaders, then significant things could happen. I also argued that a committee of this nature is exactly what was needed to give adult education leaders a recognized forum for achieving their aspirations. In a way, I was still drawing upon my foundational principles that transformation, whether personal or organizational, best takes place when people are

involved in setting their own goals and constructing the means of achieving them.

The first gatherings of the fledgling committee were devoted to developing a set of bylaws by which the committee would operate and selecting a name. One of the provincial representatives, Fr. Maurice Monette, OMI, a young priest with a doctorate in adult education, proposed successfully that the name be the National Advisory Committee for Adult Catechesis (NACAC).

NACAC, like the Adult Education Regional Consultants, was structured on having a diocesan-level representative from each of the ecclesiastical provinces. But there were also seats on the committee for desired adult education “experts” to come and share their knowledge. Three that come quickly to mind were Sr. Maria de la Cruz Aymes, Dr. David Thomas, and Dr. John Zaums.

The name NACAC did not last long. Not only did the acronym ring too harsh on many ears (NAK AK), but more importantly, the committee began to find the terminology too limiting, as Dan noted above. Indeed, later when a descriptive term was chosen in the USCCB Department of Education’s document, *Serving Life and Faith*, adult religious education was seen as a more appropriate and comprehensive term than adult catechesis, especially given the latter’s more doctrinal orientation. So NACAC became NACARE.

NACARE succeeded beyond my wildest imaginings. By the time I left the USCCB in late 1990, it had produced some ten books on a variety of topics, hosted a national symposium on adult religious education, and was a major partner in the Catholic Futures Project, a multi-organizational endeavor that examined the future of Catholic education in all of its expressions. Later, under the skillful leadership of Sr. Maureen Shaughnessy, who was now the chief staff person for adult education at the USCCB, NACARE helped to develop, *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us*, the USCCB’s pastoral plan for adult faith formation. NACARE also successfully campaigned for the establishment of an adult education component within NCCL.

NACARE was an excellent example of key principles of adult learning in action. To do its job well, its members had to be, first and foremost, learners of how to read “the signs of the times” and respond with appropriate strategies. They had to set the committee’s goals and develop steps for achieving them — all components of what it takes for committed learners to succeed.

Those who served in NACARE over the years were (and are) my dear friends, my treasured colleagues in ministry, and my esteemed teachers. It was an incredible privilege for me to have worked with them.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Although the *General Directory for Catechesis* proclaims adult faith formation as the “axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age” (275), this statement is, regretfully, more wishful thinking

then lived reality. Indeed, adult faith formation as a pastoral priority still remains a significant challenge today, more than four decades after we began working in this field. While we are disappointed in this slow progress, we remain hopeful in eventual success.

In this article we briefly told our stories and outlined several key AFF principles that we learned over the years. Drawing on those principles, we conclude with four recommendations:

First, ensure that those who are responsible for AFF in dioceses and parishes fully understand these principles and can effectively apply them in their programming. Many years ago NACARE, in partnership with Tabor (now part of RCL Benziger), developed the adult training program *Priming the Pump* to teach those in parishes and dioceses how to do AFF well. While *Priming the Pump* has long been out of print, the need for training parish AFF directors and teams remains as great as ever.

Second, focus on the needs of the adults themselves. As Scott Rutan recently described, “One important aspect from my experience: allowing people to name their hungers/questions/experience/longing (al la Rolheiser). When people are empowered to do that, TRANSFORMATION happens far more often and then INFORMATION is eagerly sought/absorbed.” We could not have said it better.

Third, “be not afraid” to engage the adult community in frank conversations about connecting church teachings to life. Only by trusting adults in this way will an educated community be formed. We believe that adults want to know – and they respect – what the church teaches. But the challenges of applying those teachings to their lives can often be thorny, especially in today’s complex society. This is where the shared wisdom of a learning community can be most valuable.

Fourth and finally, new expressions should be found for the leadership formally provided by NACARE and the intellectual stimulation offered by the *Living Light*. Adult faith formation needs a national leadership organization and a professional journal in order to advance as it should.

As previously noted, we remain hopeful for the success of adult faith formation. And we believe that when adult faith formation attains its rightful place within the church, the church will be both well served and operating at its best. ■

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# Catechetical Resourcing: From Center to Service, Media to Ministry

Tim Welch



A funny thing happened on the way to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in catechetics.

Storytelling in catechesis is as important as it always has been. But recently we have had a tremendous growth in media and technology tools to help us tell our story. Resourcing and support for these gifts have become a critical part of our ministry. But diocesan media offices have been closing faster than ever before. Why?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TELLING OUR STORY

Psychologist and media guru Dave Walsh is no stranger to NCCL. He received the NCCL Research Award in 1999, and has been a keynote for both NCCL and the National Association of Catechetical Media Professionals (NACMP). In his masterful commentary on storytelling (<http://tinyurl.com/CL-walsh>), he makes some points that can be directly correlated with our ministry. “Whoever tells the stories defines the culture. Stories teach us who we are and who we want to be.”

Sounds like tradition, doesn't it? Who we are and who we want to be. I appreciate the point Fr. Michael Himes made years ago about Tradition in his book *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism*. He said, “Tradition is the conversation, and it is the role of the Hierarchy to keep the conversation going.” I would add that it is the role of all Catholics to be actively in the conversation. And I believe that the conversation is dependent on all of us sharing stories: The official story, the story of personal experience, the story forged in our Catholic imaginations, and the story of who we want to be. Who is keeping this conversation going?

## DIGITAL STORYTELLING

According to Walsh, “Many media savvy young people are combining new and old traditions by creating digital storytelling projects that give voice to their stories and perspectives” (<http://www.storycenter.org/>).

What is digital storytelling? Barbara Greene said, “If you tell me, it's an essay. If you show me, it's a story.” I think philo-

sophical language in our own tradition represents the “telling” and inspired use of media can be part of the “showing.” Think of catechetical series that emphasize ‘church’ language, and think of series that employ experientially accessible stories. One could spend a lot of time finessing a definition of digital storytelling, but let me show you instead. Take a moment and watch the following story: <http://tinyurl.com/CL-marystory>.

*(If you didn't have access to the website, here is a summary: The video is about Mary Medina, who was relegated to a nursing home due to a brain injury and resulting dementia. The story is about finding a nursing home that was a community, not a service. The video provides a good starting point to begin a discussion on the Reign of God. Questions could be: What is your brain injury? Who are your caregivers? How are you a caregiver to others? How is your parish the life-giving community you need, or how could it be, etc.?)*

Digital storytelling involves exciting and often simple tools to share the story: the story of Jesus; the story of the people of God; your story. According to Wikipedia, digital storytelling “uses digital tools so that ordinary people can tell their own real-life stories.” Yet we don't want to let the excitement of technology overshadow the story. A litmus test for great digital storytelling should ask if the storytelling is designed FIRST to hold the attention of an audience way past the ending. Do our stories hang on to the imagination after they end?

There are technical differences between digital storytelling and simply creating digital stories. For example, digital storytelling should draw the audience into the story, rather than simply share information. It is valuable to be aware of the distinctions, but for our purposes, I would suggest that we jump in and learn the craft as we go. Authors compose a lot of poorly constructed paragraphs before winning a Pulitzer. Similarly, our students will stumble before producing the masterpieces that define our culture. Now is the time for learning the tools, practicing, and refining them into effective storytelling over time, learning from such masters at Bernajean Porter (<http://tinyurl.com/CL-porter>).

Why digital storytelling? In his video resume, Dale Goldberg said, “Stories can change you. They can make you want to be better” (<http://tinyurl.com/CL-goldberg>).

Note: I wrote this article in consultation with friends from the National Association of Catechetical Media Professionals (NACMP). Since this article has a number of web addresses, it is repeated at <http://catecheticalstorytelling.blogspot.com/> where you can read it online and more easily access the web references.

Master storyteller Meghan McKenna was the keynote at our fall conference some time ago. As I listened to her connections between human experience and theological expressions through the art of storytelling, I thought to myself, “This is catechetics!” I wondered if, generally speaking, telling a story is part of catechetics and evangelization. Surely, we want to share those skills to our upcoming disciples. But we must aim higher. Enabling them to tell *their* story... that is ministry! In both cases, if we can train our students to become storytellers, using every available medium, we can define, and enable them to define, our culture with a Catholic Christian understanding.

Let’s explore digital storytelling through the perspectives of consumption, creation, and collaboration.

### NACMP SUGGESTIONS FOR CATECHETICAL CONSUMPTION

The official story is often told in church jargon, with technical, philosophical concepts. Storytelling offers a more accessible format for sharing our truth and illuminating the corresponding theological or philosophical concepts.

Let’s explore some themes of our faith, and the power of storytelling to communicate them. I asked NACMP members, “*What is your all-time favorite video/movie that catechists can use, and what topic(s) does it pertain to?*”

Here is a sampling of the answers I received. Notice that these stories were delivered in quite diverse ways (all answers are displayed on the web version of this article at <http://catecheticalstorytelling.blogspot.com/>).

#### *The Lion King*

“In the scene where Nala finds Simba again, there are TONS of Christological references from that point to the end. I have the students (of any age, even adults) tally how many references they find. We then discuss why some are more visible than others, and why different people notice different ones, and that can lead to any number of topics.”

#### *This Is Discipling* (<http://tinyurl.com/CL-discipling>)

“...from <http://www.getoutthebox.org> and it was on Sr. Caroline [Cervený]’s curating site [see below]. We have used this to talk about evangelization to the catechists and it is one of my personal favorites because the emphasis is on the people as the evangelizers.”

#### *St. Francis Videos*

“Recently we were introduced to our new Pope Francis, who has taken his name after St. Francis of Assisi. Who is St. Francis? I’m sure we each know something about this wonderful saint whose feast day is celebrated on October 4th! Perhaps now is the time to learn more about this saint, and to ponder why he is important to today’s church. Here are some of my favorite videos about this saint:

*St. Francis of Assisi: The Man Who Loves Everybody*  
<http://tinyurl.com/CL-manwholoves>

#### *A Day in the Life of St. Francis*

<http://tinyurl.com/CL-francisday>

#### *The Secret of St. Francis*

<http://tinyurl.com/CL-francissecret>

#### *Ruby Bridges* (<http://tinyurl.com/CL-rubybridges>)

“One of my favorite movie clips to show in formation sessions for any age is from Walt Disney’s 1998 true story. It can be used to teach about forgiveness (God forgiving us, us forgiving others), and is so appropriate during February (Black History Month) as well as the liturgical season of Lent. Approximately 75 minutes into the movie, young Ruby has been the first and only African American girl attending the all-white public school. She attends, day after day, alone. The other children will not return to school while she is present. Each day the sidewalks leading into the school are lined with individuals who ridicule and threaten this child of incredible goodness. On this particular day, Ruby climbs the steps leading into the school, then suddenly leaves her police escorts, goes back down the steps, looks at the jeering crowd, and mouths some words we cannot hear. Later that evening her counselor learns that Ruby was not giving into anger and shouting at the people. No, Ruby had forgotten on that day to do what she has done every other day: pray for the people who were persecuting her. Yes, every day she prayed that Jesus would forgive them just as he forgave those who crucified him a long time ago. Ruby’s gift of loving forgiveness and prayer from the depths of her heart for the good of others, in this moment speaks more than any lectured catechesis can accomplish.”

#### *The Human Experience*

“...by Grassroots Films. The story of a band of brothers who travel the world in search of the answers to the burning questions: Who am I? Who is Man? Why do we search for meaning? Their journey brings them into the middle of the lives of the homeless on the streets of New York City, the orphans and disabled children of Peru, and the abandoned lepers in the forests of Ghana, Africa. What the young men discover changes them forever. Through one-on-one interviews and real-life encounters, the brothers are awakened to the beauty of the human person and the resilience of the human spirit. (Written by Simon Fung) Watch the trailer <http://tinyurl.com/CL-human>. I have used this for tenth grade and confirmation retreats...great discussions are started about UNDERSTANDING and other gifts of the Spirit. *The Human Experience* is also great for ‘post-Confirmation’ as well (11th, 12th grade and young adults).”

### NACMP SUGGESTIONS FOR TOOLS FOR CATECHETICAL CREATION

Part of the excitement of 21<sup>st</sup> century catechesis involves the availability of story creation technologies. It is heartening to see the number of faith formation efforts that include sharing stories with these tools.

Sr. Caroline Cerveny, in her Twitter feed at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-ccerveny> is constantly encouraging catechists to learn and incorporate storytelling apps and online production sites into their programs. We Christians have a great story to tell, and we must enable our youth to share their own faith journeys using tools many already know.

I asked our NACMP members to share a technology they used to tell a story, and a short description of the story told:

### ***Animoto.com***

“In Digital Discipleship Boot Camp, one of the training modules focuses on Digital Storytelling: Evangelizing in the Digital World. In this module, the participant learns the basics of how to put together a digital story. It’s amazing what folks are able to do. One example of Animoto’s free account, which limits videos to 30 seconds, is Jen McIkveen’s ‘Celebration of Life’ at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-life>. McIkveen enjoyed making it so much, that she’s already started a much longer one planned for a Scripture lesson for a confirmation class. The ‘plus plan’ allows for ten minute videos, and is only \$30 per year.”

### ***Facebook.com***

“Most recently I used Facebook during the Boston Marathon bombings. My intention initially was to let friends and family know I was safe. I soon realized that through this social media my small story was becoming a thread that was being woven into to a much larger narrative of what was happening in Boston. Also, in following the threads that my friends were creating, I was helping weave their stories into that same fabric.”

### ***Goanimate.com***

“Students in our eighth and ninth grades used various technology to tell stories...my favorite one was using goanimate.com. The student made a ‘commercial’ about why a lonely young man should come to our parish. It shows our pastor talking to the young man. We posted it on our parish FB page...It was free and you can see it at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-animate>.”

### ***MakeBeliefsComix.com***

“I used <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/> to tell various parables in three or four comic book style frames. The students had to guess which parable was represented by the comic strip.”

### ***PowerPoint***

“For years I’ve used PPT slide shows to illustrate songs for meditation.”

### ***YouTube.com***

“I’ve used short YouTube videos and had a great response from our youth group using a *Veggie Tales* video (*Lord of the Beans*) to talk about the different gifts everyone has and the importance of community.”

## **NACMP SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY AND CURATION**

Joyce Kelleher, now retired from the Diocese of Cleveland, recognized the paradigm shift. She knew that filmstrips were a thing of the past, VHS tapes were close behind, and DVDs were becoming less expensive. The need for a resource library at the diocesan level was waning in her diocese. However, the needs for media literacy training and consultation in media usage were greater than ever. They shifted their media efforts from center to service, from collection to curation, from media to ministry. Story delivery through filmstrips, cassette tapes, VHS, and DVD has evolved into such an array of computer applications, online resources and creation tools, and tablet apps that we could become paralyzed by choices. We cannot turn to the media center staff for help if they are no longer part of our catechetical office. We have to turn to each other.

“Whoever tells the stories defines the cultures.” Indeed, the most media savvy Catholics define the Catholic culture. This includes the Catholic storytellers with the most money, the most resources, and/or the most talent. We are in competition, not only with the rest of the world for the eyes and ears of our youth, but within our own, broad Catholic family. It becomes more important for us to learn how to tell our story well. We must be aware of available stories that illuminate the Reign of God so we can affirm them and echo them. We must create our own engaging stories. We must teach our learners how to produce them. And, as John Roberto points out, we need to construct ways of curating stories — compiling them and making them available (<http://tinyurl.com/CL-roberto>),

Who has time for all this? Who has time to learn one tool, or one great video? Everyone! What if we collaborate? What if there is a group we can turn to, request help on particular topics, and get immediate responses?

I asked our NACMP members to share who they turn to for support with examples of how they were helped:

### ***Facebook.com***

1. I love cats. They all live on Facebook.
2. Facebook is the best prayer group in the world even if it is Christ-haunted.
3. For an article, I asked nearly 5000 people if they ever found God in a movie and got more than 60 good responses.

### ***Interactive Connections Conference in Orlando, Florida***

(<http://tinyurl.com/CL-interactiveconnections>)

In one week I learned so much and had a chance to network with others that were putting the TECH in caTECHesis.

### ***NACMP.org***

If this sounds like I’m stealing your ideas and sucking up to the boss, so be it — NACMP is the wind beneath my wings. It is my first, and oftentimes only, resource for some things.

### Other offices in the diocese

I forward the materials received to the offices of youth ministry, young adult ministry, Catechesis, the Diaconate, and occasionally Family Life. They appreciate receiving the resources, and I am helped by their affirmative responses.

### So many ways!

Many other answers were given: NACMP friends who dare to ask or answer questions; workshop attendees who are curious and wonder how they are able to engage digital natives in telling their faith stories with digital tools; reading of the Scripture for inspiration and insight into understanding the Reign of God; a mind that becomes curious and engages in a Google search to learn something new; Digital Discipleship Boot Camp friends who willingly share their insights and stories on a regular basis.

There are communities already in place. We have the mavens of movies we turn to for ideas. Sr. Rose Pacatte's homepage at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-pacatte> is a great site to access movie reviews and connections with faith. She is a member of the Daughters of St. Paul community, animators behind Pauline Media. We have social media leaders like Jonathan Sullivan within our own NCCL. Find his webinars at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-jonathansullivan>. We have the wonderful community of digital catechists and curators gathered by Sr. Caroline

Cervený at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-digitalcatechesis>. Many publishers have online presences and tech-savvy skills to bring to the table. We have vibrant academic institutions, such as the University of Dayton, Boston College, Luther Seminary, and Notre Dame, who are making concerted efforts to integrate technology and ministry. We even have Lori Dahlhoff, Executive Director of NCEA's Religion Department, at the table as well as other leaders in related ministries. And, of course, there is NACMP at <http://tinyurl.com/CL-nacmporg>. There are many more organizations and individuals who are interested in stories to use in their ministry, tools to proclaim their stories, and people to rely on for ideas and support. Is there a way to "gather" everyone, face to face, and/or electronically, in way that is helpful and not just another organization?

The conversation is afoot, with discussions ranging from media literacy skills, to suggestions for effective media, to directions for accessing media, to tips about grooming learners to become creators, to the promotion of the best media. If you aren't already a part of the networks dedicated to enhancing ministry with media and technology, we invite you to join the discussion at NACMP (<http://www.nacmp.org>). ■

*Tim Welch is the consultant for educational technology at Catholic Education Ministries, Diocese of Saint Cloud, Minnesota.*



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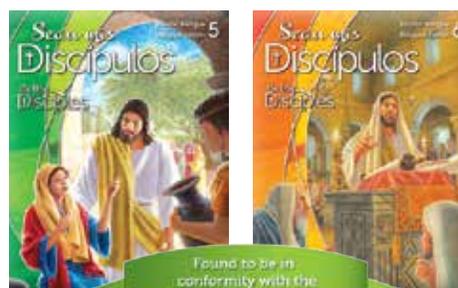
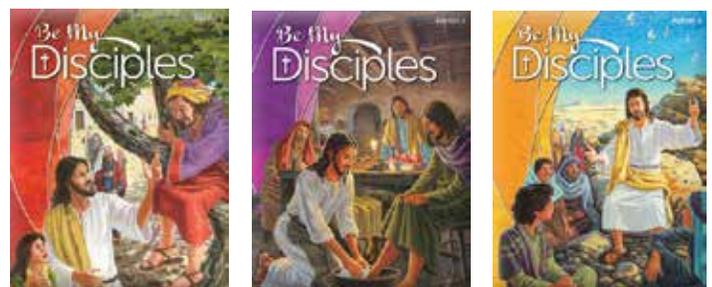
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# New Pope, New Evangelization, New Return to Old (but Good) Ideas

Matt Halbach



Since the election of Pope Francis, questions concerning his future papal agenda have immediately begun to surface. What will this pope's priorities be? How will he understand his role as "papa" of the church? How will he choose to address the many crises facing the church today? While only time will tell

how this pope may or may not live up to the immeasurable concerns and expectations of Catholics, we can be assured that Pope Francis will continue the work of the 2012 Synod which focused entirely on the new evangelization, a theme which received much attention from his papal predecessors.<sup>1</sup>

The new evangelization is the church's effort to exercise its evangelical identity by "proposing anew"<sup>2</sup> the gospel to those whose Christian faith is flagging and to those who have already disaffiliated from the church. As Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, DC, and *relator* (i.e., "moderator") of the 2012 Synod writes in his most recent book *New Evangelization: Passing on the Faith Today*, "Among the propositions of the synod, there are several that speak to the fact that the new evangelization is all about announcing the good news about Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

As a sign of hope, many Catholics today are beginning to take hold of the new evangelization. This "new"<sup>4</sup> notion of *the church as missionary* has clergy and laity today describing themselves more as "evangelizers" and "witnesses" than ever before<sup>5</sup> — descriptors that at one time were uniquely associated with evangelical Protestantism. However, and not in

spite of (but precisely because of) these signs of new life in the church (e.g., new pope, new evangelization, and new enthusiasm) I wish to cast a critical eye to a longstanding problem that has yet to receive the attention it deserves.

## THE PROBLEM

The "Final Propositions" of the 2012 Synod together depict a view of new evangelization that begins with the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>6</sup> Though the Synod Fathers make explicit that what is envisioned is, in fact, a *new* proclamation along with a new evangelization that is new in "ardor, methods, and expressions"<sup>7</sup> but not new in content, the question still needs to be asked: Should the starting point of the new evangelization be new as well? And the answer is: yes. The starting point of the new evangelization, in terms of its impact on the level of the individual, ought to be a period of *pre-evangelization*, not the initial proclamation of the gospel. Why does this matter? We need to look back into the church's rich catechetical heritage for our answer.

## EAST ASIAN STUDY WEEK (1962)

The modern catechetical renewal, with its many luminaries and study weeks, has provided a veritable storehouse of catechetical wisdom for the church in the new evangelization. Convened at Bangkok in 1962, the East Asian study week was an incredibly fruitful and timely gathering of missionaries and catechists from all over the world. The primary focus was on how to evangelize and catechize adults in cultures experiencing increasing secularization. (Today, this is precisely the concern the new evangelization is attempting to meet.) The Study Week concluded that an evangelization process that begins with an initial proclamation of the gospel risks sowing the seed of God's word in untilled soil, which places the quality of the conversion in jeopardy.<sup>8</sup> In other words, before the

1. While a cataloguing of papal pronouncements is not possible here, two major works regarding the new evangelization are Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001) and Pope Benedict XVI's motu proprio, *Ubiquumque et Semper* (2010). Both are available at: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).
2. Pope Benedict XVI used these words during his First Vespers homily for the Vigil of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul (June 28, 2010). (Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20100628-vespri-pietro-paolo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100628-vespri-pietro-paolo_en.html)).
3. Donald Cardinal Wuerl, *New Evangelization: Passing on the Faith Today* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2013), 31-32.
4. The term "new evangelization" was first used at the 1968 General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia. See, General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in Light of the Council* (Bogotá, Colombia: CELAM, 1970), 41.
5. The "New Evangelizers" is another term that has emerged. See, <http://newevangelizers.com/>.

6. Synodus Episcoporum, "Final Propositions," no. 9. (Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_25\\_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02\\_inglese/b33\\_02.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b33_02.html)). This proposition situates the New Evangelization between the initial proclamation of the Gospel and catechesis. Moreover, the Synod Fathers call for a *Pastoral Plan of Initial Proclamation* to help establish greater continuity between these poles.
7. John Paul II, Address to CELAM (Opening Address of the Nineteenth General Assembly of CELAM, March 9, 1983 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti), *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition (April 1983), no. 9.
8. Alfonso Nebreda, S.J., "East Asian Study Week on Mission Catechetics," *Lumen Vitae* XVII (1962), 723-724.



good news is proclaimed, time is needed to prepare others to fully receive its message.<sup>9</sup> The study week described this time as *pre-evangelization*.<sup>10</sup>

### PRE-EVANGELIZATION: THEN AND NOW

What became crystal clear to those gathered at the study week was that the *kerygma*, which can be thought of as *the seed of the word of God*, requires healthy soil to support its implantation and growth. Without this, the seed will not take root and will eventually be rejected. One could say as a result of this discovery that the missionaries attending the study week began to see themselves not only as cooperative “sowers of the word” but also as “tillers of the soil.” And tilling precedes sowing. We, today, who are heralds of the new evangelization, should also consider this dual role if we hope to gain any spiritual traction on the slippery slopes of secularized culture.

Attempting to evangelize highly secularized cultures by beginning with the proclamation of the *kerygma* — which is the *word of God* or *message of salvation*<sup>11</sup> — proves ineffective

because the intended recipient struggles to find the *kerygma* meaningful on a personal level. Perception is everything when it comes to evangelization. During pre-evangelization, what matters most (or initially) is not that the message is understood to be objectively true and good (though the gospel is both of these), but that the recipient *perceives* the message as true or good for himself. To be sure, pre-evangelization is not intended to reinforce a moral relativism. It is intended to lead one to gospel living in the church. Pre-evangelization more effectively leads to conversion because it begins by first recognizing an individual’s own dignity and conscience, making attempts to meet people where they are at intellectually and existentially.

### ALFONSO NEBRED A ON PRE-EVANGELIZATION

The cultural milieu of today, as it was during 1962, is one of de-Christianization and increasing religious pluralism, moral relativism, along with the many other foreboding “-isms” which accompany modern secularization. This new human climate demands a re-thinking about how the church evangelizes. Personal witness must bear the burden of not only demonstrating that *the faith is worth having*, given the uniquely modern and increasingly popular “spiritual but not religious” crowd; it must also demonstrate that faith is worth having — *in and through the church*. In a Eucharistic sense, the church today, *en masse*, has to demonstrate to its own and to the world that Christ is most richly and fully encountered in Mass.

In his pioneering work *Kerygma in Crisis?*<sup>12</sup>, which was somewhat of a post-script to the East Asian study week, Alfonso

9. While the East Asian Study Week did not address youth or adolescents specifically, there is no indication that a pre-proclamation period of preparation is not warranted.

10. Though Father Nebreda and the East Asian Study Week developed further the principles and methodologies of pre-evangelization, Fr. André Liégé is credited as the innovator of the concept. See, André Liégé, “Évangélisation,” in *Catholicisme* (Paris: 1954) cols. 755-764. There, Liégé writes, “C’est l’oeuvre de la préévangélisation — point forcément distincte chronologiquement de l’évangélisation—que de travailler les milieux humains pour les ouvrir à l’annonce évangélique.” “This is the task of pre-evangelization, quite distinct chronologically from evangelization: to work in the human milieu to open it to the Gospel proclamation.”

11. “Final Propositions,” no. 9. The 2012 Synod described *kerygma* as the “foundation of all initial proclamation” and central to making “an explicit announcement of salvation.”

12. Alfonso Nebreda, S.J., *Kerygma in Crisis?* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1965).



Photo by Tim van Vliet

Nebreda describes pre-evangelization as primarily interpersonal in nature, which means that personal witness is at the core of pre-evangelization.<sup>13</sup> (Incidentally, Christian witness is also critical to the new evangelization.<sup>14</sup>) Nebreda understood that in order to be taken seriously as a witness on an interpersonal level and in the cultural milieu, the pre-evangelist who, now, is operating as a new evangelist, must identify himself with the culture (i.e., he must look and sound like everyone else, be abreast of what's going on locally). He cannot appear as a living anachronism or as someone out of touch with the struggles of human living. He must, like Jesus, be seen as one who lives among the people, one who can sympathize with others.<sup>15</sup> As Christians, we are all called to be in the world but not of it. Thus, Nebreda reminds us that pre-evangelization is not primarily a time when we examine others, but rather when they examine us, testing our mettle and our veracity.<sup>16</sup>

Stressing solidarity with others and mutual understanding through lived witness, pre-evangelization concerns itself primarily with the communication and exchange of human “values,” not “truths.”<sup>17</sup> Nebreda suggests that values are identified in terms of the importance one places in any given thing. The key for the pre-evangelist is to determine how close to the center does a given thing reside in the other's constellation of

being. What are the other's priorities? How important is this or that truth to the other?

What is important in the pre-evangelization period is to understand what the other person values, not necessarily what they believe or think they believe. This is also to determine the other's reasons for inquiring about, taking hold of, or abandoning the faith — what Nebreda calls a “discernment of motives.”<sup>18</sup> Values bespeak what is personal and subjective, which is why Nebreda describes pre-evangelization as necessarily anthropocentric.<sup>19</sup> Its goal is not to achieve cultural ascent or cultural *theosis* but that the pre-evangelist achieve personal condescension, personal *kenosis*—or the “coming down” to the other's level so that the other may be ennobled and buoyed up. Pre-evangelization, therefore, is concerned with building positive, human relationships which are the bedrock of conversion. Inevitably, these fledgling human relationships will be tested. Therefore, the pre-evangelist must always be on guard not only to give a defense of the truth that is within him<sup>20</sup> but also witness this truth to be personally valued.

Those who need to receive a new evangelization today need to first be convinced of the authenticity of the witness, and only time and interpersonal experience can provide this, which is why a pre-evangelization must precede initial proclamation. The many flagging Catholics, and the many who populate the “spiritual but not religious” crowd, must first discover (re-

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13. Ibid., 116.

14. “Final Propositions,” no. 8.

15. Heb 4:15.

16. *Kerygma in Crisis*, 115.

17. Ibid., 118.

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18. Ibid., 110.

19. Ibid., 102.

20. 1 Pet 3:15.

discover) that the church is something they desire to belong to, not necessarily that Christ loves them personally or the Catholic truth of transubstantiation. What is being implied here is that we are not only witnesses to a particular tradition, creed, and way of worshiping Christ; we are (primarily) witnesses of *the church as a community of faith living in the world*. Again, as people will continue to observe and judge the veracity of our witness, we must always be concerned with how we are being perceived by others.

This leads us to a question of paramount importance:<sup>21</sup> “Are others able to trust us?” Trust is the foundational quality of any relationship that may lead towards conversion and, thus, it is the dynamo, the power source, for pre-evangelization. To earn another’s trust, we must first remove all prejudices and self-interest, which are blocks to establishing a healthy, mutual relationship, one that is sturdy enough to support the moral weight and demands of the gospel. By the same token, we must strive to find a way to approach others in sincerity and charity, not as “neo-pagans” or as the “unenlightened,”<sup>22</sup> if we are to win their hearts.

### THE NEED FOR PRE-EVANGELIZATION TODAY

The kerygma is the “foundation for all initial proclamation”<sup>23</sup> and, consequently, for the new evangelization. It is also the touchstone for any catechesis, as catechesis is a “remarkable moment”<sup>24</sup> in the process of evangelization. But much work needs to be done before one is disposed to the saving truths of the gospel. Thus, in his relatively recent assessment of the

kerygmatic model of catechesis, Cardinal Avery Dulles notes that a kerygma-driven catechesis would “seem to require a considerable process of pre-evangelization that would dispose students to respond to the Christian kerygma.”<sup>25</sup> The need for pre-evangelization today was also recently affirmed by Sherry Weddell in her book: *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* — which examines what dynamics precede conversion and points to new vistas of ecumenical cooperation in the total Christian effort to evangelize. Weddell writes, “We typically presume that pre-evangelization and initial proclamation just happen automatically during basic catechesis. All the evidence suggests that even if true evangelization once worked that way, it is not working that way anymore.”<sup>26</sup> Weddell also notes that though the term “pre-evangelization” is found in the current catechetical literature,<sup>27</sup> the church has provided little instruction on how to do it.<sup>28</sup>

### PEDAGOGY OF PRE-EVANGELIZATION

As Weddell noted, there is little structure given to pre-evangelization in the catechetical directories. Because of this, more ecclesial energies need to be channeled towards re-discovering the import and the dynamics of pre-evangelization. Is there already, in fact, a pedagogy for pre-evangelization? The answer is yes and no. Yes in the sense that, as Nebreda points out,

21. Sherry A. Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012). See her chapter titled, “Thresholds of Conversion: Can I trust you?”  
 22. *Kerygma in Crisis*, 16,  
 23. “Final Propositions,” no. 9.  
 24. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no 18.

25. Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 105.  
 26. *Forming Intentional Disciples*: 126.  
 27. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2005), 49.  
 28. *Forming Intentional Disciples*, 126. To be sure, elements of pre-evangelization are found in various ecclesial documents and papal pronouncements (e.g., the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, nos., 3, 6, 11-12; GDC no. 47. However, the term “pre-evangelization,” aside from being mentioned in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), no. 51; *Sharing the Light of Faith* (1979), no.34; and the above cited *National Directory for Catechesis* (2005), is fairly absent from the official catechetical literature.

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pre-evangelization follows the “divine pedagogy.”<sup>29</sup> No in the sense that there are no specified parameters or set time limits for it, which is problematic for evangelists as Weddell noted. So what does the divine pedagogy look like and how does pre-evangelization fit into it?

The divine pedagogy demonstrates that God reveals himself overtime and through words and deeds<sup>30</sup> which point to his divinity and to his love for creation. The Scriptures depict God the Father in an ongoing posture of condescension (*condescendere*; that is, God lovingly “stoops down” to meet us where we are, as we are), and creatively and progressively prepares his people to receive his Son. God did not begin his redemptive work by sending the Messiah. He began with a conversation with Adam and Eve.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, pre-evangelization also aims to approach others by meeting them where they are.

The scriptures show that after the Fall, God was invested enough to condescend to meet Adam and Eve where they were, and that he was genuinely concerned with their welfare. One could say that God even played dumb in an attempt to draw out their goodness and lead them to repentance and conversion.<sup>32</sup> Even that God was being rather *anthropocentric* in his desire to evangelize humanity. Anthropocentrism is also a key dynamic of pre-evangelization. Becoming more anthropocentric is a lesson for new evangelizers today, though the anthropocentrism must be balanced by a healthy theocentrism. Too often evangelists are overtly theocentric when they witness to others. They tend to talk with others about God *but not to them* — not in a way that the other might perceive as personally meaningful.

As stated earlier, God did not begin to evangelize by sending Jesus. The Incarnation was an historical point of culmination, which irradiates and gathers together all the words and deeds of the divine revelation that preceded it into a unique, living witness: the Emmanuel, “God with us.” Today, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the church, which is a “sacrament”<sup>33</sup> of God in Christ, has been populated with many potential witnesses to the Incarnation alive and at work in the world. Through faith, the church, like Mary, embodies the word of God. Its members are called to become a unique manifestation of the living word in the world. A greater understanding of this dynamic needs to be achieved in the preparation of catechists.

However, our voices, our words, and deeds will not be heard or seen unless we give a full, *incarnate* witness of faith, which is demonstrative of our ability to be in the world but not of it. This means that when evangelizing we, like God, must become

anthropocentric before we can expect others to become theocentric. We must truly be people who begin to proclaim the kingdom of God by first testifying to the kingdom’s influence and value in our own lives, in a way that shows a permanence, a constancy, and in a way that does not demean others but ennobles them.

## CONCLUSION

Before the gospel can be proposed anew, before “new ardor, methods, and expressions” can be given — before the new evangelization can begin in earnest — *people must first be prepared to receive the gospel*. Therefore, the art and purpose of *pre-evangelization*, needs to be retrieved from the church’s catechetical sub-conscious if the new evangelization is to effectively reengage flagging Catholics and the disaffiliated.

In a special way, Pope Francis, in his unique, no nonsense, man-of-the-people style, will potentially be a powerful agent for pre-evangelization going forward. To complement his witness, church leaders need to urgently consider directing some of their energies and the energies of their countless and wonderful *co-workers in the vineyard*, to probing more the dynamic of pre-evangelization and the real need for it in the work of the new evangelization, which is a work aimed at helping others to believe once again that faith is worth having and having in and through the church. ■

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29. *Kerygma in Crisis*, 104; See also, Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997), nos. 139, 143

30. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, no. 2.

31. Gen 3:9ff.

32. The questions God asks Adam and Eve are not for his own sake but theirs.

33. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1.

# Celebrating Ten Plots in One Story: Catechesis and the Catholic Imagination

Michael P. Murphy



There is a deep relationship between the nourishing heart of Christian catechesis and the Catholic Imagination. A most instructive link can be found when we consider the root relationship between these two essential resources for deepening our lives in God. *Catechesis*, it is well known, finds its root in *katachein*, which

means “to echo” or “to resound.” In one way or another, good catechesis always echoes and reverberates music from one eternal note: the reality of God — Father, Son, and Spirit.

The “Catholic Imagination,” while a popular topic in contemporary theology and spirituality, is oddly, a bit more of a slippery concept. It may be a matter of an immediate (and misguided) free association, but so many of us view imagination as somehow akin to airy “fantasy,” or confuse it with the flaky whimsicalities practiced by the pixie generation. As playwright John Guare observes, when it comes to imagination, we have got it all wrong. “Imagination,” he writes in his play *Six Degrees of Separation*, “rather than being a linchpin of our existence now stands as a synonym for something outside ourselves, like science fiction, or some new use for tangerines on raw pork chops.” Guare cries “foul” and declares that the imagination has a more profound purpose; that it is “the passport we create to take us into the real world.” As G.K. Chesterton likewise observes in many instances, the imagination is a prime cognitive faculty, a vehicle for human intellection and theological understanding. Chesterton declares, “Imagination lets us see what is actually there.” Imagination illuminates our creaturely-ness; imagination discloses and reveals the very image and likeness of God inscribed upon us.

Beyond fantasy and science fiction, “imagination” is usually associated with artistic creation and rightly so. This connection gets us closer to what a Catholic Imagination is and how it can serve projects in catechesis and religious education. Blessed John Paul II, himself a serious artist, knew how the imagination served as a major component of human and theological knowing and wrote much on the topic. In 2000 he hosted more than 600 artists at the Vatican as part of the celebration of the Jubilee Year. In his famous *Letter to Artists*

(1999), he exalted the divine gift of the imagination by writing the following:

In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art. Art must make perceptible, and as far as possible attractive, the world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God. It must therefore translate into meaningful terms that which is in itself ineffable. Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colors, shapes, and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen. It does so without emptying the message itself of its transcendent value and its aura of mystery.

In John Paul’s insightful reflection — and with the insights gleaned from Chesterton and Guare — we find much of what contemporary thinkers mean by a “Catholic Imagination.” As an aesthetic operation, the Catholic imagination seeks to describe the peculiar dynamism that exists between religious and artistic experience and to hold this mix up as a life-giving spirituality and a valid way of beholding existence. However, the Catholic Imagination is not merely an aesthetic, cultural, or sociological distinction, as so many have concluded. Quite the contrary; it is fundamentally a vehicle through which we authentically encounter the real. According to William Lynch (1908-1987), a Jesuit theologian and literary critic, imagination constitutes “all the resources of man, all his faculties, his whole history, his whole life, and his whole heritage, all brought to bear upon the concrete world inside and outside of himself, to form images of the world, and thus to find it, cope with it, shape it, and even to make it.” It is a borderless and holistic faculty. To employ a Catholic taxonomy, imagination proceeds sacramentally. It is the way in which we engage and articulate palpable manifestations of the divine; it is the way we articulate the deeper perceptions of our intuition and spiritual senses. The imagination helps locate and decipher sensible manifestations of the real and is therefore a locus of human cognition for God’s revelation.

What might all of this mean for catechists or for those engaging in projects of catechesis? Quite a lot, as one might imagine. In addition to laying out some foundational stone

for discussions about the Catholic Imagination, my main goal of this article is to provide a *Top Ten* list of the attributes and qualities of a Catholic Imagination and to suggest resources for exploring and understanding the attributes and qualities more fully in catechetical settings. Most of these are geared for RCIA settings, but they can be adapted and tailored for other contexts. After each attribute/quality, I list a novel, poem or song, and film — all of which, upon consideration, will deepen understanding about the particular attribute/quality proposed. Moreover, in the interest of demonstrating how the Catholic Imagination honors and cultivates the many ways of knowing, I also include ideas for projects and activities inspired by the nature of the corresponding attribute/quality. These participatory exercises are designed to deepen understanding in both individual and communal catechetical settings.

*Note: The list that follows is in no way exhaustive, and is open to revision.*

### 1. EMPHASIS ON THE INCARNATION

The fundamental point of a Catholic imagination is an *incarnational consciousness*. As William Lynch asserts, “the finite always leads somewhere” and “Jesus Christ moved down into all the realities of humanity to get to his father.” There are many implications here, the Thomistic idea of grace building on nature being chief among them. An *Embodied Theology* is a central byproduct of the Incarnation and of an incarnational consciousness. Sacrament, language, imagery, metaphor, and symbol point to the importance of the senses as inroads to the divine. God is always present in the world — our challenge is to keep our senses (the senses being one of our vital faculties) vigilant and receptive in order to perceive God’s presence. Moreover, incarnational, embodied theology seeks to illuminate the *Eucharistic* center of Catholicism: the real presence in the Eucharist is both source and summit of our lives and our lives in the church. The Eucharist fires the imagination and, while it mediates the real, it is in no way symbolic. As Flannery O’Connor famously observed about the sacrament: “If it is a symbol, to hell with it.”

**NOVEL:** *Bread and Wine*, Ignazio Silone

**POEM:** “O Taste and See,” Denise Levertov

**FILM:** *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Dreyer, 1928)

**PROJECT:** Create a Three Dimensional Object that depicts, recalls, or celebrates the personal experience of Eucharistic “Real Presence.”

### 2. THE ANALOGY OF BEING

As theologian David Tracy observes: generally speaking, the Catholic tradition emphasizes the *analogical imagination* (God’s infinite closeness, God’s immanent being) against the Protestant version — *the dialectical imagination* — which emphasizes God as radically other (God’s transcendent being). There is less emphasis on dramatic leaps of faith (as in Kierkegaard) and more emphasis on sacramental “experiencing,” “seeing,” and “feeling” God in whose presence “we live, move and have our being” (cf. Acts 17). More explicitly, it is the traditional doctrine of the

*analogy of being* that clarifies and articulates the relationship that God has with creation. In the Catholic Imagination, the Incarnation of Christ is the “linking term,” a unique historical event that has endless implications analogically. There is a constant tension between *analogical and dialectical approaches to reality*, but these approaches are not mutually exclusive.

**NOVEL:** *Mariette in Ecstasy*, Ron Hansen

**POEM:** “The Porch,” RS Thomas

**FILM:** *Babette’s Feast* (Axel, 1988)

**PROJECT:** Create an “Idea Map” or Family Tree that links specific people and events to your concept of divine activity in your life.

### 3. THE SACRAMENTAL IMAGINATION: BOTH/AND VS. EITHER/OR

In support of the previous two premises: the Catholic Imagination tends to be *both/and*. The sacramental nature of reality invites us into a more comprehensive view of experience than “either/or” and helps us to negotiate and see beyond opposites. God is both one nature and three persons. Jesus is both fully God and fully human. The Bible has both one core message and a diversity of particular theologies. The church is both a divine mystery and a human institution. The world is best understood by both religion and science. And so on. The greatest commandment is to love both God and all (neighbor, enemy, self).

**NOVEL:** *The Man who was Thursday*, GK Chesterton

**POEM:** “The Grandeur of God,” GM Hopkins

**FILM:** *The Life of Pi* (Lee, 2012)

**PROJECT:** 1) Make a list of “items” (actions, objects, people) that are “both/and”; discuss. 2) Describe a spirituality that has a sacramental world view. Or 3) Discuss how the Catholic sacraments are “both/and” or how they are not. Or both.

### 4. TRINITARIAN RELATIONALITY

The mystery of the Trinity exposes the triadic and relational nature of all creation. Furthermore, as God is a community of divine persons propelled by love, the Trinity models *kenosis* (i.e., self-donation) as a practical model for personhood and interpersonal relationships. The roles of the divine persons are triadic as well — creator, sanctifier, redeemer. The three infused virtues — faith, hope, and love — are the most important virtues. Trinitarian thinking unlocks all manner of philosophical insights — one of which is *The Harmony of the Transcendentals*. The mediaeval notion that the transcendentals (the good, the true, and the beautiful) regulate reality is as valid as ever. The transcendentals make a space for the notion that truth is symphonic just as they assert the value of diversity and theological styles — topics that have particular relevance not only in spirituality, but in politics, social arrangements, and the arts.

**NOVEL:** *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy

**POEM:** “In a Parish,” Czeslaw Milosz

**FILM:** *Magnolia* (Anderson, 1999)

**PROJECT:** 1) Perform a noble act of service. Or 2) Write a letter to a friend or family member expressing your honest

thoughts and feelings. Or 3) Pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament. In all cases, see/note what happens next. Discuss and relate to the mystery of Trinity.

## 5. MARIAN DEVOTION

Marian devotion is a main practice through which the Catholic Imagination celebrates the power of the feminine. The Swiss theologian, Balthasar (among others) identifies Mary of Nazareth, Queen of All Saints, as **absolutely essential** to the salvation of the world and exalts the wisdom and courage with which she asserts her personal freedom (in her Biblical *fiat*) and the way she negotiates her faith. Moreover, the centrality of Mary — as a kind of intercessory mediatrix — is uniquely Catholic and central to our understanding of Jesus, prayer, and personhood. Mary is mother of God, mother of the human Jesus, a mother to us all; and our concept of authentic motherhood is made more expansive and diverse when we imagine Mary's maternal creativity.

**NOVEL:** *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*, Anne Rice

**POEM(S):** "Mother," Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)

**FILM:** *A Song for Bernadette* (King, 1943)

**PROJECT:** Consider the variety of Marian devotional artifacts. Procure several, research origin/meaning/cultural/devotional significance. Discuss.

## 6. FIDES ET RATIO — FAITH AND REASON

Faith and reason are harmonic elements that generate a vital dynamism. While faith and reason often have different horizons, truth cannot contradict truth. According to John Paul II, philosophy should always honor "the range of authentic wisdom and truth — metaphysical truth included — which is proper to philosophical enquiry." Science, in addition, is a great gift and a prize of the intellect; Blessed John Paul II extended his support for the notion that truth can never contradict truth: "Encouragement to these brave pioneers of scientific research, to whom humanity owes so much of its current development, I would urge them to continue their efforts without ever abandoning the *sapiential* (i.e. fixed on *wisdom*) horizon within which scientific and technological achievements are wedded to the philosophical and ethical values which are the distinctive and indelible mark of the human person."

**NOVEL:** *The Sparrow*, Mary Doria Russell

**SONG:** "The Mayor of Simpleton," XTC

**FILM:** *A Man for all Seasons* (Zinneman, 1966)

**PROJECT:** Review a book, article, or idea that juxtaposes theology/spirituality against science or ethics. Discuss.

## 7. COMMUNITAS/COMMUNIO.

The Catholic Imagination is nothing if not *communitarian*. It eschews the (American) Protestant tendency that valorizes the individual (the "Jesus and Me" approach) and the mystical body of the church supports more inclusive relationality. Of course, this is not to say that the individual is unimportant in Catholicism. Individuality is simply conceived of differently (e.g. different than the individual as *self-sufficient ego* that we see in late modernism). The personhood of an individual is fully realized (or unrealized) based on the quality of relationship between God, self, and community. Following the Greeks and St. Paul, a person is most herself or himself when he or she is in full exercise of his or her personal gifts (*charisms*); gifts, by their very nature, assert themselves towards the public (or *corporate* as in *bodily*) good. The exercise of personal gifts for the public good is a hallmark of *communio*. Because of the *Fall* (at least theologically speaking), weakness, failure, and struggle are also components of *communio*, as are forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope. The primacy of the community is a gospel mandate, a transcendental, as well as the foundation of any conception of "church."

**NOVEL:** *Let the Great World Spin*, Colum McCann

**POEM/SONG:** "You'll Never Walk Alone," Rodgers and Hammerstein

**FILM:** *Of Gods and Men* (Beauvois, 2010)

**PROJECT:** Consider the notion that "Forgiveness is the hardest challenge of Christianity." Review and discuss the concept of truth and reconciliation. Review and discuss Dr. Fred Luskin's "Nine Steps to Forgiveness." Compare to Catholic notions of confession, penance, and reconciliation. Next, forgive somebody; or allow yourself to be forgiven; or both.

## 8. KENOSIS

One could say that in the heart of Christian existentialism resides the idea of *kenosis*, which translates into "self-emptying" or "self-donation." Because God's great hope is that we might give, we are endowed us with a kenotic disposition. Notions of grace derive from kenosis, and the Golden Rule is

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based upon it. A kenotic reality is an eternal reality. It establishes Christ as the center of the cosmos and Jesus of Nazareth as the central exemplar of what it means to be human. Our values, desires, and relationships become more navigable and intelligible with Christ as center. Hierarchy begins with the human Jesus — the exemplar of **true humility** — and propels from the reality of servant leadership. The notion that the universe is **sacredly arranged** by effusive, inexhaustible grace is truly a *cardinal* (i.e. “hinge”) concept. It is not merely a “top-down” affair; rather it is a *sacred arrangement* (and this is literally what “hierarchy” means): human creatures are made for nobility and holiness — to give as they have been given, to sacrifice as God has sacrificed for us and to stretch-out in openness to others.

**NOVEL:** *The Diary of a Country Priest*, Georges Bernanos

**POEM:** “Those Winter Sundays,” Robert Hayden

**FILM:** *The Painted Veil* (Curran, 2006)

**PROJECT:** Visit the elderly, sick, injured, or shut-in. Show interest, listen, and observe. Journal about what is learned. Discuss. Repeat frequently.

## 9. CONVERSION

Conversion is an ongoing process as opposed to a “one-and-done” experience. Accepting Christ as one’s “personal savior” is life-changing, to be sure, but such an assent only becomes fully intelligible day by day — within the context and vitality of personal prayer, human encounter, and community participation.

**NOVEL:** *Wise Blood*, Flannery O’Connor

**SONG:** “Roll Away Your Stone,” Mumford and Sons

**FILM:** *The Mission* (Joffe, 1986)

**PROJECT:** Write about a personal moment of conversion (journal entry, poem, song, etc.) Or write about your favorite conversion story (whose conversion, why you honor it). Share.

## 10. LIFE AS PILGRIMAGE

We are creatures with origins and destinies, with sacred beginnings, middles, and ends. The human person is *homo viator* — a travelling creature who is meant to experience, learn, and draw meaning from these things. Balthasar’s concept of **Role and Mission** discloses beautifully how our lives are saturated with meaning and purpose; and his notion of **Theodrama** underscores the inherently dramatic structure of existence. The Catholic Imagination, following suit, tends to sacralize tragedy and comedy, for example, and finds theologically credible activity both in existence and in artistic depictions of existence (i.e. in narrative, visual, performing art, and so on).

**NOVEL:** *Therapy*, David Lodge

**SONG:** “Orange Sky,” Alexi Murdoch

**FILM:** *Trois Coeurs* Trilogy (Kieslowski, 1993-94)

**PROJECT:** Create a “Life Map” that depicts and illuminates your pilgrimage thus far. There are many approaches to this kind of cartography — timeline, photo collage, pirate map, Powerpoint, a three-dimensional creation...

To conceive of catechesis as an exercise in the mystery of God’s imagination is to endow the process not only with additional *gravitas* but with a refreshingly practical road map. The Catholic Imagination conceived of today is a practice that participates in and extends traditional Catholic spirituality. Jesus’s preferred pedagogy of teaching through parable and story, the spirit and mind-expanding journey of encountering scripture via the *Lectio Divina*, or the Ignatian approach exercising the spirit and the conscience: these are earlier expressions of employing a Catholic Imagination (and remain practices that nourish us still). Such an imagination demands that we work with it and listen to it, that we develop a relationship with it, and find original ways to express it. As Lynch scholar Gerald Bednar proposes, such an approach reveals the imagination as necessarily theological:

Art is for humanity what nature is for God. Imagination frees a person from subjectivity by the creation of art whereby the self becomes objectified, real, and in relation to concrete reality. Imagination liberates the person from the confines of the self. Through acts of creative imagination, a person becomes real. It is there that a person “imitates” God, or participates in the divine, most closely.

The hope here is to provide a practical matrix for identifying and unleashing the rich complexity of the Catholic Imagination as a catechetical resource. Good catechesis resounds the note; a refined Catholic Imagination recognizes the note as divine music. The Catholic Imagination celebrates the many ways of knowing and the symphony of being, and catechists who nurture this approach in church communities will be inviting their students to open up and to go deeper. We will always work from scripture and through the essential concepts of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. We will always learn from the writings of the saints and the vast amount of other theological and spiritual reflections that constitute this faith tradition. We will always be grateful for the gift of liturgy and delight in its nourishment. But we are also grateful for the gift of imagination and are moved by the way it traffics in the world. We are inspired profoundly by the creativity of artists and beautiful artifacts they make — not only because they are ends in themselves, but because they show us a new horizon for catechetical reflection. We need not isolate our catechetical conversations in rote pedagogies (where writing and responding rule the experience) for it is clearly productive and enriching to cultivate alternative responses. When students respond with their imaginations, they are spiritually empowered to utter a fresh and central answer. They will point at the Prodigal Son and construct an approach to social justice based on *Talitha Cum*; they will rhapsodize in song about the road to Emmaus and dance the kenotic dynamism of the Holy Trinity into being. Imagine that! ■

*Michael P. Murphy is the Director of Catholic Studies at Loyola University Chicago.*

# Go Outside! Go Out!

Janet S. Crespi



Even without the statistics from the CARA report, we as catechetical leaders know that over three-fourths of our parishioners are not participating in the life of the church. The evidence is in the pews and in our faith formation programs. Over the last half-century, studies reveal the steady increase in the decline in the number of people celebrating Mass. To counteract this decline in Mass attendance and church activities, we have “beefed up” our diocesan and parish catechetical programs by making them more convenient for parishioners, more interesting, more fun, and more family-friendly. We are striving to ensure that our DREs, CREs, and catechists are equipped with a solid faith background and with excellent resources and materials to use in their programs. We are providing retreats for our clergy, and for those implementing catechetical programs to keep them refreshed so they are ready to offer their all to those they serve in their parishes. As catechetical leaders, we strive to perfect the individual gifts that God has given us so we can do our best to proclaim the gospel message.

## WE NEED A RADICAL CHANGE

In my own parish, I can rightfully boast of our liturgies and faith formation programs. Our pastor is a gifted homilist, he makes real for those sitting in the pews the beauty of God’s love in interesting and often humorous ways. Our music director is a gifted composer and musician. His music is uplifting and enhances the liturgy. We have a lector that memorizes the readings each and every week, no matter the length of the Scripture passages, enabling her to truly proclaim the message, not in a robotic monotone, but in a bombastic proclamation of God’s truth. The hospitality crew make themselves available at every Mass and catechetical event to ensure all feel welcome. Our catechetical programs consist of catechists that are trained, seasoned, filled with the Spirit’s excitement, and ready to help the CRE in whatever manner is required of them. While all of this may seem to be the epitome of what church is and should be, our pews hold true to the statistics from the CARA report. Even those parishioners who used

to come to the Christmas and Easter Masses are no longer seen in church. Why don’t they come? Where did they go? The larger question is, as evangelists, what are we going to do about it? A radical change in our methods of catechizing the tepid and indifferent attitudes is needed. We must be willing to be the instruments for this change.

In a recent issue of *Catechetical Leader*, Becky Eldredge spoke about the necessity of our prayer lives and how we must be fully immersed in Christ’s love, while at the same time being totally immersed in the world. Development of our prayer life is indeed crucial in our ministries as agents of the Spirit, and I think I can say that most of us work on that area of our lives and ministries. However, proclaiming the gospel by our personal witness in the realm outside of the walls of our churches

is still in the nascent stage. If we are to be the illumination of Christ’s love for others, we must go to where the people are. If we are reaching only 23 percent of our population in our current methodologies, then what is the point of our staying within the walls of our religious institutions? We are missing 77 percent of our population. We may say to ourselves that we do not have the energy, nor the time to add

one more item to our “job description,” but gone are the days of the “if we build it, they will come” mentality.

## THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS

On the Vigil of Pentecost, Pope Francis held a question and answer session with different ecclesial communities. In response to questions he received regarding the most effective contributions we can make to the church and to society, Pope Francis cited the three most important things we can do. The first is to keep Jesus as the center of our work. The second is to pray, and even more importantly, to listen to God for He will give us strength in our work. The third is to go out and witness. In the words of Pope Francis:

Don’t shut yourselves in, please! This is a danger: if we shut ourselves in in the parish, with friends, in the movement, with those with whom we think the same things ... do you know what happens? When the Church becomes closed, she gets sick, she gets

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sick. Think of a closed room for a year; when you go in, there's a smell of dampness, there are so many things that are not on. A closed Church is the same thing: it is a sick Church. The Church must come out of herself. Where? To the existential peripheries, whatever they are, but go out. Jesus says to us: "Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Give witness of the Gospel!" (cf. Mk 16:15)...Go outside, go out! Think also of what Revelation says. It says a beautiful thing: that Jesus is at the door and knocks, he knocks to come in to our heart (cf. Rev 3:20). This is the meaning of Revelation. But ask yourselves this question: how many times is Jesus inside and knocks on the door to go out, to go outside, and we don't let Him go out, because of our securities, because so many times we are in obsolete structures, which only serve to make us slaves, and not free children of God? In this "exit" it is important to go to the encounter; this word is very important for me: encounter with others. Why? Because the faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do the same thing that Jesus does: encounter others (May 22, 2013 Zenit.org).

We must have courage and we must trust in the one who has sent us the Holy Spirit. I left the NCCL conference in Cleveland this May during the city's lunch hour. Travel was slow because of the road construction in the streets, accompanied by the typical traffic patterns of that time of day, and the busyness of people walking in the crosswalks. I came to an intersection within a few blocks of where we had the conference and I saw a group of about 40 people that appeared to be Mennonites. They were singing the last refrain of an old gospel hymn over a loud speaker. Instinctively, I rolled down my window to listen. One of the men in the group began preaching their theology of heaven and hell. He welcomed questions by anyone who may be interested in their faith. In less than a minute's time, he made clear the purpose of Jesus in our lives, and that this particular group of people had the answers. These were not Catholic evangelists. We as Catholic catechetical leaders must go out and encounter others. We must go beyond our comfort zones. We must be the radical change needed to bring the 77 percent back, for if we do not illumine the path, ours will follow the light of another. |

*Janet S. Crespi is finishing her doctorate in systematic theology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.*

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# The Parish Guide to the New Evangelization: An Action Plan for Sharing the Faith

By: Robert J. Hater | Reviewed by: Pam Fischer



*A Parish Guide to the New Evangelization* is a practical guide that offers questions for reflections and a pastoral action plan for parish staffs. Robert Hater does this through stories and theological content. Some of the key “how to’s” include:

- How to overcome challenges to the new evangelization.
- How to motivate parishioners to evangelize.
- How the church encourages the use of the Internet and other media to promote evangelization efforts.

## OBSTACLES ALONG THE JOURNEY

Being called to discipleship and being called to evangelize means that we are always going to be facing many obstacles along the journey. We need to remind ourselves that through the evangelization process conversion will happen. We live in a very “I” centered world and discipleship does not happen overnight. We need to focus on the fact that changes not only occur through words, but also by our actions and realize that this will take some time; we must be patient and subtly persistent. Jesus faced this in his own life, with his followers. We hear the stories of conversion, through parables and most eloquently through his actions, as a man.

To evangelize means “to share faith.” How we go about that is one of the struggles or successes that we face as pastoral leaders. We live in a world that is very technologically advanced. We must get more involved in the digital age and make a difference to the people we are trying to reach. I recently made my own advancement in the world of technology and media by purchasing a smartphone. It is so smart that I really don’t know how to use all the applications effectively. I will have to rely on my 18-year-old son to “hook” me up and “evangelize” to me all of the “talents” of this new tool. I am an educated woman and I plan to be able to use this phone as a means to share our Catholic faith with the young people of my parish.

## SHARE THE WORD OF GOD THROUGH STORIES

Our parishes must be welcoming, hospitable communities of faith. We must reach out and serve those who are on the fringes, and continue to support those parish members who are there for, what seems to be, everything. A personal invitation is a powerful tool in ministry, and inviting families is one of the keys to unlocking the new evangelization. As parish leaders we need to recognize how important family catechesis is; it’s a lifelong journey that encourages all family members to

grow in a deeper knowledge and understanding of our Catholic faith. We must share the word of God through the stories of Scripture and through the real-life stories of our daily lives, by providing service opportunities, by encouraging faith sharing with others, and meeting people where they are and on their terms. Hater shares Ezra’s story as an example of serving the needs of others. Ezra’s story teaches us what it means to be truly made in the image and likeness of God.

Hater writes:

Evangelization begins in Christian families. From the first seeds of faith, planted in family life, God’s grace begins an unfolding process that lasts a lifetime. From a mother’s smile to a father’s sacrifice, God’s spirit permeates a family, centered on love and faithfulness (104).

It is my hope that this happens every single day in our families, because if it doesn’t happen in our families where will it happen? Our families are faced with many challenges; each day, we need to make it a priority to share the word of God through our words or by our actions.

Many of the action steps that Hater presents in his book are tangible steps that parishes could easily follow. He leads the reader through an action plan that is very thought provoking and he offers spiritually sound reflection questions to help us respond to the holy longings of our heart. We need to keep in mind that the new evangelization is not about creating new “programs” but a paradigm shift, finding new ways to reach out and to minister to all of the members our parish communities.

The new evangelization invites all pastoral leaders to live a Christian life through sharing faith, being outstanding witnesses of faith, showing concern for those who are seeking and learning and most importantly to always reach out and evangelize with great love. In closing, I would like to share the last line of Hater’s book, “The new evangelization invites saints and sinners to join hands, ask for the Holy Spirit’s wisdom, and walk together into the kingdom of God.”

Isn’t this what we are all called to do? ■

*Pam Fischer is the Director of Religious Education at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Community in Newton, Wisconsin. She has been married to Larry for over 20 years and has a son, Matthew, who will be attending college in the fall.*

# Blogging moms

Claire M. McManus



From Boomer to Generation X, Millennial or whatever designation will be given to Generation Next, mothers will continue to dominate the landscape of our parish catechetical programs.

Anyone who has raised a family knows that there are times when life gets pretty messy.

Young mothers of this generation are drawn to blogs like metal shavings to a magnet, where they share in the ups and downs of parenting. Among some of the blogs written by and for mothers are two that seem to understand that life is less a page out of *Martha Stewart Living* and more a chapter from a book by Erma Bombeck.

## APOSTLE TO THE MISFITS

Mary DeTurrís Poust, a Catholic mom blogger from the Diocese of Albany, is a self-proclaimed Apostle to the Misfits. By misfits she means those people who “color outside the lines, are quirky and eccentric, and are true to themselves and their beliefs in the most glorious ways.” Her blog, *NotStrictlySpiritual.com*, is a place where she can “bring together people from all different walks of life and form a community of misfits that will change the world one person at a time.” Poust speaks to the moms out there who are looking for a little meaning in their lives. She reassures her readers, who like herself, may have lives that leave little time to pursue prayer or share faith. Poust encourages,

Discover the divine in the mundane. If you're like me, you probably think your life would be more focused and centered if only you had time to go on retreat, meditate, go to daily Mass, or fit in any kind of regular prayer. But who has that kind of time? Although it's important to set aside some regular time for quiet prayer, you don't have to stop moving to start praying. Look at your daily life and see where you can weave prayer into the actions of your day. Turn your activities into moving meditations.... Prayer doesn't pull you away from the activity; it helps you enter more deeply into it.

Poust is not an expert in Catholic spirituality. She is, however, an excellent writer and respected blogger who knows how to translate spirituality into the language and media of this generation of young moms.

## YOUR TRUTHIEST TRUTH

We also know that many young mothers of this generation have left behind lives and experiences that have teetered on

the brink of disaster. The word of God grows most persistently through the cracks of our broken lives.

Glennon Doyle Melton is a Christian mom whose blog *Momastery.com* reaches out from the depths of her broken past through the hope of her ever-recovering present. She, too, blogs about the ups and downs of raising a family, but her posts reveal some of the wound that lies beneath the surface of her scarred life. “My life is a tragedy, comedy, romance, adventure, or redemption story depending on the decade, time of day, and how much sleep I've had.”

A gifted writer, whose musings on life are filled with sentiment and self-deprecating humor, Melton offers no advice on spirituality but her unabashed admission that without God she would not have survived. She courageously posted about the rough spot in her marriage, her decision to separate, and the struggle to mend what was broken.

Just as I refused to be the poster child for Leaving, I also refuse to be the poster child for Staying. Life and relationships are complicated and messy and when we try to tidy them up with advice or generalizations, we offend, alienate, and leave folks feeling misunderstood and alone. My only advice is this: Drown out the external noise. Wait for the universe to reveal enough evidence to draw a conclusion. Be Still and Know. Wait for that teeny little nugget of Truth to arise — you know that nugget. It's often the quietest but deepest voice inside us that insists we have to go even though staying is more comfortable or the one that requires us to stay when we'd prefer, at the moment, to run for the hills. Listen to your truthiest truth. Your truthiest truth sounds more like Love and Courage than Fear. Don't ignore it. Don't be afraid. Trust. God won't invite us anywhere God's not already waiting.

Pay attention to these blogs; they reveal a deep need that may not be addressed in our faith communities. Both of these women are providing a vehicle for grace that we may not be able to replicate in our parishes, but rather than ignoring them as they flourish in the vacuum of the cyber universe, we must engage them and post a response that steers our young moms in the direction of their faith community. ■

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

# Forming parents' habits

Leisa Anslinger



Happy New Year! I know it is not January. However, most of us and most of our parishioners think of early autumn as the beginning of a “new year.” Whether they have children in our programs or not, most of the people in our parishes see the end of summer as a time to get back into the “regular” rhythms of life. How do we make early autumn a time for everyone, especially parents, to renew their commitment to Jesus Christ? How may we help parents strengthen the habits of faith in their lives and homes?

In the past few years, I have had dozens of conversations with workshop groups about the parents in their parishes. In asking parish catechetical leaders to identify their hopes and prayers for the parents in their programs, two consistent themes emerge:

1. “I wish they would come to Mass on Sunday!”
2. “I wish they could learn to prioritize their time and attention.”

The insight of these catechetical leaders is consistent with what I hear from parents as well. Many who do make the Sunday liturgy their first priority are dismayed at how many do not. They understand their regular participation in Sunday Mass shapes and nourishes them and their children, and they see the impact of this in their lives. Many who admit that they do not come to Mass regularly sense that something is missing in their lives. When they talk with parents whose week begins with Mass, they are encouraged and challenged to change.

## HABIT FORMATION

In his book, *The Power of Habit* Charles Duhigg explores the brain science of habit formation. The process he describes can be applied to the ways in which we help parents form the habit of faith. Think about this process in your own life and experience as we explore it in relationship to the parents we serve.

The process of forming or strengthening a habit involves a cycle:

**First**, there is a *cue*. Something leads us to enact a behavior. For those of us who have the Sunday liturgy as the central and beginning moment of each week, the very thought of Sunday leads us to participation in Mass. Think of the bells that audibly lead us to the doors of church.

**Second**, the *routine*, or rhythm, a behavior or action that is the essence of the habit. We know that participation in Mass is more than the action of going to church on Sunday. The action is central to the Catholic Christian way of life, and the routine of Mass participation shapes and continues the process of transformation and conversion in Christ.

**Third**, the *reward*. In the process of forming a habit, there must be a reward in order for the habit to be strengthened or solidified in our lives. What is the reward, or impact, of faith? Joy, peace, purpose, love of God and neighbor... we can name many rewards and challenges of the life of discipleship. The reward, or impact, reinforces the behavior the next time the cue is experienced.

## HABIT OF FAITH

Let us apply this to our ministry with parents. If our desire is to help parents and families form the *habit* of faith, we can help in specific ways:

1. *Cue*: In one parish a few years ago, Children’s Liturgy of the Word was offered at the early Christmas eve liturgy. At the end of Mass, the children were called forward for a special blessing and the pastor invited parents to come back with their families, explaining that what their children had experienced is offered every Sunday. Many did return; the participation of younger families has steadily increased, and their family programming is thriving as a result. How might you offer a “cue” to your families? Build on what is already present: sacramental preparation, parent meetings, special family gatherings, and so on. How might these processes become a cue for increased participation?
2. *Rhythm (routine)*: Consider forming a team of parents who actively participate in Sunday Mass to welcome and connect with less-frequent participants when they see them. Help those who are already engaged to be aware of the need to connect with those who are less engaged, strengthening the lived faith of all.
3. *Impact (reward)*: Invite parishioners to occasionally provide a lay witness at the end of Mass, in the bulletin or as a video link in your parish email newsletter. Ask them to describe the impact of their faith in their lives. ■

*Leisa Anslinger is the director of Catholic Life & Faith, an online resource for helping leaders engage real people in real faith, catholiclifeandfaith.net. Contact her at leisaanslinger@gmail.com.*

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

**Planning for Adult Faith Formation**

***Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*** by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The bishops present a pastoral plan in four parts. The plan examines the challenges and opportunities faced today, the key qualities of a mature faith, the principles and approaches for providing sound adult faith formation, and the critical roles of parish leadership and diocesan support.

This is available in print, ebook, and online at the USCCB website.

***A Concise Guide to Adult Faith Formation*** by Neil Parent. Ave Maria Press.

Neil Parent articulates his view that learning about the faith in adulthood is not merely an extension of basic childhood religious education, but is rather a continuous, lifelong process. Parent combines church teaching and adult learning theory to make this a must-read for pastors, catechists, and all in faith formation ministries.

***Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation*** by Jane Regan. Loyola Press.

Jane Regan explores the current structure of parish catechesis. Basing her ideas on contemporary theory and traditional practice, Regan sets forth an intriguing argument: the vitality of the church depends on establishing a new education paradigm — one that is focused on adults.

How can parishes design a framework for adult catechesis? Will such programs be accepted by local church communities? Where does children's faith formation fit into the new structure? Regan answers these questions and offers ideas for developing a balanced approach to religious education — one that addresses the ongoing faith life of adults.

***The Adult Learner, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*** by Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F.

Holton, III, Richard A Swanson. Taylor & Francis Publishing.

How do you tailor education to the learning needs of adults? Do they learn differently from children? How does their life experience inform their learning processes?

These were the questions at the heart of Malcolm Knowles' pioneering theory of andragogy, which transformed education theory in the 1970s. The resulting principles of a self-directed, experiential, problem-centered approach to learning have been hugely influential and are still the basis of the learning practices we use today. Understanding these principles is the cornerstone of increasing motivation and enabling adult learners to achieve.

This is a definitive and foundational book for anyone involved in adult faith formation in our Catholic parishes and communities. For additional information, table of contents, etc. visit the publisher's website.

***Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation: 40 Tips*** by Sr. Janet Schaeffler, OP. Published as an eBook in PDF and available from eCatechist.com.

In this short and practical book, Janet Schaeffler highlights the foundational principles and practices that are at the foundation of any parish program. Topics include: what is adult faith formation, pastoral planning, program design, methods, marketing, etc.

For additional book recommendations, ideas, and resources, visit Sr. Janet Schaeffler's website [janetschaeffler.com](http://janetschaeffler.com) and sign up for her monthly newsletter, GEMS.

**New Books for Catechist Education, Formation, and Certification**

***31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator*** by Jared Dees. Ave Maria Press.

In the framework of *31 Days*, Jared Dees offers an extensive collection of simple, practical, and well-researched ideas and strategies for becoming effective catechists in parish faith formation programs and religion teachers in Catholic schools.

*31 Days* can be used individually, in small groups, and for in-service programs. It is for beginning and veteran catechists/religion teachers, helping them develop clear and practical plans for nurturing the spiritual formation of their students at the elementary, junior high, and senior high levels.

Dees is the creator of [thereligionteacher.com](http://thereligionteacher.com), where you can receive a complimentary copy of *The Religion Teacher's Guide to Lesson Planning*.

***Beyond The Catechist's Toolbox: Catechesis that Not Only Informs but also Transforms*** by Joe Paprocki. Loyola Press.

Joe Paprocki, best-selling author of The Catechist's Toolbox Series, has written the first, step-by-step book that demonstrates how to teach a 75-minute catechetical session with practical techniques that expand upon the textbook to create a more prayerful climate in the classroom.

*Beyond the Catechist's Toolbox* enables young people to personally encounter Jesus in prayer, rather than just read about him, in order to become lifelong disciples of Christ.

Paprocki is creator of [catechistjourney.loyolapress.com](http://catechistjourney.loyolapress.com). ■

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

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