

May 2012 | Volume 23, Number 3 | \$6.00

cl

CATECHETICAL
LEADER



EUCCHARIST, MYSTERY, AND FAITH

IN THIS ISSUE:

Formed by Eucharist, Sent in Mission
Three Ways to Engage Parents

CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

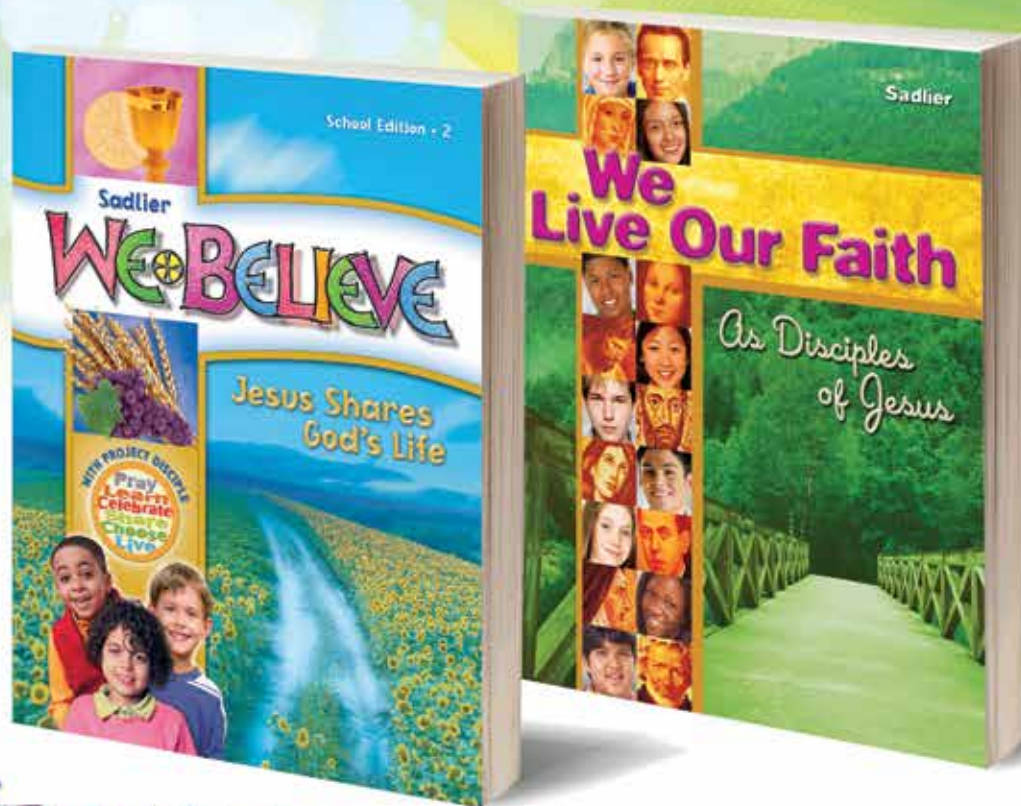
NCCL / Strategic Plan 2011-2014

NCCL, 125 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #38
Fulton, MO

Believing...

is just the beginning.



Sadlier WE BELIEVE

Incorporates the *Roman Missal*, Third Edition

Project Disciple and *Haciendo discípulos* activities develop discipleship skills and encourage children to be evangelizers

- Complete catechetical program for Grades K–8
- The first (and only) catechetical program to bring you 1,400 Content-Based *Project Disciple* Activities
- Spiral curriculum presents key concepts of faith each year helping children develop as disciples of Jesus Christ
- Available in school, parish, and bilingual editions

Contact Us: 877-930-3336 • Mention Promo Code C9



Sadlier

www.Sadlier.com/previewwbpd



SadlierReligion

CATECHETICAL LEADER Table of Contents

May 2012

In Every Issue

- 4 **From the President** Anne Roat
Choose Leaders at this Year's Conference
- 5 **From the Executive Director** Leland Nagel
It's for you...and it's free
- 24 **Transforming, Evangelizing Catechesis** Tom Quinlan
Pope Benedict on the Key Role of Silence in Prayer and Evangelization
- 26 **Book Review** Reviewed by Amy S. McEntee
American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us
- 28 **Engaging Parents** Leisa Anslinger
Three Proven Principles for Meeting Spiritual Needs
- 29 **Diocesan Director's Forum** James F. Gontis
Top Ten List for Outstanding Catechesis
- 30 **New Evangelization on a New Continent** Russell Peterson
The Challenges of the New Digital Continent
- 31 **Notable Resources** Dan Pierson

Features

- 6 Formed by Eucharist, Sent in Mission
Joan Rosenhauer
- 16 Mystagogy: Seek the Mystery
Sara Blauvelt
- 19 Ten Advantages of Intergenerational Catechesis
Joseph P. Sinwell
- 21 Connect, Awaken, and Share: Three Ways to Engage Parents in the Faith Formation of their Children
Tom McGrath and Joellyn Ciccirelli

Catechetical Update

- 12 NCCL / Strategic Plan 2011-2014



Formed by Eucharist, Sent in Mission
page 6



Mystagogy: Seek the Mystery
page 16



Ten Advantages of Intergenerational Catechesis
page 19



Connect, Awaken, and Share: Three Ways to Engage Parents in the Faith Formation of their Children
page 21

NCCL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

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

NCCL STAFF

- Mr. Leland D. Nagel**
Executive Director
- Ms. Gina Garroway**
Associate Director

CHOOSE LEADERS AT THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE

Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



Dear NCCL Members,

As I am writing this column in January, Indiana is covered in a blanket of snow. But you will not be reading my words until May, so I have faith that spring will have come to the Midwest and the snow will be gone by that time. More importantly, with spring comes the 76th Annual NCCL Conference and Exposition. And even more importantly—we are going to San Diego.

The Town and Country Conference Center in San Diego where we will be staying is superb! I had an opportunity to visit it in November and loved the pools, restaurants, shops, golf course, spa, and beautiful landscaping. All these amenities are available at the conference center or within walking distance. For those of you who want to do some sightseeing, there is a tram station near the conference center that will take you to the San Diego Zoo, SeaWorld, the Pacific Ocean, Old Town, several of the California missions, and other attractions.

This year's theme is *Embrace Grace* and the lineup of speakers is outstanding. Fr. Frank DeSiano, Valimar Jansen, John Roberto, Jonathan Sullivan, Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ann Garrido, and Jack Jezreel are just a few of this year's stellar presenters. I was very excited to learn that Fr. Leo Patalinghug will be hosting a breakout called 'Embrace Grace Before Meals.' For you foodies who missed the television episode of Food Network's *Throwdown*, Fr. Leo is the priest from St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg who beat Bobby Flay in a cook-off.

Bryan Reising, who is the chair of this year's conference committee, told me that they have fantastic roundtables planned. There is even a post conference gathering during which everyone, novices to experts, can learn how tech-

nology can help your ministry and be fun. As usual, there will be wonderful resources presented in the showcases and in the exhibit hall. Occasions to gather, to network, to share ideas, and to have fun abound throughout the conference.

A significant task awaits this year's conference-goers. NCCL members will have an opportunity to choose their leadership for the next three years. Two slates of officers will be introduced to the membership. The slates will spend time describing their vision for our organization. You will be given time to ask questions of the eight individuals on the slates. Voting will take place during the conference, and the officers will be installed during the closing prayer service.

On a final note, the new NCCL strategic plan was completed in January. Copies of the plan have been sent to members of your Representative Council and shared with the NCCL committees. There is also a copy of the plan available on the website. Just in case you missed reading and studying the plan that serves as our blueprint for

I am definitely ready for San Diego and our 76th annual conference and exposition. If you have not made your reservation, there is still room.

action until 2014, we have included a copy in this issue of *Catechetical Leader*. Please be sure to take a look at it.

I am definitely ready for San Diego and our 76th annual conference and exposition. If you have not made your reservation, there is still room. If you have made your reservation, I will see you there. Remember, your participation is very important to NCCL. Thank you for all you do to support your organization!

God bless,

Anne

President, NCCL

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

IT'S FOR YOU...AND IT'S FREE

Leland Nagel



For over a decade, NCCL partnered with USCCB, in particular the Office for Catholic Education and the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, and the Departments of Chief Administrators and Religious Education of the NCEA, in offering a five-day orientation program for new or nearly new diocesan leaders. More than 250 people, many of whom are currently involved in diocesan positions, participated in The Diocesan Educational/Catechetical Leadership Institute that began in 1997.

In 2009, with a downturn in the economy, increased costs in transportation, and a full week away from the office, the Institute used the opportunity to transform itself. In 2010, the Leadership Institute became an online program. In addition to individual participants, one diocesan department used the webinars as their staff development activities for each month. They gathered together for the webinar presentation and then stayed together for a second hour for their own discussion.

In 2009, with a downturn in the economy, increased costs in transportation, and a full week away from the office, the Institute used the opportunity to transform itself. In 2010, the Leadership Institute became an online program. In addition to individual participants, one diocesan department used the webinars as their staff development activities for each month. They gathered together for the webinar presentation and then stayed together for a second hour for their own discussion.

In 2011, the program expanded to include two tracks of recordings, each track with its own complement of webinars and question-and-answer (Q & A) sessions. Track I still serves new diocesan educational or catechetical leaders. Track II serves the professional development needs of veteran diocesan administrators.

As plans for the 2012 track were underway, The Leadership Institute Sponsors began to look for ways to effectively use these resources beyond their initial target audience. A proposal was presented to the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis who endorsed the idea of offering these webinars to a much larger audience and to do it for free. That's where you become the lucky recipients of a wealth of good material that will cost you nothing more than your time.

Starting in 2012, the online Leadership Institute will be offered free of charge to all interested individuals. It will continue to serve the needs of diocesan leaders. Many of the webinars and Q&As will also be of interest to parish catechetical leaders and catechists, Catholic school principals and teachers, and other individuals who provide faith formation to diverse age groups and settings.

You can pick and choose from dozens of topics, all presented by some of the nation's best teachers. There is no prescribed order; no prerequisites, and they are available 24/7. There is no penalty if you want to watch it again or view it a day later.

CATECHETICAL LEADER

Many of the webinars come with downloadable PowerPoint presentations. This is an opportunity you won't want to miss. Some of the topics are suitable for adult faith formation classes or individual reflection. The possibilities for use are limitless. You don't have to use the full hour either; you might just want to use an eight- or ten-minute clip at the start of a meeting.

Here is how the series is described on the website. It is easiest to just go the USCCB homepage (usccb.org) and then click on *Evangelization and Catechesis* at the bottom of the page. Once there, you will find *Leadership Institute* on the right side under *Related Information*.

WEBINAR SERIES

Track III - During 2012, an exciting new series of webinars focused on the "New Evangelization" will be offered. The webinar topics and presenters were approved by the Bishops Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis and the Bishop Chair of the Bishops Committee on Catholic Education. Once posted, participants will be able to access the webinars online. Live Q&A sessions with a presenter panel will be held three times during the year.

Track II - Includes a series of webinars and Q&As recorded in 2011. The topics include stewardship of creation, evangelization, catechesis and the fathers of the church, the revised Roman Missal, popular devotions, morality, sacramental life, prayer, an introduction to the Eastern Rite Churches and how to use the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.

Track I - Includes webinars and Q&As recorded in 2010 to orient new diocesan educational and catechetical leaders. Clergy, Catholic school principals, parish catechetical leaders and others will benefit from most of these topics. A special live Q&A session for interested diocesan leaders will be announced later in 2012.

Don't miss this opportunity to listen and learn from some of the best teachers of the Catholic faith and traditions. Expand your understandings, broaden your perspectives, and deepen your insights. You can do all this for free and in the comfort of your own home. As one of the sponsors of this Institute, NCCL is proud to invite you to share in the work of one of our cooperative efforts. Your use of these resources is an indication to our bishops of your appreciation of these materials and the desire that these offerings be continued in the years to come. ■

Formed by Eucharist, Sent in Mission

Joan Rosenhauer



In 2004, Blessed John Paul II announced a Year of the Eucharist and asked the Catholic community worldwide to focus our attention on the mystery of the Eucharist. He issued an apostolic letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, in which he reflected on the meaning of the Eucharist in our lives. “We cannot delude ourselves,” he tells us, “by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ. This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged” (No. 28).

The power of that statement is striking. Blessed John Paul II didn’t say that concern for those in need is *one of* the criteria by which our Eucharistic celebrations are judged. He said it is *the* criterion. And this powerful message does not stand alone among the many sources of teaching about how the Eucharist leads to our mission in the world. Blessed John Paul II also taught that it is “unworthy of a Christian community to partake of the Lord’s Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, No. 20).

While this teaching is striking, it should not come as a surprise. How can we receive the Eucharist and yet ignore Christ’s teaching and the model he offered of reaching out to the poor and the marginalized? Christ himself, whose mission of love becomes our mission when we receive him in the Eucharist, taught us that the measure of our lives will be how we responded to the “least” among us (cf. Mt 25: 31-46). In those who are suffering, we find Christ himself. It is important to note that there aren’t several stories of the Last Judgment with a range of standards against which our lives

will be judged. There is one, and the standard is whether we have cared for those in need. It is also important to note that Jesus did not add at the end of the parable, “However, the only people who have to worry about this message are the ten people on the social concerns committee and the rest can just forget it,” or “The only people who have to worry about this parable are retired people who have plenty of time, and the rest of you, during the rest of your lives, can ignore it.” This is a message for each and every believer at every stage of our lives.

Pope Benedict XVI reflected this fundamental teaching in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*. Describing the mission of the church, he wrote, “...love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the gospel. The church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the sacraments and the word” (No. 28).

During 2012, Pope Benedict XVI has asked the global Catholic community to direct our attention in a particular way on the church’s mission of evangelization, calling for a synod of bishops on the New Evangelization during the fall of this year. The New Evangelization includes many dimensions, including our efforts to help the poor, a mission to which we are called by the Eucharist and the teaching of the church. Blessed John Paul II has taught, “The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity toward the poor, the

weak, and those who suffer” (*Redemptoris Missio*, No. 42). Pope Benedict XVI tells us, “Testimony to Christ’s charity, through works of justice, peace, and development, is part and parcel of evangelization” (*Caritas in Veritate*, No. 15).



Arborloos are inexpensive toilets that first serve sanitation needs, then later provide a rich source of nutrients for fruit trees. Photo by CRS staff.



The land in parts of Ethiopia is dry and arid. Photo by Joan Rosenhauer/CRS

The lessons of Scripture, our teaching about the Eucharist, and our call to evangelization come together to send us in mission into the world to help people who are poor and suffering. A challenge for those involved in catechetical ministry is to help our Catholic people understand how important this mission is to our faith lives. Does our participation in the Eucharist lead us to demonstrate love and concern for people who are suffering? As we prepare to receive Christ in the Eucharist, do we consider whether we have been indifferent toward those in need? Do our lives as believers and as a faith community reflect our three-part mission focused on the gospel, the sacraments, and responding to the poor?

There is a risk associated with any discussion of Catholic teaching on love for the poor. “The poor” can be an abstraction. We can forget that there are real people who are our brothers and sisters to whom our faith and our mission lead us. Efforts to teach and reflect on our mission in the world must always include a discussion of our brothers and sisters and the struggles they face.

In eastern Ethiopia, it’s a struggle just to get water. The terrain is so dry and natural springs are so far apart that women and girls have to spend as many as eight hours each day walking to get water for their families. That was how 12-year-old Haja spent most of her life. But this changed when the U.S. Catholic community, through our agency, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in collaboration with the church in Harar, Ethiopia, began to work with Haja’s village on a water and sanitation project.

First we helped villagers build terraces, by hand, one rock at a time, on the hills near their homes. This allowed rainwater to be absorbed into the ground rather than rushing down the side of the barren hillside.

As a result of increased groundwater, new natural springs developed closer to the village. CRS and the local church helped the villagers lay pipes to bring the water to their fields. They also piped water to the center of the village where a spigot was installed.

CRS and the church in Harar also helped villagers to learn about the relationship between health and sanitation. They

had not realized that poor or nonexistent sanitation systems could lead to disease. To address this problem, we brought them a simple technology called the “arborloo.” Villagers dig pits in their yards. We give them a concrete slab with a hole in it to cover the pit. Then they build an enclosure around the pit. They use the arborloo for six to nine months, mixing cooking ash into the pit as it is used. This controls odors and helps turn the contents into compost. The arborloo is then move to another part of their yard. We give them a seedling to plant in the hole, and over time they grow an arbor with fruit trees that can help feed their families.

This project has meant that girls like Haja and their mothers no longer have to spend eight hours each day hauling water for their families. As a result, Haja and other girls are able to attend school for the first time in their lives. Their mothers are able to focus on income-generating activities to pay school fees and improve their quality of life in other ways.

When we consider how the Eucharist forms us and sends us in mission to be Christ’s love in the world, it is essential to overcome the risk that “the poor” will become an abstraction by recalling people like Haja and her neighbors as well as those

Fourth-grade students at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart School in Baltimore, MD, hold cardboard rice bowls used to raise money for Operation Rice Bowl. Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS



CATECHETICAL LEADER

PUBLISHER: National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

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

Fax: (202) 884-9756. Contact NCCL for reprints.
Copyright © 2012 by NCCL.

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

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

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

Please recycle CL.





As part of a CRS watershed management program, the land around this mountain was terraced, resulting in green and healthy crops. Photo by Joan Rosenhauer/CRS

we encounter in our own communities who are struggling with homelessness and poverty. These are our brothers and sisters who are children of God and in whom we see Christ in our world.

It is also essential to overcome another risk—the risk that we will discuss and agree on our essential gospel call to help those in need without considering a practical response. What exactly can we do to respond to this call?

At CRS, we are often asked this question. What can I do? We have a simple answer—PLAG. It stands for Pray, Learn, Act and Give, four steps that any of us can do no matter how busy we are or what challenges we face in our own lives.

The starting point is **prayer**. Each of us can and must pray for those who are suffering in our communities, in our nation, and in our world. We also need to pray for greater justice and peace in our world. It is not enough to focus on responding to suffering while ignoring the injustices and violence that lead to suffering. We cannot underestimate the power of prayer.

Learning is a second, essential step toward responding to the needs of our brothers and sisters at home and abroad. We can't know how to respond if we don't understand the situations of suffering, including the factors that contribute to it. In this age of the Internet, it is relatively easy to find information on poverty, its causes and consequences, around the world. The websites of Catholic Relief Services, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, diocesan Catholic Charities agencies, and many more provide easy access to helpful information.

St. James tells us, “faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (2:17). **Acting** on our commitment to bring God's love to those who are hungry, thirsty, and otherwise in need is an essential part of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. For catechetical leaders, this is a particular challenge since so many of our people are extremely busy and don't believe they have the time to become involved in our social mission. At the same time, there is a hunger among many parishioners to make a difference and bring their faith to life beyond Sunday.



Parishioners and students purchase fair trade products. Photo by Wetzler Studios for CRS

Youth and young adults are particularly interested in addressing issues of poverty, injustice, and violence. Parents are often looking for opportunities to instill an ethic of service in their children. Older people seek meaningful ways to use additional time as children leave home and retirement frees up their schedules. How can catechetical leaders create opportunities for action that balance these competing demands?

Once again, Catholic social ministry agencies can help catechetical leaders engage parishioners in our mission in the world. For local opportunities, diocesan Catholic Charities agencies' parish social ministry offices can be a valuable resource. Catholic Relief Services encourages Catholics to respond to the needs of people who are suffering around the world through a number of programs and opportunities. *Operation Rice Bowl*, CRS' Lenten program, is far more than

a small box for coins. Resources for individuals and families offer ways to pray for and learn about our brothers and sisters in developing countries, share in their experience through simple meals from their cultures, advocate for policies that support their development, and practice sacrificial giving as a part of our Lenten observance.

CRS also sponsors a fair trade program that allows individuals and families to purchase coffee, chocolate, and handcrafted items that are produced in ways that provide a fair wage and decent working conditions to workers from developing countries. Parishes can serve fair trade coffee at parish events and can host fair trade sales at Christmas and other times. These create helpful "teachable moments" when parishioners can learn about the impact of our purchasing choices on low-wage workers around the world.

Subscribe now to *Catechetical Leader*

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

Rates:

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

Please indicate the number of years you wish to subscribe.

One year Two years Three years

Amount Enclosed or Charged \$ _____

Please send the subscription to:

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

Credit card:

Fax information to NCCL at (202) 884-9756

Visa MasterCard American Express

Card no. _____

Signature _____

Check:

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



Participants in the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering lobby their members of Congress on issues of justice and peace. Photo by Philip Laubner/CRS

Additionally, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and CRS sponsor *Catholics Confront Global Poverty*, an initiative designed to make it easy for Catholics to advocate for U.S. policies that respond to dire emergencies and promote greater development, justice, and peace in poor nations around the world. Individuals can join CCGP and receive electronic notices when it's important to contact US decision makers on such issues as emergency assistance, development assistance, peace building, natural resources, and trade. Parishes can become a star on the CCGP web map, demonstrating their participation in efforts to confront global poverty.

A final, important way to engage in our mission to help those in need and promote justice and peace is by **giving**. While some are uncomfortable with this topic, catechetical leaders can provide a useful service to parishioners by helping them understand that sharing our financial resources is a valued opportunity to respond to the gospel call to love our neighbors. Parish leaders can also help parishioners by identifying reputable agencies they can support and provide educational information on these programs.

Several years ago at a diocesan social ministry conference, one of the participants commented that we have to accept that not everyone can be a “social ministry person.” The lessons of the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, and our understanding

of the Eucharist would lead to the opposite conclusion. It may be that we can't all do everything we would like to respond to human needs. And we may not all be able to do the same thing. But all of us can do *something* to respond to those in need. The critical task for catechetical leaders is to provide information, resources, and links that can help parishioners identify the “something” they can do to carry out our mission in the world.

This focus becomes even more compelling when we remember the people who are at the heart of this mission, people like Haja and her neighbors. During a recent visit to their village, one of the visitors asked the women how the water and sanitation project had affected their lives. After considering the question, one woman responded, “None of my children died this year.” When we realize that we can save and transform lives just by providing a community spigot and an outhouse, and that there are so many other ways we can make a real difference in the lives of our neighbors near and far, we understand more fully the importance of this mission as an essential part of catechetical ministry. ■

Joan Rosenbauer is Executive Vice President of U.S. Operations for Catholic Relief Services. Contact her at Joan.Rosenbauer@crs.org.



CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



NCCL / STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2014

GOAL ONE: TO PROMOTE THE CENTRALITY OF ADULT FAITH FORMATION IN CATECHETICAL MINISTRY.

Objective 1.1: Enable annual conference participants to actualize the centrality of AFF in their catechetical efforts.

- Action Item 1.1.1: Experience a variety of adult styles of learning (at general sessions during every conference) in which members can participate so that they can implement similar techniques in their ministry.
 - Responsible Party: Annual Conference Committee and Adult Faith Formation Committee
 - Time Line: Beginning 2013 and ongoing
 - Finances: None

- Action Item 1.1.2: Give participants the opportunity following selected annual conference sessions to participate in an adult faith formation cohort that will meet in a facilitated discussion to reflect on the presentation as it affects the centrality of adult faith formation in their ministry.

- Responsible Party: Annual Conference Committee and Adult Faith Formation Committee
- Time Line: Beginning 2013 and ongoing
- Finances: None

Objective 1.2: Create or provide quality AFF resources.

- Action Item 1.2.1: Invite NCCL members to nominate parishes where the centrality of AFF is evident in their

approach to the areas of evangelization, systematic catechesis, sacramental prep, and mystagogy in order to compile exemplary approaches.

- Responsible Party: Adult Faith Formation Committee and Evangelization Committee
- Time Line: Spring 2013 and ongoing
- Finances: None
- Action Item 1.2.2: Compile a list of existing AFF resources organized by content and invite members to submit descriptions of how they have effectively used these resources in their ministry.
 - Responsible Party: Adult Faith Formation Committee, Evangelization Committee, and Product Development Committee
 - Time Line: Current and ongoing
 - Finances: None

GOAL TWO: TO ADVANCE CATECHESIS AS A WORK OF EVANGELIZATION AS DESCRIBED IN THE GENERAL AND NATIONAL DIRECTORIES.

Objective 2.1: Offer catechetical leaders opportunities to grow in a better understanding of evangelization.

- Action Item 2.1.1: Promote participation in the Track III series on Evangelization of the Diocesan Educational / Catechetical Leadership Institute for 2012.
 - Responsible Party: Diocesan Directors Forum, Diocesan Staff Forum, Parish Catechetical Leader Forum, and the *Catechetical Leader* Committee
 - Time Line: Winter 2012
 - Finances: None
- Action Item 2.1.2: Assemble and make known various universal and national documents; programs and processes; resources which can help catechetical leaders grow in a better understanding of evangelization.
 - Responsible Party: Evangelization Committee, Technology Committee, and the *Catechetical Leader* Committee
 - Time Line: Summer 2012 and ongoing
 - Finances: None

Objective 2.2: Assist members in understanding and articulating how every aspect of catechetical ministry serves the mission of evangelization.

- Action Item 2.2.1: Clarify the relationship of evangelization and catechesis through a clinic which illustrates how various moments of catechesis can be truly evangelizing.
 - Responsible Party: Evangelization Committee, Annual Conference Committee, and the Speakers' Bureau
 - Time Line: Fall 2012
 - Finances: Some cost but could find sponsors
- Action Item 2.2.2: Take eight phases of evangelization as stated in the NDC, chapter 2, #17c and correlate various aspects and examples of catechetical activity.
 - Responsible Party: Evangelization Committee, Annual Conference Committee, and the Speakers' Bureau
 - Time Line: Spring 2014
 - Finances: Some costs but could find sponsors

GOAL THREE: TO PROMOTE THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE HOLY SEE AND USCCB.

Objective 3.1: Develop resources for catechetical leaders to understand and implement appropriate use of social media.

- Action Item 3.1.1: Compile and publish a collection of the Social Communications documents of the Church which includes a bibliography.
 - Responsible Party: Technology Committee
 - Time Line: Fall 2013
 - Finances: \$3000 upfront recovered through sales of product
- Action Item 3.1.2: Develop a simple print product on how to implement social media for catechetical leaders.
 - Responsible Party: Technology Committee
 - Time Line: December 2012
 - Finances: \$750 upfront recovered through sales of product

Objective 3.2: Model effective use of social media.

- Action Item 3.2.1: Develop an NCCL app.
 - Responsible Party: Technology Committee
 - Time Line: Summer 2014
 - Finances: Grant application with research needed for costs
- Action Item 3.2.2: Improve the social media experience of the NCCL Annual Conference through streaming portions, power strips at each table, wifi throughout the public spaces, and back-channeling.
 - Responsible Party: Annual Conference Committee
 - Time Line: Beginning Spring 2013, fully achieved Spring 2014
 - Finances: \$3,500

GOAL FOUR: TO NURTURE THE GRASSROOTS STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION.

Objective 4.1: Create structures to support province level networking of DDREs, Diocesan Staff, and PCLs.

- Action Item 4.1.1: Build better networking of PCLs through social media leading to a fuller representation of PCLs on Rep Council.
 - Responsible Party: Parish Catechetical Leader Forum and Membership Committee
 - Time Line: Summer 2012
 - Finances: None
- Action Item 4.1.2: Educate diocesan catechetical personnel on social media that helps them to gather electronically for discussions, e.g. Skype, Google Hangout, GotoMeeting, etc.
 - Responsible Party: Diocesan Directors Forum, Diocesan Staff Forum, Technology Committee, and Communications Committee
 - Time Line: Fall 2012
 - Finances: None

Objective 4.2: Develop a marketing campaign to increase positive name recognition of NCCL within the Catholic community.

- Action Item 4.2.1: Create a promotional kit to inform

the bishops, pastors, and diocesan catechetical staff on the mission of NCCL and benefits of membership.

- Responsible Party: Membership Committee, Marketing Subcommittee, Diocesan Directors Forum, and Diocesan Staff Forum
- Time Line: Summer 2012
- Finances: \$500
- Action Item 4.2.2: Enlist a specialist in marketing to develop a marketing campaign for NCCL.
 - Responsible Party: Membership Committee and Marketing Subcommittee
 - Time Line: Spring 2013
 - Finances: \$3,000

GOAL FIVE: TO ENSURE THE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF NCCL.

Objective 5.1: Engage DDREs and province reps in actively recruiting new NCCL members.

- Action Item 5.1.1: Produce a professional quality marketing packet that has both a physical and an electronic version and includes quality video that clearly delineates the benefits to a diocese for diocesan membership.
 - Responsible Party: Marketing Subcommittee, Membership Committee, and Diocesan Directors Forum
 - Time Line: Summer 2012
 - Finances: \$1,000
- Action Item 5.1.2: Produce a professional quality marketing packet that has both a physical and an electronic version and includes quality video designed to promote NCCL membership to PCLs and a clear delineation of the benefits of members to PCLs.
 - Responsible Party: Marketing Subcommittee, Membership Committee, and Parish Catechetical Leader Forum
 - Time Line: Summer 2012
 - Finances: \$1,000

Objective 5.2: Engage actively involved NCCL members for the purpose of sustaining and increasing financial support.



- Action Item 5.2.1: Solicit active NCCL members to expand the Speakers' Bureau to increase both the breadth of offerings and the geographic distribution of speakers.
 - Responsible Party: Board of Directors and Speakers' Bureau
 - Time Line: Winter 2012
 - Finances: None
- Action Item 5.2.2: Create an NCCL presence on Goodsearch and Goodshop and actively educate members on how to use them and the existing Amazon bookstore.
 - Responsible Party: Executive Director, Technology Committee, and Communications Committee
 - Time Line: Winter 2012
 - Finances: None

GOAL SIX: TO EMPOWER CATECHETICAL LEADERS TO MORE EFFECTIVELY MINISTER IN A MULTICULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL CHURCH.

Objective 6.1: Provide intentional opportunities for people of diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds to interact under the auspices of NCCL.

- Action Item 6.1.1: Develop a multicultural committee for NCCL whose members would be representative of and advocate for various cultures.
 - Responsible Party: Board of Directors
 - Time Line: Summer 2012
 - Finances: None

- Action Item 6.1.2: Initiate a relationship with National Catholic Organizations that represent other cultures asking them to put an NCCL link on their websites and allow a link to their website on the NCCL website.
 - Responsible Party: Multicultural Committee and Executive Director
 - Time Line: Fall 2012
 - Finances: None

Objective 6.2: Provide catechetical leaders with formation in intercultural competencies.

- Action Item 6.2.1: Submit articles and/or links to *CL Weekly* to highlight catechetical diversity and best practices from other cultures in the USA.
 - Responsible Party: Multicultural Committee and Executive Director
 - Time Line: Winter 2013
 - Finances: None
- Action Item 6.2.2: Offer podcasts given by catechetical leaders of other cultures to educate the NCCL membership on how better to serve or address the cultural needs in their dioceses or parishes.
 - Responsible Party: Multicultural Committee and Technology Committee
 - Time Line: Winter 2013
 - Finances: None

Mystagogy: Seek the Mystery

Sara Blauvelt



Mystagogy, it is a mystery. Our church has this wonderful tradition of mystagogy (literally: “interpretation of mystery”), which the early Fathers used in their post-baptismal catechesis. If we consider how we approach reading a mystery novel, we find that the reader sorts through clues looking carefully at the words and actions of the characters in the story; this keeps the reader actively engaged as they try to come to some deeper understanding. Such an approach is not normally the case when we turn to catechetical efforts. Driven by the time constraints of parish calendars and catechetical texts, often so highly structured to impart the facts, the exploratory element of delving into the mystery is absent from our efforts. Consequently, mystagogy has been a largely underused catechetical methodology for the greater part of the last 1,200 years and so not only is it an unfamiliar (perhaps even uncomfortable) term, but a forgotten practice. We need to reclaim this essential methodology in our evangelization and catechetical efforts.

Mystagogy requires definition, while it eludes a static interpretation or methodology. Mystagogy is a process that should encompass all of life. It leads to the understanding of one thing, which regularly fosters understanding of another, which results in delving more deeply into the mystery. The Rite of Christian Initiation describes mystagogy as a process where individuals are “introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of the mysteries through the gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received” (245). As such, understanding leads to loving, loving to participation, participation to commitment, and commitment to a transformed way of living. The same is true of liturgy; when we gather for worship, it is fundamentally mysterious. Therefore, mystagogy attempts to transform the individual through reflection on his or her expe-

riences of the rite, the word, and the symbols of the liturgical celebration. It is effective because religious truths are often incomprehensible to reason and known only through faith.

Mystagogy should be a pastoral practice, for both clergy and lay ministers. The eyes of faith must be opened so that the experience of mystery can be applied to the context of church today. With that, the faithful can come to appreciate more deeply the magnitude of the gift(s) received in the sacraments. As catechists, we need to both familiarize ourselves with this practice and more importantly, imagine ourselves as mystagogues; that is, we must see ourselves as guides for reflection

on the rites of the church. As mystagogues, we help individuals, or cultures, to reassemble fragmentary memories into a meaningful Catholic belief system. Furthermore, this practice should not be limited to the neophytes in the parish RCIA program; rather, it should be employed in all catechetical efforts as envisioned in the new evangelization. As the transformative strength of mystagogy is being experienced by the newly

baptized, it is apparent that mystagogy can, and should, be a reflective experience in which all the faithful participate on a regular basis.

INCARNATIONAL AND ROOTED IN THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

In imagining ourselves as mystagogues, we are armed with a Catholic imagination that is Incarnational at its core; God’s immanence to created reality must be stressed. In *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, the Synod of Bishops begins the discussion of Eucharistic mystagogy by highlighting the commissioning of the disciples and that the Lord himself promised his abiding presence: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). The text continues, “We do not need to make him present by ourselves; it is he who makes himself present among us and

*In imagining ourselves
as mystagogues, we are armed
with a Catholic imagination
that is Incarnational at its core;
God’s immanence to created reality
must be stressed.*



remains with us always” (5:1). Mystagogy helps us to gain access to this abiding presence.

When rooted in the paschal mystery, mystagogy can foster imagination which leads to deeper conversion. Rooted in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, our lives become rooted in the cycles of life and death. Mystagogy on the paschal mystery allows us to see our ultimate death and resurrection within the Body of Christ. Likewise, it enables us to see the small moments of dying and rising in this world as moments to join more closely to the Lord and to those who suffer. Therefore, as mystagogues we must be aware of the community of believers with whom we share the journey. Sharing an awareness of that community expands the conversion of all.

INSPIRED BY THE WORD OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

Imagining ourselves as mystagogues requires that we be rooted in Scripture. Armed with the word of God, the readings of the Easter season—typically the time of mystagogy for the neophytes—predominate our exploration. The ability to draw the individual into our story of salvation can summon a response to faith and service. Repetition of the stories of faith, both

that of salvation history and our own experiences, provides a means for individuals to make their own the prayers and stories of faith; creating not only individual identity, but also a community of faith that is both strengthened and strengthens others.

As mystagogues we employ a poetic stance in our readings because the mystery of God is too deep for mere words: layering images and employing allegories helps to aid interpretation. However, such a stance is not generally well accepted in the fact-driven society of today. We must allow ample time and silence for sharing, absorbing, and reflecting upon the word of God.

LITURGY: MAKING PRESENT THE MYSTERY

“In the sacramental liturgy of the Church, the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit proclaims, makes present, and communicates the mystery of salvation, which is continued in the heart that prays” (CCC, 2655). Mystagogy does not necessarily need to be done independently. Good liturgy can be mystagogical. Apart from the Eucharistic celebration, the rites present a point of departure for reflection. This reflection takes time and the mystagogue must open up, in conversation

with the community, particular moments, elements, and symbols within the rite. Exploring the words and gestures can effectively deepen the sacramental experience. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Liturgical catechesis aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ (It is ‘mystagogy.’) by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacraments’ to the ‘mysteries’” (1075). In imaging ourselves as mystagogues, we must be grounded in liturgical symbols; both understanding the elements of the ritual and the theology of the rite so that it can generate a response and captivate our hearts with each encounter.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Eucharistic mystagogy is that it enables us to connect liturgy and life. St. Augustine, in his Eucharist reflections, said, “Become whom you receive.” We are to take Christ into the world, into our homes, workplaces, and society. Only through conscientious reception of the sacrament and reflection on the mystery are we fully strengthened for such a mandate.

TRADITION: A MIRROR TO CONTEMPLATE GOD

As Catholics, we share a love of artifacts of faith and devotions in the form of sacramentals which help us to further interpret revelation. As mystagogue, it is indispensable for us to have a well-informed understanding of these faith traditions and the role such traditions play in our spirituality and our catechetical efforts. Such a rich tradition provides a springboard of intuition into the deeper mysteries of the sacraments. The significance of this contribution is emphasized in the *CCC*, “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal.” Each makes present and fruitful in the church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own “always, to the close of the age” (80). Using forms of reflection, Scripture, ritual, parable, image, symbol, and myth, we allow God to capture and deepen our imaginative responses to God’s grace.

MYSTAGOGUE: COMPANION AND GUIDE

The call is clear: “But you are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises’ of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). Our baptismal promises call us to be faithful disciples who joyfully proclaim the good news to the world. Practically speaking, however, many of our traditional catechetical modes fall short in mystagogical endeavors. In mystagogy, there is a need for silence and time must be suspended. Outlines should serve truly as outlines, rather than dictates for discussion. As mystagogues, we must immerse ourselves in silence, for without silence, it is not possible to understand oneself, and therefore, it is not possible to frame ourselves within the mystery. Finally, we must

be willing to see ourselves as companions on this journey. As an introductory guide, we are all companions exploring the mysteries together, once the process is begun.

As guides, we must also be willing to ask challenging questions. The model of Socratic questioning is essential in mystagogical reflection. Simple yes or no questions will not lead to the depth of understanding that leads to true conversion of mind and heart. Questions should seek conceptual clarification, and probe assumptions and rationale evidence. Likewise, questions should explore implications and consequences of various responses. As mystagogues, we must ask, what does the paschal mystery mean to me/us now? How do I allow this radical mystery of faith to transform every aspect of my life? While these are difficult questions to ask, and even more difficult to answer; it is these very questions which help us move from information to transformation.

As mystagogues, we must respect our intuitive nature. The same mystery can mean different things to different people. Furthermore, if we are doing mystagogy well, each time we revisit a mystery to explore and reflect, we should come to a new understanding. Uncomfortable as it may seem for the leader, mystagogy does not remove ambiguity; it almost always creates it. Resting in such ambiguity requires our trust in the unseen mystagogue, the Holy Spirit who bestows growth to the mystagogue and the community.

MYSTAGOGY: TREASURE THE MYSTERY

Mystagogy is formative and transformative – it brings together all that has gone before and provides depth and context for life. For mystagogy to be effective, it must be rooted in the paschal mystery. Mystagogy must be placed in biblical and historical contexts and use symbolism as well as traditional ritual elements. It must be appropriate to the community: the culture, the ecclesial, social, and political concerns of the hearers. Finally, this is not a process that should cease at any point. Rather, aided by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, mystagogy is a lifelong transformative process. As such, mystagogy should not be only for the neophytes, but for the community of faith at large to grow together as they deepen their understanding of the paschal mystery and the radical change it should affect in their lives. Mystagogy is a time to savor and reflect. It is a time to redefine world-views within the sacramental horizon. Mystagogy encourages us to wonder, to see with the eyes of faith, and to respond anew to the mysteries of faith we celebrate. Mystagogy allows us, both as companion and guide, to understand mystery not as outside or above life, but rather as the hidden face of God, manifested in Christ, waiting to be discovered both in liturgy and life. ■

Sara Blauvelt is the Director of Religious Education at St. Patrick’s Church in Rockville, Maryland. A catechist of 18 years, she is in her sixth year as director. She holds an MA in Religious Education/Catechesis from the Catholic University of America. Contact her at stpatsara@verizon.net.

Ten Advantages of Intergenerational Catechesis

Joseph P. Sinwell



Parish religious education programs struggle with dividing families and age groups. They lack outreach to adults. A pastoral need is to allow people to learn within their own age group and within community and families. Intergenerational catechesis offers some options. This article will highlight how the intergenerational model provides advantages to promote and improve catechesis. Intergenerational catechesis has these advantages:

1. Promotes a community involved model
2. Encourages the development of individuals at all levels
3. Highlights adult religious education
4. Emphasizes the need for religious education in the home
5. Uses basic themes
6. Offers choices for timing
7. Promotes connection with Eucharist
8. Promotes service
9. Encourages a parish focus
10. Strengthens parish community

COMMUNITY INVOLVED MODEL

The intergenerational model invites each and every person to participate, learn, and share. This model emphasizes that individual faith can help others grow by witness. It gathers people of their own age into intergenerational groups. Listening and discussion sparks growth, faith awareness, and prayer. A session on forgiveness might include biblical stories and forgiveness of God. This discussion will help participants when they have failed to forgive and find difficulty with forgiving enemies. The focus on this theme will encourage the entire community.

DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AT ALL LEVELS

Individuals in a parish are at different ages and stages of faith development. In intergenerational religious education, individuals are encouraged to learn and share at their ages and faith level. Opinions need to be respected; age levels can be

brought together to share perspectives. The sharing will lead to deeper faith when combined age groups or families gather; discussion may center on meaning and implications.

For example, if the discussion is about the commandments of love, the group might explore together how love is present in their lives, or what gifts they have to share, or what they can do to help others in need. Families can discuss ways to assist other families who are in need of prayer. Review the corporal works of mercy. These examples will raise further reflection.

HIGHLIGHTS ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Throughout parishes in the United States, adult religious formation is not as popular or highly developed as it needs to be. Adult faith formation is not a frequent asset in the parish. Intergenerational catechesis invites all adults to belong whether they are single, married, divorced, or senior. In this model, adults are brought together to listen and discuss topics; groups can be divided or formed in a variety of ways. Obviously adults can lead prayer and may investigate other ways of growth as well. It is possible that this discussion may lead to other topics, and if leaders are aware of these topics, can then be discussed more deeply.

EMPHASIZES THE NEED FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE HOME

“Parents are catechists precisely because they are parents” (National Catechetical Directory, #177). When parents meet together in intergenerational sessions with their children and youth, they give witness to faith and teach by doing. “Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis” (NCD, #54c). This observation will encourage leaders and parents to plan faith discussions or activities at home. The sessions at home will not be classes but rather discussions or working further on suggestions or activities raised during the intergenerational sessions. With adolescents, further topics or issues can be raised. The time does not need to be long.

Prayers from sessions can be repeated and used at home so that the home becomes a domestic church. The home can be a place where liturgical seasons are celebrated with appropriate short readings and colors; a place where the traditions learned in church are continued at home. The constant difficulty is time; however, we do make time for activities

and people who are important to us, so the question for all adults becomes what do those priorities look like? How can one omit regular worship and religious reflection from one's life?

USES BASIC THEMES

Usually, themes chosen in intergenerational models are basic to the faith, e.g., sacraments, commandments, prayer, need. These themes are often poised in a three or four year cycle and tied to liturgical readings. This process brings the community into a whole learning process and emphasizes the beliefs and practices that are important. The discussion of what the basics are, the process through teaching, discussion, and follow up at home and in other parish opportunities will reinforce solidity in religious education.

OFFERS CHOICES FOR TIMING

The intergenerational model usually meets once a month for an extended period. It demands volunteers and organization. Some hospitality needs to be planned and prepared as well. As in other structures, people are given choices with times and more flexibility since sessions are similar. The once a month schedule may be more appealing.

PROMOTES CONNECTION WITH EUCHARIST

The Eucharist is the essential form of worship and essential center for gathering. Intergenerational catechesis provides opportunity for highlighting Eucharist, reminding individuals of the call to Eucharist every week and the presence of Christ. At times, reference to the intergenerational session can be made in homilies. It is also possible to celebrate Eucharist following the intergenerational session.

During the year, the parish may wish to invite all those who participate to a Mass during Ordinary Time. The Eucharist fuels individuals and communities, inspires love, forgiveness, justice and mercy, and sustains service, especially to those most in need. As the community reflects on forgiveness, justice, and mercy throughout the process of intergenerational catechesis, participants will discover those who are abandoned, suffering, and in need and decide how to best serve.

PROMOTES SERVICE

Religious education is meant to lead towards Catholic worship, prayer, and action. During intergenerational catechesis,



Photo by Michele Africano

reflection and discussion provide time to identify those who are not being served or reached and ideas or activities to serve them may be decided (e.g., a food closet or clothing collection can be provided). Individuals then need to assume responsibility for the follow-through once decisions are made. Even children can participate in this process by making cards for those in nursing homes or collecting canned food. Discipleship is one of the goals of religious education.

ENCOURAGE A PARISH FOCUS

The intergenerational model encourages that the parish has a focus for each month. Information can be distributed prior to the scheduled gathering time. This focus enables other activities to be formed like brief courses, further discussions, or book sharing.

STRENGTHENS PARISH COMMUNITY

Intergenerational catechesis strengthens the community by sharing the Catholic faith story. What do we believe, by bringing all cultures and ages together, by helping the community examine a broader world, by reflecting on and sharing God's word, and by responding to those in need and praying together? These activities stimulate both individuals' and the parish's response to a living God; they aid us in knowing our neighbor and realizing their needs.

The parish community is not the only place where need exists as we live in a broader world that fails countless people in circumstances of hunger, racism, violence, and war, among others. Each of us is united with those who suffer; each of us is called to love and care for others, especially the poor. The collective prayers, reflection, and actions of the smaller, intergenerational communities in turn enable our larger, parish community to grow and worship more strongly.

The list of advantages does not exhaust how intergenerational catechesis can help and stimulate a parish community. It does however, provide a way to reinforce, grow in faith, and stimulate spiritual growth. It encourages a parish to grow together and include everyone since we are all joined in the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ■

Joseph P. Sinwell, DMin, is an author and retired Diocesan Director of Religious Education in the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island.

Connect, Awaken, and Share: Three Ways to Engage Parents in the Faith Formation of their Children

Tom McGrath and Joellyn Cicciarelli



If you talk to anyone involved in faith formation of children for more than a few minutes, the conversation will likely turn to the topic of parents.

“How do you get them to show up for meetings?”

“Don’t they understand they can’t just dump the children off at RE and dash?”

“How do they expect the children to take their faith seriously if it’s barely on the parents’ radar?”

“What more can I do to get them engaged in their primary role as nurturers of their child’s faith?”

In a culture where religion is often held suspect and spiritual practice is an individualistic pursuit—just one more option among the hundreds available at any given moment in our day—getting parents to conscientiously engage in and support their children’s faith formation is indeed a challenge. Yet we all know from experience the tremendous impact a parent’s level of interest in the child’s religious education can have—whether positive or negative.

Reflecting on this challenge recently at a gathering of Catechetical professionals and volunteers in Chicago, theologian Father Lou Camelli identified two entry points for reaching parents: narrative and connection; story and togetherness. We totally agree. For two years we traveled the country offering workshops to help Directors of Religious Education better engage parents in their children’s faith formation. We organized the workshop around three themes: connect, awaken, and share, and we stressed the importance of both story and connection in every segment of the workshop.

CONNECT

How do you connect with people? Jesus gave us a good example of how to do that: See them. Really see them for who they are and not for their role, or reputation, or status in society. Recognize their true identity as beloved children of God who are “not far from the Kingdom of God.” (Mk 12:34) The gospels make it clear that Jesus truly believed that people were just a look, a touch, a word, or a prayer away from connection with God—no matter how far away they might outwardly seem. This was demonstrated by the Samaritan woman, tax collectors, a woman “caught in sin,” and a man plagued by legions of demons. It was true even of a hated Roman centurion, a member of the brutal occupying army and symbol of all that was godless.

“Go in their door,” advised St. Ignatius to the first Jesuits who wanted to connect with the people of Rome. He told them not to expect people to come to you, but rather to go out to the piazzas and neighborhoods and speak to people of what matters most to them. Often this meant meeting people at the point of their pain.

And so a first tactic in reaching parents is to honor their experience. Meet them where they are, which is in the midst of a very busy, time-crunched life. We suggest that at parent meetings, for example, before you plow ahead with your agenda, welcome them and the concerns with which they arrive.

To do that we recommend an exercise called, “What’s in your wallet, what’s in your purse?” Here’s how it goes:

As you begin the meeting, acknowledge the reality of their busy lives. Say, “It’s obvious that we all arrived here today with many things on our minds. Worries, deadlines, commitments, challenges. Some may be minor and mundane; some may be significant and pressing. So let’s do this exercise. Look in your wallet or your purse or on your person for some object that can symbolize whatever it is that is on your mind or in

*And so a first tactic
in reaching parents is
to honor their experience.
Meet them where they are,
which is in the midst of a very busy,
time-crunched life.*

your heart as you walked in here today – credit cards, keys, family photos, calendar. Whatever it is, hold it in your hand and just acknowledge that this object represents what’s on your mind and in your heart right now.”

“Then turn to one other person—preferably someone you do not know that well—and take a minute each to share whatever you care to about this object and what it represents to you. “

When each person has had a chance to share (you might alert them when the first minute is up so that both get a chance to talk), thank them for their enthusiastic sharing and tell them, “When we gather in this place, we know we are in the presence of God, and that Christ is among us. The Holy Spirit is alive and active right here, right now. And so I welcome you, worries and all.” We have found that after such an exercise the people are far more present and attentive and ready to participate.

At this point, you can also do a bit of teaching, reminding people that at Mass the celebrant offers us an amazing invitation when he says, “Lift up your hearts.” Explain that this is a serious invitation. We are invited each and every time we go to Mass to lift up to God what’s in our hearts and on our minds right then and there. Too often we may just let that moment of the Mass pass us by without realizing that, as we prepare to receive the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, we are invited to bring our own real presence into this time, and this place, and this assembly (which is also about to be transformed into the Body of Christ).

AWAKEN

How do you awaken faith that might lay dormant beneath the crush of busy schedules, financial struggles, and living in an age of distractions? How do we give parents the eyes to see the holiness of their own lives?

The key is theological reflection, and it’s something that parents can do—and you can teach them how. It begins with story. Think of what happens when you hear the words, “Once upon a time in a land far away,” or even, “That reminds me of the time...” When we hear those words something shifts inside and we become ready to hear with the ears of our hearts. The invitation to story opens up in people the place inside where they recognize the movement of the Spirit and hear the voice of God.

The best way to get people to recall stories from their own life is to tell one of your own. Whenever human beings hear a story recounted, it’s likely they will think, “That reminds me of a story,” and in the ensuing outpouring of stories everyone moves into their imaginations, memories, and reflections.

One method we use to get people to do theological reflection is to ask them to think of a sacred object in their home. It’s always important to “prime the pump” by offering examples and stories we’ve heard from other parents that will help fire their own imaginations. For example, we might mention the mom who told about the breadboard that hangs in her kitchen. It belonged to her grandmother who made bread every day for the family and it speaks to her of the faith and values by which her grandmother lived.

Or we will tell the story about a dad who treasured the flag that had draped his father’s coffin. He never met his father who died in the Vietnam War when he was just a few months old. Now grown, this man cherished this relic of his father’s service and presented his own son with that flag when the son came of age.

We will tell of cherished holy cards and photos, handed-down crucifixes and a family Bible, and soon everyone recognizes they have a number of sacred objects in their homes that speak

10 TIPS FOR BETTER MEALTIMES

1. Commit to a set time for meals (daily, weekly, or according to your family’s schedule).
2. Turn off the TV, computers, and handheld games, and don’t answer the phone. Don’t flip through your mail.
3. Use prayer to mark the transition from busyness to mealtime. Be mindful of those who do not have enough to eat today.
4. Slow down enough to taste and enjoy your food.
5. Hold one conversation at a time. Everyone gets a chance to speak. You can disagree, but you can’t be unkind about it.
6. Encourage laughter.
7. Practice manners, such as saying please and thank you and asking politely for people to pass the salt, and so on. Everyone stays at the table until they’re excused to leave.
8. Give everyone a role in preparing or cleaning up. Even small children can help set the table or put napkins in place.
9. Regularly invite guests to your table. Welcome them as you would welcome Jesus. Treat your family members the same way.
10. Always end with a quick expression of gratitude to God and thanks to the cook! **!**

1 Reprinted with permission of Loyola Press. Excerpted from *Mealtime Matters* by Tom McGrath, www.loyolapress.com

to them of faith and of God. Parents awaken to the reality that their homes are holy ground.

People can also be easily led into theological reflection on virtues that every parent needs, or how to weave more prayer into their family's day, or times they've practiced the Corporal Works of Mercy, which parents are called upon to do every day—feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, etc.

SHARE

When we connect with God, and our faith awakens, we cannot help but want to share what we have seen and experienced with others. That is true for parents as well. And we can show them ways to weave the sharing of their faith throughout their day.

Of the many ways to encourage sharing the faith—praying with your child at bedtime, watching videos that convey good values, observing the liturgical feasts and seasons, enjoying family rituals that convey our family values and provide meaning and belonging—the family mealtime consistently provides the richest opportunities to pass on a living faith. That's because we bring all of our hungers to the table—physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. And all of them can be fed when we gather as a family. Mealtimes offer an opportunity to pray, to converse, to tell about our day, to see each other and to be seen. For young people growing up in turbulent, ever-changing times, regular mealtimes provide an anchor that lets them know they belong and on whom they can rely. Jesus understood the power of the meal. For us, gathering regularly around the family table in Jesus' name is one of the best ways to prepare young people to appreciate why we gather at the table of the Lord.

THE REAL INVITATION

One of our favorite authors, Margaret Silf, tells a story of visiting the top of the Empire State Building during her first trip to New York City.¹ On the way up, people were laughing and chattering, but as the doors of the elevator opened to the observation deck, everyone grew silent. They were in awe—stunned by the amazingly beautiful view spread out before them. Margaret wondered, “How has this spectacle come about? It isn't some lavish Hollywood show put on to draw the crowds. It is simply the result of millions of ordinary people switching on the lights right where they live. None of them will have thought for a moment that they are contributing to a vision that can take your breath away.”

There's so much to take away from this story, but we end with it here because we realize how sad it is that parents go about their lives unaware of the awesome effect they could have if they “turn on the light of faith” in their homes and with their children.

This is our goal, to show parents the holiness of their lives; to let them know they can choose to turn on the light—the light of Christ—right where they live. It's not asking them to add yet one more chore or burden, but inviting them to illuminate their ordinary lives in the light of Christ. What a great way to raise our children! ■

Tom McGrath is Vice President of New Product Development and Joellyn Ciccirelli is Director of Curriculum Development at Loyola Press. They are convinced that parents want the very best for their children and that the very best includes a lifelong faith in the God who chooses to dwell among us.



¹ Margaret Silf shares this and many other stories of spiritual wisdom in her book, *Compass Points*, published by Loyola Press, www.loyolapress.com.

Pope Benedict on the Key Role of Silence in Prayer and Evangelization

Tom Quinlan



Our lives are filled with tasks and talk. And yet, as I think we all know intuitively, having some space for silence and stillness in our lives leads to a greater state of well-being, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Pope Benedict, in his 2012 World Communications Day message entitled *Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization*, addressed the need for a dialogic relationship between words and silence for a fruitful prayer life. He points out the critical spiritual skill of becoming good listeners...in our prayer and for effectiveness in the work of evangelization.

If God speaks to us even in silence, we in turn discover in silence the possibility of speaking with God and about God. In silent contemplation, then, the eternal Word, through whom the world was created, becomes ever more powerfully present and we become aware of the plan of salvation that God is accomplishing throughout our history by word and deed.

All ministry is about relationship, and evangelization ministry is no exception. The end goal of evangelization is helping people establish a relationship with God in and through Jesus. The means to this divine relationship is often our building of relationships with others, where trust is present and conversion is fostered. Communication is key to relationship-building and Pope Benedict explains the way words and silence must balance one another in this process.

When word and silence become mutually exclusive, communication breaks down, either because it gives rise to confusion or because, on the contrary, it creates an atmosphere of coldness; when they complement one another, however, communication acquires value and meaning.” Silence “gives rise to even more active communication, requiring sensitivity and a capacity to listen that often makes manifest the true measure and nature

of the relationships involved (Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization).

Indeed, we, the baptized, are called to speak *with* God and *about* God...to pray and to evangelize. To be spiritually grounded, we must listen first, carving out space and time to be still attentive to the divine presence. Only then can we be open, in a deep sense, to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our life. Only then can we be effective conduits of grace to others. And only then will our proclamation of Christ have an authentic and dynamic resonance. The embrace of silence helps to foster, with God and with others, a sacramental encounter.

Now this begs questions about the manner in which we form children, youth, and adults. How well do we form our parishioners to experience and embrace the gift of silence in their lives and in their prayer? What are our formation sessions like and how do they form our people spiritually? What are we intentionally doing to inculcate a sense of comfortableness with sacred silence and helping our children, youth and adults to build their spiritual skills in this regard?

It seems to me that the way we pray, in faith formation sessions, at meetings, and even in parish liturgies reflects the frenetic, almost neurotically-busy, pace of life today. After all, for better and for worse, we, too, are products of this loud and fast-paced world.

As catechetical leaders, how can we resist allowing present-day dysfunction to dictate how we lead? How can we build ministry and provide experiences for catechists, children, and adults that intentionally form them to know and love the richness of Catholic tradition, including the grace of contemplative living? How can we also help the broader parish embrace silence in its ministry and in its public prayer?

For ourselves and those we serve, we must teach and practice the spiritual discipline of quiet. We can learn to pray, publicly and privately, in ways that are not cluttered or rushed. We can study the wisdom and apply the methods of the mystics of the church, both ancient and modern. We can

*All ministry is about relationship
and evangelization
ministry is no exception.
The end goal of evangelization
is helping people
establish a relationship with God
in and through Jesus.*

allow *lectio divina* to become a patient, normative approach to praying Scripture.

Our challenge is to invite a noisy world to gain the intuition to listen. We are called, as catechetical leaders, to give people tastes of sacred silence, out of which divine-human communication can grow richer, human relationships can become more sacramental, and proclamation of Christ can be more authentic and effective.

Pope Benedict is right. The world needs to become reacquainted with silence. And not just passive, empty silence, but the silence that speaks more than words, that carries the whisper of divine love. We, the church, can do this. We must do this. And the world will thank us for it. ■

Tom Quinlan is in his 11th year as catechetical director for the Diocese of Joliet. He is chairperson of the NCCL Evangelization Committee. Tom can be reached at tquinlan@dioceseofjoliet.org.



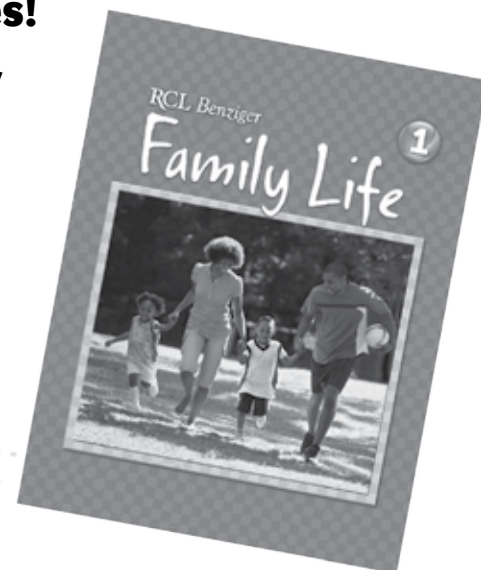
RCL Benziger

Family Life K-8

Provide much needed support for today's families!

This comprehensive moral catechesis places human sexuality within the context of Catholic moral living.

- Offers in-depth support for child safety education
- Provides virtues education and skills for family life
- Links parents and teachers/catechists with ongoing web support at RCLBFamilyLife.com



RCL
Benziger

Order your Review Pack Today!

Call 1.877.275.4725 or visit RCLBenziger.com

8805 Governor's Hill Drive, Suite 400 • Cincinnati, OH 45249

American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us

by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell

Reviewed by Amy S. McEntee

While religion and politics have long been deemed the two topics that should not be discussed at a dinner party, they have become seemingly unavoidable in all other public arenas. From religious liberty to affiliation of presidential candidates, the airwaves, newspapers, and social media feeds are filled with sound bites that suggest the United States certainly has not yet become a godless country. The book, *American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us*, by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell explores how religion forms and informs American life.

In 2006, Professors Putnam (of Harvard) and Campbell (of Notre Dame) conducted the *Faith Matters* survey, one of the most extensive surveys of American religious and civic life. Having surveyed a nationally representative sample of just over 3,000 Americans, a follow up survey was conducted in 2007 with many of the same participants, about 1,900. Combining factors such as frequency of attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer outside of religious services, the strength of an individual's belief in God, and other indicators, Putnam and Campbell developed the "religiosity index." By combining the indicators of believing and belonging and behaving, the religiosity index identifies not only the denominational make up of the religious landscape, but also the intensity of religious sensibility in the United States. Utilizing the *Faith Matters* survey, dovetailed with research findings from Pew Religion and Public Life and others, Putnam and Campbell identify major cultural shifts and influencing factors in the changing contours of the American religious landscape.

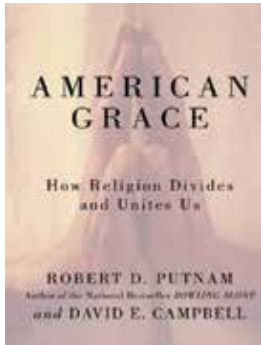
At 550 pages long, with another 100+ pages of appendices and notes, this is not a brief summary of religious affiliation in the United States, but rather an extensive analytical assessment of the role of religion in American culture. Statistical information is abundant and well supported, making the book tedious at times, despite the clarity with which the authors write. Vignettes that flesh out the lived reality of the statistical data are interspersed.

The first half of *American Grace* takes a historical look at religious practice in the United States, zeroing in on the last 50 years. Putnam and Campbell break down the changes in religiosity by identifying slow, gradual change, as well as one "seismic shift" and two subsequent aftershocks. The far-reaching social, sexual, and political upheaval of the 1960s coincides with the first major shake-up of religious beliefs and practices. The 1970s and 1980s brought with them a response to what was viewed as moral and spiritual decay, especially by evangelical and conservative Christians, leading to the rise of

the "Religious Right." In the 1990s and early 2000s, young people, especially, became frustrated with the affiliation between religion and conservative politics and abandoned religious affiliation altogether. (The authors note that those who are not affiliated – the "nones" – are not necessarily agnostic or atheist. Most of them believe in God, but choose not to identify with a particular religion.) Although there are smaller counter movements in each era, the result of these major shifts, the authors argue, is the diminishing division between denominations as people increasingly arrange themselves religiously according to their political inclinations.

Factors such as gender, ethnicity, education, economic status, conversion, and religious innovation are also examined in *American Grace*. The findings, while not necessarily surprising, are synthesized in a way that gives fascinating insight into the religious attitudes and practices of Americans. These insights are crucial for church leadership to consider, especially in response to Pope Benedict XVI's call to renew the efforts of the new evangelization. Some of the more interesting findings are the following:

- Nearly one-third of all Americans have switched religions at some point in life (135).
- Nearly 20 percent of Americans were raised in a religion different from their parents' religion, even when the parents shared a religion.
- Between one-third and one-half of all marriages in the United States are interfaith.
- Roughly 60 percent of Americans who were raised Catholic are no longer practicing. Half of those have left entirely; the other half remain nominally, rarely participating in the life of the church.
- Among Catholics under the age of 35, six out of ten are Latino.
- Young adults are more conservative than their parents about abortion, but less conservative about homosexuality.
- The "nones," or unaffiliated, are the third largest religious grouping in the United States. However, in the 2006 *Faith Matters* survey of over 3,000 individuals, just five identified as atheist or agnostic.
- Individuals are more likely to resolve inconsistencies between religious and political affiliations by changing their religion rather than changing their politics.



Perhaps the most interesting finding comes out of Putnam and Campbell's extensive treatment of the role of religion in civic life: Religion is good for the country. Religious Americans are more generous with their time and money than secular Americans. Regular churchgoers are more likely to volunteer for both religious and non-religious organizations. Religious Americans are more likely

to give to charitable organizations, and give a larger percentage of their annual income than their secular counterparts. Additionally, religious Americans are more likely to be active in political life, work for social reform, and work to solve a community problem. In short, religious Americans are generally better neighbors and citizens.

It is the good neighborliness that returns back to the subtitle, *How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. At a time when threats to religious liberties are being discussed with increasing frequency and political candidates are scurrying to secure the vote of particular religious groups, Putnam and Campbell provide research indicating that Americans overwhelmingly agree that

religion is a positive influence in the United States and overt religious hostility is relatively rare, especially at the local level.

The authors attribute this to the "Aunt Susan Principle." That is, every one has an "Aunt Susan" figure in his or her life – a person who, despite a different religious background or lack of religious background, is believed to be a saintly person bound for heaven. It seems that, while the hyperbole and generalizations often employed at the national level are divisive, social networks and personal relationships are far stronger in creating religious tolerance and unity.

Like all works of social science, the implications of *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* are left to the reader. The book is far too large and the information too dense to devour as a quick read, but, rather, requires being read in sections, with careful reflection. Putnam and Campbell provide significant context and important considerations that can help shape how to enter into conversation about faith topics, especially in a presidential election year. ■

Amy S. McEntee is an assistant director in the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. She is also the Chairperson of the Executive Board for the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association. She and her husband, Patrick, reside in Dayton, Ohio.

Echoes of Faith[®] Plus

Order Today!



The BEST Basic Formation for Catechists and School Religion Teachers!

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



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



Three Proven Principles for Meeting Spiritual Needs

Leisa Anslinger



Are your spiritual needs being met at your parish? What are your spiritual needs?

How might others in your parish, particularly parents, respond if asked these questions?

In one sense, meeting the spiritual needs of the people within our parishes is what our life in ministry is all about, or should be. The church exists to evangelize, to draw people to Christ, and to be sent out in mission. And of course, touching parents touches their children, and ripples onto the whole community.

Put simply, if our parishes are not helping every member grow spiritually, we are not fulfilling our mission. Surveys such as the Pew Forum Study on Religious Life in America indicate that this failure to meet the spiritual needs of those we minister to is contributing to the decline in membership that concerns so many of us; this is a factor in why so many leave us, moving into Protestant Christianity or joining the ranks of the unaffiliated.

It is important then for us to think about spiritual needs and consider strategies for more deeply meeting those needs in our parishes and the wider church. First of all, I know it may be difficult for those of us who serve in ministry to believe that others would say their spiritual needs are not met through Catholicism. After all, we believe that the fullness of all any human might need is found with Christ within the church. Yet we know that many do not perceive the church in the same ways we do. They stay on the fringes of our life and faith, and the gospel never seems to seep into their hearts or minds. Didn't those parents agree to hold sacred the responsibility of raising their children in our faith, after all? Surely people bear responsibility for their lives, yet in Christ, we also bear responsibility for one another. Particularly, we who have accepted the call to serve Christ by serving the church bear responsibility to do all we can to break into the lives of those on our edges, bringing with us the love, mercy, and compassion of our Lord.

How, then, do we meet the spiritual needs of so many, with such varied experiences of life and faith? There are as many answers to that question as there are people to serve, of course! I believe the studies and what we are learning from effective pastoral practice lead us to consider these principles:

It is important then for us to think about spiritual needs and consider strategies for more deeply meeting those needs in our parishes and the wider church.

1. *People's human needs are tied to their spiritual needs.* Take for example the new parent, still not sleeping through the night, and worried that she or he will not be a good parent. Imagine the difference a relationship with a more "seasoned" parent might make in that new parent's life. Or the difference learning parenting skills with other new parents in the parish might make. Making these sorts of connections can transform baptism preparation into a moment of deeper faith for all involved. When the parish becomes the place where people's human needs are met, their spiritual needs will emerge and be met as well.
2. *Everyone has a place.* The insider-outsider dynamic that is so prevalent in our parishes must be eliminated! Help insiders to understand that they (and only they) can make a real difference in the lives of the ones who are currently uninvolved. Parent to parent, parishioner to parishioner. It takes commitment, invitation, follow-through, and care, and the results will be greater involvement and engagement among all.
3. *Help people connect faith with their real life.* When we talk with those people who have been on the fringes, they often talk about how distant the others in the parish feel to them. A friend of mine likens this to looking through binoculars backwards. Everyone looks really far away. When people perceive that the parish is a community of people like themselves on a journey of faith, we turn the binoculars around, and see each other "close up."

We will continue to think about spiritual needs in the next article of this column. For now, I leave you with a challenge: talk with the parents you serve about their spiritual needs, especially some who are currently on the fringes. You know who they are. Reach out your hand, your heart, and a listening ear. You might be surprised at all you learn, about the other person as well as yourself! ■

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.

Top Ten List for Outstanding Catechesis

James F. Gontis



10) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR!

A sense of humor reminds us of our limitations and allows others to relate to our humanity.

09) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE!

Good catechesis only happens after thoughtful, intentional preparation and planning with the needs of others in mind.

08) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS ENCOURAGE AND TEACH DEVOTION TO MARY AND THE SAINTS!

Teaching about the lives of the saints allows people to see there are many ways to live a holy life honoring God. Saints came from all walks of life, all ethnicities, all ages, and both genders; there is a saint with which everyone can identify.

07) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS TEACH THE BEAUTY, GRANDEUR, AND INCARNATIONAL NATURE OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

We are not pure spirits; the Catholic faith is a religion of both spirit and flesh. We receive grace and are drawn to God through truth, beauty, and goodness. The sacraments are outward signs—see-able, hear-able, taste-able, smell-able, touch-able—that give us grace, which can be neither seen, heard, tasted, smelled, nor touched!

06) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF THEIR STUDENTS.

Taking into account particular environmental conditions and basic human needs helps make learning more enjoyable for all those involved.

05) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS INSTRUCT THEIR STUDENTS IN THE ART OF PRAYER.

Through prayer, we grow closer and connect with God; there is a hierarchy here that begins with Mass. We must not forget about devotional prayer, however. Devotions have the power to stoke within our souls the desire for encounter with the living God.

04) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS LOVE THEIR STUDENTS IN A CHRIST-LIKE MANNER, PRAY FOR THEM, AND TEACH FOR CONVERSION OF LIFE.

A catechetics professor of mine used to tell her students, “Pray to have a heart for your students.” It is important for us to pray *with* and *for* our students.

Let us convey to our students not to live beneath their dignity. Catechesis on life in Christ should be specific, e.g. on the dignity of human life, necessity of sanctifying grace for heaven, the wages of sin, and God’s limitless mercy, manifested in a particular way in the sacrament of penance, which is also referred to as the Sacrament of Conversion (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1423).

03) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS DO NOT PIT TRUTH AND LOVE AGAINST EACH OTHER. GOD IS TRUTH AND GOD IS LOVE.

Love and truth, while not identical, are inseparable. Love is a mountain that must be climbed. Jesus himself said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). Love does not oppose God’s law; it fulfills it!

02) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS ARE TRINITARIAN IN THEIR CATECHESIS.

Outstanding catechists are caught up in wonder and awe of the Holy Trinity and weave this notion into each lesson. While the Trinity remains a mystery, good catechists seek to truly understand its beauty.

01) OUTSTANDING CATECHISTS KNOW THAT, TO FORM SAINTS, WE OURSELVES MUST BECOME SAINTS!

Nemo dat quod non habet! (No one gives what he or she doesn’t have!)

Outstanding catechists are, first and foremost, good Catholic Christians, striving for holiness in their primary vocation, while living and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Good catechists manifest lives that are most distinctively Catholic through their participation in the sacramental life of the church, especially the Eucharist; love for the Communion of Saints, especially for our Mother Mary; and a life that mirrors the mission of the church through service to others within a community of believers. ■

James F. Gontis is the Director of the Department of Religious Education for the Diocese of Harrisburg. He is the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Conference of Catechetical Leadership and serves as the Province Representative to the NCCL’s Representative Council.

The Challenges of the New Digital Continent

Russell Peterson

“Those who want to be present in the new digital continent”

Perhaps you are familiar with Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. He recently spoke at Mercy University in the Swiss city of Fribourg during a meeting organized by the Bishops’ Conference of Switzerland and the Swiss Press League. I have been unable to find an English translation of his address, so I only have a couple of quotes from the Catholic News Agency. One quote in particular caught my attention:

“Language, understanding of communities, and visibility are the great challenges facing those who want to be present in the new digital continent.”

LANGUAGE

The language of the Internet is certainly not the language of traditional Catholic theology. Catholic theology slowly and steadily builds to its point. It references its sources and constructs an edifice before stating its original ideas. Oftentimes, Catholic documents claim to be stating nothing new throughout the entire document. New ideas and short ideas are suspect within Catholic theology. The Internet, however, is not a place that suffers long, dragged-out thought patterns. I often tell catechetical leaders that the smaller the scroll bar on the right, the less likely anyone is to read an e-mail. The same is true for postings on blogs. Internet readers are looking for fast information. The Internet is more like microwave cooking than slow roasting.

One of our challenges is to take our beautiful theological tradition and package it for a new audience. This is part of the inculturation of the Good News for the 21st century. The digital continent uses a certain language; we need to learn and use that language while staying true to our tradition.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITIES

Notice the word “communities.” It is in the plural; there is not one Internet community, but many. Some are divided by language. Others form by common interests. Some sites, like Facebook and YouTube, appear to be all encompassing, but on closer inspection, it becomes obvious that people form smaller sub-communities within these larger social networks. I am a novice in understanding the communities of the digital continent. At its worse, it appears that the Internet is a location where people are able to isolate themselves into communities of only like-minded individuals. How do we, as church, be a unifying presence? How do we reach out to the

self-alienated? How do we enter into communities and call them to growth?

VISIBILITY

Google “Catholic” and you will find that the USCCB is the 18th listing. I googled NCCL and never found the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership. A search of “Catholic” on YouTube revealed sound theology, odd articles, and statements against the church. The Internet is filled with information, filled with “stuff.” Much like the room of a teenager – at least many teenagers – there is stuff everywhere, but you are not able to find what it is for which you are searching.

How do we get our message visible? We cannot do that on our own and need to get assistance from experts.

“Those who want to be present in the new digital continent”

This is the phrase that originally drew my attention. In particular, I was struck by the verb “want.” The Vatican and the United States Bishops, through the USCCB, are consistently stating that we need to be in the digital continent. This is where our people are. This is where evangelization is occurring more and more often. The digital continent is a fantastic location for catechesis. Those who want to be present are bringing the Good News to the people on the digital continent and are oftentimes creating great material and connecting with thousands of people.

Do you and I want to be present there? I would like to state that we have no choice, that we must be present in the digital continent. However, I also believe that we must do our catechetical ministry in the communities and not primarily from an office. I know parish and diocesan catechetical leaders who rarely leave their offices. They do not want to see the people of God in any setting other than their space, and appear to need the security of the controlled setting in order to be comfortable. The digital continent is not a controlled setting; it is a place of discussion rather than sermon or lecture. We must have the courage to step outside of our comfort zones and engage in dialogue. It will not always be easy, but it is essential. We must want to be present in the digital continent.

Let us pray for one another to grow in the desire to enter this new digital continent. ■

Russell Peterson is the associate director of catechesis for the Diocese of Belleville, Illinois, and the vice president of NCCL. Contact him at RPeterson@diobelle.org.

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

THE CATECHETICAL LEADER'S LIBRARY (PART ONE)

There are 17,500 parishes in the United States. If we consider that in each parish there is one to three individuals responsible for coordinating some aspect of the catechetical programs in those parishes, we can then estimate that there are some 50,000 individuals serving as catechetical leaders for some aspect of the catechetical programming in the those parishes.

These catechetical leaders may be identified as directors of religious education, coordinators, administrators, youth ministers, RCIA coordinators, family ministers, etc. In some parishes, these catechetical leaders may have a background and a degree in religious studies, religious education, theology, or pastoral ministry. In the majority of parishes, however, this is not the situation. The catechetical leader may have served as a catechist or volunteer in some parish ministry, while having a college education in the humanities, math and science, education, business, etc.

Thus, the challenge is for these individuals to prepare themselves for their new role as catechetical leaders.

Where to begin?

While there may be a local Catholic college or an opportunity to participate in a distance-learning program, I recommend that these catechetical leaders commit themselves to becoming independent, self-directed learners. Keep it simple.

To be successful and credible, it is essential that the catechetical leader maintain a learning journal and portfolio of all learning experiences. This can be done in a notebook or a word document. Simply record what you read - the main ideas and how they apply to your ministry. A sample form, entitled "Catechist's Learning Page" can be found at www.eCatechist.com.

Here is a list of basic resources that should be part of a "catechetical leader's library" and used to create a program of self-directed learning. The majority of diocesan directors of religious education would recommend them for self-study – either individually, in a small group, or with a mentor.

For your **first reading assignment**, I suggest section 54. "Differing Roles of Those Who Catechize," with special attention to "Parish Catechetical Leaders."

You may also want to visit the **National Survey of Parish Catechetical Leaders 2011** by Tom and Rita Walters.

It is available at - <http://saintmeinrad.edu/professors/walters/>

Called to Be a Catechist: Your Practical Guide by Cullen W. Schippe (Pflaum Publishing Group)

The Effective DRE: The Skills Development Series (Loyola Press in collaboration with the NCCL) includes eight books,

Keeping Records and Budgets
Maintaining Professional Balance
Building Community

Catechizing for a Just World
Communicating Effectively
Forming Ministerial Relationships
Recruiting and Training Volunteer Catechists
Developing a Parish Program

The Effective DRE: A Theology Series (Loyola Press in collaboration with the NCCL) includes nine books,

Faith Handed One - Church History
That All May Be One- Ecumenism
The Church as Communion and Mission- Ecclesiology
True God, True Man- Christology
In the Breath of God- Christian Morality
Means of Grace, Ways of Life- Sacramental Theology
Nourished by the Word- Scripture
Companions on the Journey- Mary and the Saints
Connecting Faith and Life- Theological Reflection

National Directory for Catechesis (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Summary of the National Directory for Catechesis (National Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Leader's Guide to the National Directory for Catechesis (National Conference of Catholic Bishops)

General Directory for Catechesis in Plain English: A Summary and Commentary by Bill Huebsch (Twenty-Third Publications)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Reader's Journal for United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Catholic Study Bible by Donald Senior and John J. Collins (Oxford University Press)

Catholic Bible: Personal Study Edition by Jean Marie Hiesberger (Oxford University Press)

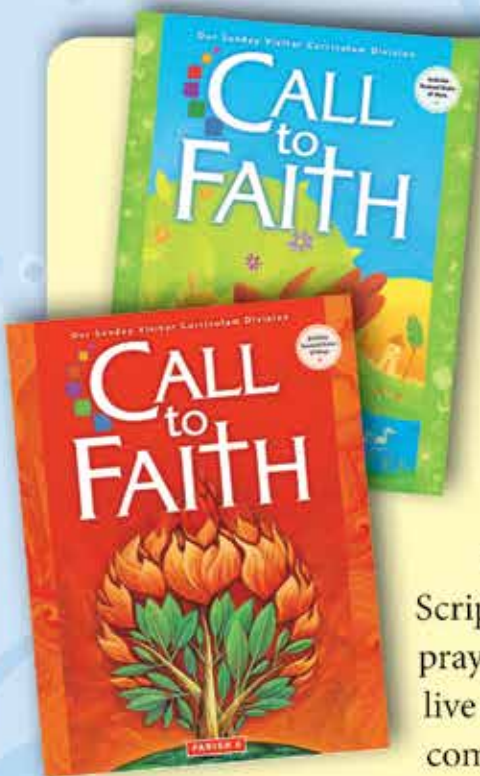
Little Rock Catholic Study Bible by Catherine Upchurch, General Editor (Liturgical Press)

I would also recommend the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** and the **Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church** (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), which are excellent for reference.

In the July/August issue, I will make reference to church documents, websites, and books. Please send suggestions and recommendations to pierson.dj@gmail.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 and 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.*

Form Catholic Identity through *Call to Faith!*



STEP 1: *Call to Faith*

This engaging series sets children on the course to form strong Catholic identity and provides easy-to-use teaching tools as well as tremendous flexibility for K-8 learners. Parish and School editions provide for the unique needs of each community.

Catholic identity is formed in the *Call to Faith* series through its treatment of Scripture, Sacred Tradition, doctrine, and prayer. Children are invited to share and live their faith in their families, parish, and communities.



STEP 2: *Catechist's Companion*

FREE with purchase of the *Call to Faith* series, choose one of the three popular *Catechist's Companion* booklets listed above for each of your catechists.



STEP 3:

Take Out® FREE with purchase of the *Call to Faith* series, a one year subscription (10 issues) for EVERY family! Each issue of the 8-page mini-magazine is packed with Scripture, saints, prayers, discussion topics, activities, and more. Perfect for the car, the table, or even the bleachers! *Take Out*® will be delivered to your parish or school every month.

Call today for free evaluation samples of *Call to Faith!* 1-800-348-2440 ext. 2173

Place your order by
June 30th and save 40% on
shipping charges!



Our Sunday Visitor

Centennial Celebration 1912-2012

www.osvcurriculum.com • www.osv.com