



EUCHARIST AND CATECHESIS

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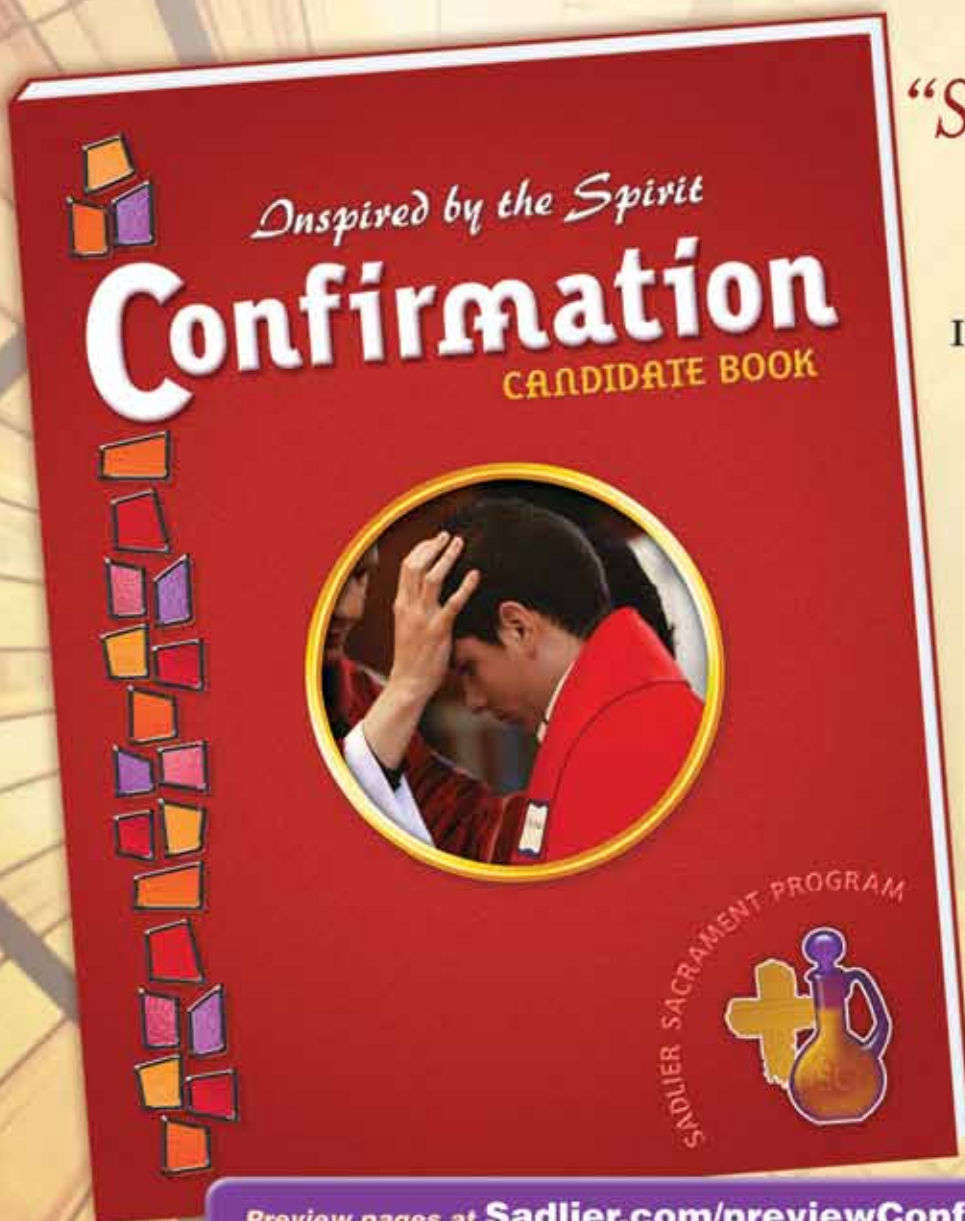
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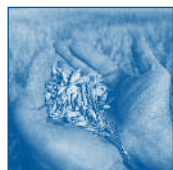
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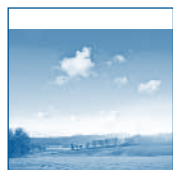
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NOVEMBER'S REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



Once again, our November Representative Council meeting was an energizing and productive occasion. For three days, the representatives put aside their own heavy workloads to concentrate on the work of the conference. Your Board of Directors was gratified with the amount of business, networking, and professional

development that was carried out by the members of the council. The meeting evaluations were affirming and reassuring that the work of NCCL is a priority with your reps.

A highlight of the meeting was our member check-in.

We called 159 members during a 30-minute period. Comments from our members included how much they enjoy *CL Weekly* and how they are looking forward to the annual conference in Atlanta. Requests for more online leadership development and more collaboration with other national Catholic organizations were noted. Adult faith formation continued to be the focus of many of the conversations with our members. Representatives asked to have more time for member check-in next year.

Another activity that NCCL reps enjoyed was one that was part of our strategic plan—"Produce a product entitled, *How to Do More Ministry with Fewer People and Less Money.*" Vice President Russell Peterson directed a FedEx activity that had each board member responsible for one segment of a product. Writing teams were formed consisting of one board and three Representative Council members. Over a period of three days, nine chapters of a book were composed on a wiki. The outcome was excellent, and Russell is now working on editing the product. We plan to have something ready by the annual conference. I had high hopes for this process, but the product exceeded my expectations. There is an enormous amount of talent and creativity on our Representative Council!

We are very fortunate to have Bishop Leonard Blair of Toledo as our Episcopal Advisor. He makes a special effort to be in attendance at our Representative Council meeting and our annual conference. There is always time on our agenda to listen to Bishop Blair give us an update about the work of the USCCB Committee for Evangelization and Catechesis and the Subcommittee for the Catechism. Rep council members also have

an opportunity to ask Bishop Blair questions and engage him in dialogue about the topics that concern the catechetical ministry. You can find a synopsis of Bishop Blair's comments in

Adult faith formation continued to be the focus of many of the conversations with our members.

the Representative Council minutes that our posted on the website.

No Representative Council meeting would ever be complete without reports! We listen to committee reports; we get updated about the Secretariat for Evangelization and Catechesis from Dr. Michael Steier; we hear about the business of the national office from Lee Nagel; and we have an opportunity to read reports from our provinces. The Representative Council was asked to give advice and input about the new standards for lay ecclesial ministers and the process for certifying parish catechetical leaders. Members of Representative Council were pleased to see the inter-organization collaboration that all the reports illustrated.

Your Representative Council is outstanding! I know I speak for the entire board of directors when I say it is a privilege to work with your province reps. Be sure to let them know how much you appreciate their service to your organization.

God bless,

Anne

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PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

Leland Nagel



Easter Greetings,

Many of you have wondered what happened to *Catechetical Leader*. You have patiently waited, some have contacted me wondering if they missed it, while others emailed they couldn't find it on line. Nevertheless, this is our first issue in 2011.

I ended my column last year with these words, "See you in January with *Catechetical Leader* Volume 22, Number 1. NCCL continues to respond to a mission that demands we 'enrich and strengthen the ministry of catechesis.'" What happened?

I was confident we had hired a creative, energetic person whose ideas for *Catechetical Leader* were limitless. This person was amazing and had a proven record of success. It wasn't just talk, there was evidence of excellence. My personal experience led me to believe this person was invincible.

In October, delays and problems began to emerge, most of them associated with a parent's illness. Then our editor became deathly ill. I didn't want to give up the dream. My ministerial heart took precedence over my administrator's mind. I held on to a poem I learned in first grade.

Patience is a virtue.
Virtue is a grace.
Both put together
Make a very pretty face.

Patient I was. More deadlines passed, phone calls were ignored, e-mails left unanswered, and the promises to get something in the mail never quite happened. I didn't want to give up the dream. Any day now, I knew would receive word that *Catechetical Leader* was at the printer. Weeks turned to months as I let the reality of January and February fly by like a fast moving snow storm; a blizzard to be exact. *Catechetical Leader* was getting buried while reality was peaking through in the melting promises.

I should have realized that when a person is dealing with the impending death of their father and they are shouldering most of this themselves, that something has to give. In this case, it was *Catechetical Leader*. I had to give up the dream. I had held on too long.

While spring officially began March 20, it happened in the office on April 12 when I received an email in response to a very direct question. It contained the following information. "I probably should have done this sooner, but I feel that it is in NCCL's best interest to find someone else to handle the work of NCCL's CL

Magazine. There aren't words to express my regret in letting you down. I am so very sorry." The millstone had been removed. Free at last. Free at last. Thank God, free at last.

There was no need to pretend to be invincible. In some ways, I let my heart believe the invincibility myth and in doing that only exacerbated the situation. Naked truth was needed and I still wanted to believe in the dream. The result was indecision. Thank God for outright confrontation. It breaks through the veil of hesitancy. Action occurs.

And action it is. The editorial board, which was commissioned but never met with the editor, is now in full swing. This issue poses some challenges as we address the introduction of the Revised Roman Missal from a catechetical perspective. Dr. Hosffman Ospino has produced a white paper entitled: "The Eucharist: Source and Fulfillment of Catechetical Teaching." In his paper, he provides four key points which illustrate that our catechesis both depends on and draws from the Eucharist—source and summit of the Church's life—as it facilitates understanding of and a deeper faith response to the Eucharist through the action of the Holy Spirit.

We have also included two responses to that paper from Fr. Frank DeSiano, CSP, and Dr. Margaret Nutting Ralph. These three people will engage in a dialogue with one another and the participants of Learning Session 102 at our 75th annual conference and exposition. The other white papers can be found on the NCCL website under the *News & Events* tab.

The new National Standards for Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers, which now includes the work of five organizations under the ACLEM moniker, comprises the NCCL Update. Membership in the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers is comprised of the:

- ◆ Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions
- ◆ National Association for Lay Ministry
- ◆ National Association of Pastoral Musicians
- ◆ National Conference for Catechetical Leadership
- ◆ National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry

These standards, along with the Certification process will be presented to the USCCB CCA for approval at their fall meeting in September of 2011.

Please watch for the development of *Catechetical Leader* as we produce the remaining issues of Volume 22. A new dream is taking shape. ■

The Eucharist: Source and Fulfillment of Catechetical Teaching

Hosffman Ospino



“Catechetical teaching finds its source and fulfillment in the Eucharist.”¹ Truly fascinating words from Pope John Paul II in his 1979 Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*.² The words echo with clarity the Second Vatican Council’s affirmation that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows.”³ While catechesis is an essential part of the church’s ministry of the Word,⁴ in the Eucharist we encounter a powerful lens to further appreciate the nature of catechetical ministry.

The relationship between catechesis and the Eucharist compels us to reflect upon the depth of the mystery, the presence, and the celebration of the Eucharist in our lives as faith educators. Catechesis is an ecclesial activity constitutive to the process of evangelization.⁵ Though catechesis alone is not evangelization, without catechesis the church would not be able to evangelize properly. When the church reflects upon her evangelizing mission she understands herself as a catechizing community that lives in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, a relationship that is fully expressed in the mystery of the Eucharist. This reflection invites the community to understand her identity as profoundly eucharistic. Two implications derive from such conviction.

On the one hand, the catechizing community is rooted and sustained by the firm belief that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Such presence continuously actualizes the meaning of the Paschal Mystery and renews the gift of life and love that God meant for humanity through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the catechizing community celebrates that Jesus Christ is our Eucharist. Through the action of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to believe and become what we were called to be—namely, God’s people—when we gather together to celebrate the Eucharist. In this celebration, we are the visible expression of the church.⁶

The life of the church revolves around the Eucharist—and that includes all forms of catechetical activity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that the “other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”⁷ This is a loud and clear affirmation of the significance of the eucharistic mystery in the here and now of our catechetical communities. What we do and who we are as Christians is deeply shaped by our relationship to Jesus Christ, our Eucharist. The significance of the Eucharist even transcends the immediacy of our historical present pointing to the eschatological dimension of our faith: in the celebration of the Eucharist we participate in moments of eternity as

The life of the church revolves around the Eucharist—and that includes all forms of catechetical activity.

“anticipation of the heavenly glory.”⁸ When we celebrate the mystery of God’s ultimate love as a eucharistic community, our hope is strengthened because we experience glimpses of what it means to be in the fullness of the presence of the risen Lord and desire that such experience never ends. This is why we pray that the promise be fulfilled and together cry out: “*Marana tha!*” “Come Lord, Jesus.”⁹

The contemplation of the relationship between catechesis and the Eucharist is an invitation for Christians not only to understand the reasons for which we share our faith from generation to generation and the implications of doing so, but also to further appreciate the depth of our ecclesial identity: we are both a eucharistic and a catechetical community. Let us consider four interrelated dynamics that bring this relationship between catechesis and the Eucharist to life in our faith communities.

1 John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT), n. 48.

2 Also known as *On Catechesis in Our Time*.

3 Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 10.

4 Cf. *General Directory for Catechesis*, n. 52.

5 Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), n. 22; CT, n. 18.

6 Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), n. 1329.

7 CCC, 1324; Cf. USCCB, *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC), n. 24.G. (p. 84); n. 35.A. (p. 113).

8 CCC, n. 1402.

9 CCC, n. 1403; 1 Cor 16:22.



1. Catechesis is done by the eucharistic community *while* helping the community to understand what it means to be a eucharistic people

The church's catechetical mission is a responsibility shared by all the baptized, starting with the bishop in each diocese¹⁰ and extending to parents, teachers, and the various catechetical agents dedicated to this important task.¹¹ Catechetical communities, whether at the diocesan or a parochial level, are fundamentally constituted through the Eucharist,¹² the source of their life and identity. We share our Christian faith as eucharistic communities gathered in the name of the Lord to celebrate the paschal mystery and to be shaped by that same mystery in the everyday of our lives.

Catechesis at its most fundamental level is as an exercise of giving witness to our faith in the Eucharist as baptized women and men. Such is the faith that makes us one community, beyond our differences and limitations. It is in this context that the words of the First Letter of John make extraordinary sense: "What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:3). Our faith in the Eucharist as mystery, real presence, and

celebration is a continuous invitation to build community, to have fellowship with others who share the same faith. The church shares her convictions through catechesis not necessarily to aspire to something that is yet to be achieved but to give testimony of something that she already is: a eucharistic community.

All catechetical agents share in the responsibility of providing opportunities for our sisters and brothers in the faith to experience the depths of what it means to be a Eucharist community: clergy are to celebrate the Eucharist frequently;¹³ parents have the obligation to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist with their children¹⁴ and involve them in the life and mission of the church in their local parish;¹⁵ catechists must actively participate in their faith community and attend the Sunday Eucharist.¹⁶ If we are conscious of being a eucharistic community that shares through catechesis what it believes and celebrates, it is natural that we embrace these responsibilities as part of our Christian identity.

Nonetheless, it will be naïve to think that all baptized Christians have a fully developed understanding of what it means to be a eucharistic community. Perhaps many Christians live

10 Cf. *NDC*, n. 54 (p. 218).

11 Cf. *NDC*, n. 53 (p. 217).

12 Cf. *NDC*, n. 29.C. (p.100); n. 59 (p. 248).

13 *Code of Canon Law*, c. 904; See also *NDC*, n. 29C (p.100).

14 Cf. *NDC*, n. 54.C. (p. 235).

15 Cf. *NDC*, n. 61.A.3. (p. 260).

16 Cf. *NDC*, n. 54.B.8. (p. 229).

continued on page 6

and act according to a tacit understanding of such identity. But this is not enough. One important task of catechesis is to guide the community into the knowledge and appreciation of its eucharistic identity in order to live it with clear intentionality here and now. To achieve this, catechesis looks at the history of the Christian community highlighting those fundamental elements of ecclesial life that have remained constant for nearly two thousand years and asserting the roots of our eucharistic identity which go back to the early church.¹⁷ At the same time, catechesis builds on the pedagogical power of the Eucharist, “a primary means of education in the faith,”¹⁸ and the many other forms of liturgical prayer in the Church. Through the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, faith communities introduce their members into the prayer life of the church,¹⁹ nourish them,²⁰ and lead them into a deeper understanding of the eschatological dimension of the Christian life: “by the eucharistic celebration we already unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy and anticipate eternal life, when God will be all in all.”²¹

2. Catechesis is sustained by the communal celebration of the Eucharist *while* preparing the community to grow deeper into the mystery it celebrates

Without a doubt, catechesis is a demanding responsibility that requires the best of our time, energy, and creativity to share with others the richness of the Christian tradition. Bringing the gospel message to others through catechesis may lead us into complex contexts and expose us to new situations. It certainly requires that we announce the Good News in season and out of season (1 Tim 4:2) in the midst of many challenges. All this reveals a world of pluralistic, sometimes fragmentary experiences that often awake in us the desire for something that brings us together and gives meaning to what we do. The eucharistic celebration is meant to be that source of life and renewal. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, especially in the context of parish life, we are reminded of our identity as the People of God,²² called by God as part of the

divine plan of salvation²³ and accompanied by the Spirit in the uninterrupted flow of historical events.

Through the celebration of the Eucharist, “the People of God come to know the paschal mystery ever more intimately and experientially. They come not simply to the knowledge of God—they come to know the living God.”²⁴ This is a powerful conviction that gives the catechetical community a life-giving hope: in the Eucharist we have a real encounter with the Risen Lord; an encounter that transforms the lives of those who participate in it and gives us the certainty that what we share through catechesis can actually be experienced in the here and now of our lives. In the eucharistic celebration the words of the Apostle Paul come to life: “I urge you therefore, brothers,

by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1). It is perhaps in the experience of the Easter Triduum that this conviction is most fully realized: we give thanks for the gift of the Eucharist, Jesus’ real presence, that nourishes the church; we remember Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice of love for us on the cross; we celebrate the new life of the resurrection as God raises Jesus conquering death and sin once and for all. Every Sunday mirrors this mystery—hence the importance of participating in the dominical celebration, the weekly Easter.²⁵

Of much significance is the fact

that the church welcomes thousands of women and men into her womb at the Easter Vigil every year. For those who have been part of the catechumenal journey leading to this day, it is a joyful occasion in which they become fully incorporated into the life of the faith community. For those who participate in the celebration and witness the rituals and symbols that speak of new life in Christ, it is a unique time for renewal. Both experiences actualize the words of the *National Directory for Catechesis*, “faith gathers the community for worship and worship renews the faith of the community.”²⁶

Because of its centrality in the life of the church, faith communities are aware of the importance of properly preparing women and men of all ages to celebrate, receive, and live the Eucharist. Many resources are understandably dedicated to



17 Cf. *NDC*, n. 32 (p. 109).

18 Cf. *NDC*, n. 17.C. (p. 50).

19 Cf. *NDC*, n. 34 (p. 112); n. 48.E.1. (p. 203).

20 Cf. *NDC*, n. 29.C. (p.100).

21 Cf. *CCC*, n.1326.

22 Cf. *NDC*, n. 29.C. (p.100).

23 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*), n. 9.

24 *NDC*, n. 33 (p. 111).

25 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, n. 19.

26 *NDC*, n. 32 (p. 109).



this effort. Ordinarily, catechesis is associated with preparation prior to the reception of the sacraments, particularly reconciliation, Eucharist, and confirmation. Such pre-sacramental—or initiatory catechesis²⁷—is important because it gives meaning to the sacraments and communicates the joy of being a witness to Christ in ordinary life, particularly among the young.²⁸ But catechesis about the Eucharist cannot be limited only to this pre-sacramental stage. Catechesis about the Eucharist must be permanent or continuing.²⁹ Authentic participation in the liturgical life of the church requires continuous faith formation in parishes and at home.³⁰ All Christian faithful must participate in catechetical encounters in which they are exposed to a deeper understanding of the liturgy of the church, a better appreciation of the theology of the Eucharist, and a more dynamic reflection about how the mystery of the Eucharist gives life in our everyday experience. A permanent catechesis on the Eucharist is the key to help the community to grow deeper into the mystery it celebrates.

3. Catechesis proclaims what the community believes about the Eucharist *while* teaching about the Eucharist for the community to believe

Catechesis is traditionally associated with the church's ministry of the word.³¹ All baptized women and men intentionally involved in the ministry of catechesis participate in this important dimension of the life of the church as an actualization of our baptismal identity. Therefore, catechesis is an exercise of proclamation of the faith by which we live, of the truths that mediate our relationship with the God of life through Jesus Christ. One such truth is the mystery of the Eucharist. Catechesis proclaims that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine; that what we commemorate in the Eucharist celebration has a salvific effect in our lives here and now; that as a body of baptized women and men gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist the Holy Spirit enables us to be what we are called to be: God's own people.

The apostle Paul insightfully articulates the relationship between proclamation and belief: "But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14-15a). The passage does not suggest that the act of proclamation causes belief. It rather points to the fact that without first hearing about one particular truth it is difficult to embrace it with the help of faith. As catechetical agents, we share a general sense of being sent into our faith communities to proclaim what we know and what we have experienced about the Eucharist. In the

context of the eucharistic community, the first announcement of the Christian faith, namely the kerygma, must then be accompanied by a thorough presentation of the church's convictions about the Eucharist, "the closest communion with Jesus on earth."³² Such process of proclamation requires that catechists dedicate the appropriate time to reflect on the tradition received, interpret it with the larger ecclesial community, and make it available to help others to understand it more deeply.

How much a faith community grows in its understanding and love of the eucharistic mystery will significantly depend on its openness to embrace the church's teaching. It will also depend on the quality of the catechetical experience through which that teaching is shared and appropriated. Catechetical leaders, whether bishops and priests or teachers and parents, have a key role in the process of helping the faith community to be more intentional about living its eucharistic identity. Catechesis must lead to worthy celebration of the Eucharist. It must also introduce the appropriate formulas and devotions,³³ creeds,³⁴ and liturgical guidelines³⁵ to guide the faithful into a fuller relationship with Jesus Christ, our Eucharist. Though good catechesis about the Eucharist may not cause the faith that is necessary to recognize Jesus Christ's real and salvific presence in this particular mystery, it will definitely pave the way for those who hear the message to enter in relationship with the Lord present there: "catechists water the seed planted by evangelists, but God gives the growth."³⁶

4. Catechesis reveals to women and men of all ages that the mystery of the Eucharist is real and accessible *while* guiding them to live that mystery in the particularity of their everyday lives

The presence of Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist is true and real. Thus, to believe in what the Eucharist is and what it realizes has profound implications for the lives of the women and men whom we meet in our catechetical encounters.

Catechesis raises awareness about what the Eucharist is in the life of the church. It introduces the faithful to the idea of sacramental presence through which God becomes distinctively accessible to humanity and to the rest of the created order. By contemplating the Lord's sacramental presence in the Eucharist as well as in the other sacraments, the church discovers its own identity as a universal sacrament of salvation because Christ acts continuously through her.³⁷ The action of the Holy Spirit enables the church, as a eucharistic

27 *NDC*, n. 17.C. (p. 50).

28 Cf. *NDC*, n. 36.A. (p. 120); n. 48.E.2. (p. 205, 206); n. 54.B.1. (p. 220).

29 Cf. *NDC*, n. 17.C. (p. 50); n. 20 (p. 60); n. 35.D. (p. 117).

30 Cf. *NDC*, n. 39 (p. 156).

31 See note 4 above.

32 *NDC*, n. 20 (p. 60).

33 Cf. *NDC*, n. 29.F. (p. 103).

34 Cf. *NDC*, n. 20 (p. 60).

35 Cf. *NDC*, n. 35.C. (pp. 114-115).

36 *NDC*, n. 56 (p. 243).

37 On the idea of the Church as a universal sacrament of salvation see *LG*, n. 48.



community and sacramental mediation of God's presence in the world, to become what it symbolizes. It is important, then, that catechesis about the Eucharist ultimately leads to a more profound appreciation of the ecclesial community.

At the same time, catechesis helps the church to identify the effects of the eucharistic mystery in her members. The most important effect of the Eucharist in our lives is communion: with Jesus Christ our Savior,³⁸ with the Triune God,³⁹ and with other Christians.⁴⁰ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that "the Eucharist is properly the sacrament of those who are in full communion with the Church."⁴¹ But communion requires conversion to participate of the fullness of Christ's love. The Eucharist continuously leads us in this direction.⁴² By celebrating and receiving the Eucharist we gradually become that which we celebrate and receive: the Eucharist confirms our vocation to holiness;⁴³ it also nourishes the life of faith, hope, and charity that God begets in us through baptism.⁴⁴

Our participation in the mystery of the Eucharist shapes our identity and our actions in the particularity of our everyday lives. As a eucharistic people, we are sent to participate in the evangelizing mission of the church, announce the good news to all, give testimony of our relationship with Jesus Christ, and respond sincerely to God's call to holiness.⁴⁵ As mentioned

in previous sections of this reflection, all catechetical efforts must help Christians to understand what being a eucharistic people means in the here and now of our own contexts. Such efforts must also provide the best opportunities for Christians to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ, our Eucharist. As a eucharistic community we recognize the Lord in various ways but especially in the poor: "the Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren."⁴⁶ The practical implications of any catechesis about the Eucharist could not be more specific than this: we are called to be in eucharistic communion with those who are considered least in our society; those who suffer and are poor; those who are sick;⁴⁷ those whose vulnerability reveals the face of Jesus Christ in our own midst.⁴⁸

The above four dynamics make more explicit the conviction with which we began our reflection: catechetical teaching finds its source and fulfillment in the Eucharist. These thoughts are an invitation to affirm the identity of our faith communities as deeply eucharistic and catechetical. Authentic catechesis is fully rooted in the mystery of the Eucharist and leads to it in all its expressions. |

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38 Cf. CCC, n. 1391.

39 Cf. NDC, n. 39 (p. 156).

40 Cf. CCC, n. 1398.

41 CCC, n. 1395.

42 Cf. NDC, n. 25.A. (p. 77); n. 39 (p. 156).

43 Cf. NDC, n. 36.C.1. (p. 139).

44 Cf. NDC, n. 3 (p. 10).

45 Cf. NDC, n. 29.C. (p. 100); n. 36.C.1. (p. 139); n. 48.D. (p. 199).

46 CCC, n. 1397.

47 Cf. NDC, n. 36.B.3. (p. 138).

48 Cf. Mt 25:31-46.

Catechesis on the Eucharist: New Testament Models

Margaret Nutting Ralph



In the white paper entitled *The Eucharist: Source and Fulfillment of Catechetical Teaching*, Dr. Ospino and NCCL engage us, as catechetical leaders, in a reflection on “the depth of the mystery, the presence, and the celebration of the Eucharist in our lives as faith educators” (par. 2). To participate in this sharing among catechists, I would like to offer a reflection on Eucharist, using Scripture as our source.

Why Scripture? The Second Vatican Council’s document *Dei Verbum* states that “...the entire Christian religion should be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture” (21). Taking this statement to heart, let us turn to Scripture to see what we can learn about the “depth of the mystery, the presence, and the celebration of the Eucharist in our lives” from the inspired catechists whose writings became part of the canon. Shouldn’t we, as Gospel people, called to be catechists, echo their good news about Eucharist to the whole world?

My own field of study is the Bible, and particularly the various literary forms found in the Bible. As we know, in order to understand an inspired author’s intent we must take into consideration the literary form in which the author has chosen to write (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 110). To probe what biblical authors teach us about the mystery of Eucharist, we will examine the work of three inspired authors who use a variety of literary forms: First, we will consider carefully what Paul has to say about the ramifications of being eucharistic people in his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul’s letter includes an account of Jesus’ instituting Eucharist at the last supper. Next, we will probe the way Luke emphasizes the centrality of Eucharist throughout his gospel, beginning with his infancy narrative and concluding with his post-resurrection appearance story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Finally, we will consider the unique way in which John emphasizes Christ’s true presence in Eucharist, not by describing a Passover meal the night before Jesus dies, but by presenting Jesus’ “I am the Bread of Life” discourse. By examining these texts, we will gain a new appreciation for the variety of catechetical approaches that inspired authors have taken to teach both their contemporaries and us the good news about Eucharist.

PAUL’S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

The earliest account of Eucharist that we have is in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, written around 56 AD (the earliest gospel, Mark, dates to 65 AD). Paul had established the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-28), and had obviously taught the Corinthians to celebrate Eucharist. Now, Paul is writing a letter to people he knows well, correcting them because they are not celebrating Eucharist in an appropriate manner: As they gather for their Eucharistic meal they are neglecting the poor in their midst.

First, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the unity that is theirs in Christ. Paul says, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because

Shouldn’t we, as Gospel people, called to be catechists, echo their good news about Eucharist to the whole world?

the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Cor 10:16-17). Paul is deeply distressed that anyone would act so as to cause division in the one body of Christ. His teaching presumes that Christ’s body and blood are present in Eucharist: The Eucharist is a “participation” in the “body” and “blood” of Christ. Based on this understanding, Paul is teaching the Corinthians that they become what they receive: the one body of Christ.

Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians that when they are gathering for Eucharist, they are not faithfully celebrating the Lord’s supper:

When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper, for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk...do you show contempt for the church of God and make those who have nothing feel ashamed? (1 Cor 11:20-21, 22)

To add authority to his words, Paul says:



For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Cor 11:23-25)

Paul, like the synoptic gospels (see Mark 14:22-24; Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:15-20), pictures Jesus saying, “This is my body.” All are emphasizing that Christ is truly present as an alive person, body, and blood, in Eucharist.

Paul then adds, “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Cor 11:29). With this admonition, Paul is teaching the Corinthians and us that to properly celebrate the Lord’s Supper we must recognize the presence of Christ, whose person we receive and from whom we derive our unity. We must also recognize the body of Christ that we become. To ignore parts of that body, especially the poor, is to ignore Christ himself.

LUKE’S INFANCY NARRATIVE

Luke weaves eucharistic themes throughout his gospel: in the infancy narrative, in his account of the last supper, and in one of his post-resurrection appearance stories. Since Paul and Luke recount the last supper in similar terms, we will discuss

only Luke’s infancy narrative and post-resurrection appearance story.

An infancy narrative is a distinct literary form. It does not respond to the request: “Tell me exactly what happened.” Rather, it responds to the request: “Tell me just how great this person became as you know from hindsight.” Infancy narratives developed late in the gospel tradition. Only Matthew and Luke include infancy narratives in their gospels. Only Luke pictures Jesus being born in a manger. Luke has two purposes in doing this. One is to teach the significance of Jesus’ birth by using a literary device known as *midrash*; the other is to teach something about Eucharist.

Both Matthew and Luke employ *midrash* in their birth narratives, that is, they weave into their accounts of Jesus’ birth plot elements that are allusions to Old Testament texts. Their purpose in doing this is catechetical. They want to teach the significance of Jesus’ birth as it was understood after the resurrection. It is because Matthew and Luke both employ *midrash* that their infancy narratives differ so much in details. For example, only Matthew has the star and the wise men. Only Luke has the manger and the announcement to the shepherds. In explaining the significance of Jesus Christ’s birth as it was understood after the resurrection, they allude to different Old Testament texts.

When Luke places Jesus’ birth in a manger he is alluding to the beginning of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah presents God as

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bemoaning the fact that the people do not know God. God says:

An ox knows its owner,
an ass, its master's manger;
But Israel does not know,
my people has not understood. (Isaiah 1:3)

By placing Jesus in a manger, having the angel announce Jesus' birth to the shepherds, and having the shepherds recognize their savior (Luke 2:1-20), Luke is teaching that the situation described in Isaiah has been reversed through Jesus Christ. God's people now do recognize their God.

In addition, by placing Jesus in a manger, Luke is teaching something about Eucharist. In Luke's account the shepherds are told that "...today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:11-12). When the shepherds follow the angel's instructions, they find "Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger" (Luke 2:16). By having the angel tell the shepherds that the infant lying in the manger is a *sign*, Luke is teaching us to look for a deeper meaning. What does this sign signify?

A manger is the place where one puts food for the flock. By placing Jesus in the manger, Luke is teaching that Jesus is food for the flock. Jesus nourishes us, gives us strength, and accompanies us on all of life's journeys. We are never alone. We are never without the presence of our Lord, Messiah, and Savior whom we receive in Eucharist.

THE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Luke teaches much the same truth about Eucharist in his story of two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). The setting for the account is what we would call Easter Sunday morning. Luke has already told us that the women have discovered the empty tomb and have been told that Jesus is alive. He has been raised. The two disciples on the road have heard this amazing news, but they do not believe it. They are still discouraged; their hopes have been dashed.

As the two disciples walk along Jesus joins them, but they fail to recognize him. They continue to fail to recognize Jesus as they explain their disappointment to him, as Jesus opens Scripture for them, and as the day's journey ends. Only when they stop for the evening and break bread together do they realize who has been their companion for the whole journey: "And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he



took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:30-31).

The allusions to Eucharist are obvious in this passage. Luke uses precisely the same language when describing the Last Supper: “Then he [Jesus] took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me’” (Luke 22:19). Although Christ was with the disciples when just the two of them were gathered in his name, Christ was with them in the stranger on the road, and Christ was with them in the living word of Scripture, the disciples did not recognize the risen Christ in any of those places. However, they did finally recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread, in Eucharist. Luke is affirming Christ’s presence in Eucharist, but he is also teaching Jesus’ disciples, including us, that the Christ whom we receive in Eucharist is also present in these other ways. We must open our eyes and see.

Luke’s Emmaus story also teaches us that when we celebrate Eucharist, we are participating in a meal that links this world and the next, an eschatological meal. The Christ who is present at the meal has passed through death and still lives. Heaven and earth are joined. Luke has prepared us to understand this insight through his description of the Last Supper. In Luke, at the Last Super, Jesus says to his disciples: “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before

I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it [again] until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15). Taking the cup, Jesus says, “I tell you [that] from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18). In the road to Emmaus story, the risen Christ is once more celebrating the Passover with his disciples, this time his own Passover from death to life. When we join this meal, when we celebrate Eucharist, we step outside of time and space. We participate in the meal with all those for whom the kingdom of God has been fulfilled, both in this world and the next.

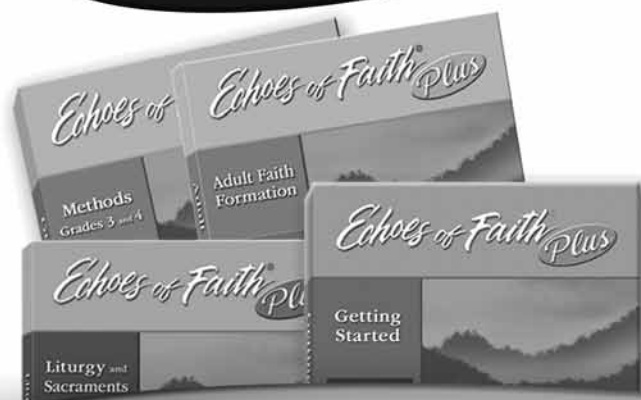
Finally, we must note the disciples’ response to their newly developed ability to recognize Christ in Eucharist. They immediately become evangelizers: “So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them... Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:33, 34).

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we, who also recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread, are called to be evangelizers. Once we hear the good news of the resurrection, once our eyes are opened and we recognize Christ not only in Eucharist, but in the word proclaimed and in each other, how can we keep silent? We, too, are compelled to

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Jesus' "I am the Bread of Life" discourse

Unlike Mark, Matthew, and Luke's gospels, John's gospel has no account of a Passover meal at which Jesus institutes the Eucharist. However, that is not to say that John's gospel fails to deal with the issues that we are discussing. John's picture of Jesus' giving his discourse on the bread of life (John 6) is extremely pertinent to our discussion.

Before we turn to Jesus' discourse on the bread of life, it will be helpful to say a few words about John's method. John's gospel uses different literary forms than do the synoptic gospels. It was written toward the end of the first century to Christians who expected the second coming long before their time and who were asking, "Where is the Son of Man who was supposed to return in glory on the clouds of heaven?" The gospel is responding to that question by teaching that the risen Christ is not absent, but present. Jesus told his disciples that he would return soon (John 16:16-20), and he did, in his post-resurrection appearance (John 20:19-23). Jesus has never left. He remains with his people in the church and in what we have come to call the sacraments.

Instead of having many miracle stories, as do the other Gospels, John tells us about seven signs. Each of these stories about the signs is an allegory, that is, each has more than one level of meaning. At one level, the story is about Jesus and his contemporaries. At a deeper level, the story is about the risen Christ in the lives of John's audience, and in our lives.

In addition to his stories of Jesus' mighty signs, John pictures Jesus delivering a number of theological discourses that start as dialogues and end as monologues. In these speeches, Jesus teaches what the stories of the signs teach at the allegorical level.

Because John uses allegory, he wants those in his audience to know that they should look beyond the literal meaning of his words. Therefore, he teaches his audience how to think metaphorically. He does this by picturing Jesus in conversation with a person who takes Jesus' words too literally. The person's misunderstanding gives Jesus (and John) the opportunity to explain the metaphorical meaning of his words. For instance, Jesus tells Nicodemus that "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above" (John 3:3). Nicodemus takes the word *born* literally and says, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he" (John 3:4)? Nicodemus' misunderstanding gives Jesus an opportunity to explain his intent. Jesus was speaking of being born again of "water and the Spirit" (John 3:5), of being born again spiritually, not physically.

Jesus tells the woman at the well that he would give her "living water" (John 4:10). She, too, takes the words literally and

says, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep; where then can you get this living water" (John 4:11)? Her misunderstanding gives Jesus the opportunity to explain his real meaning. Jesus was speaking of "water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14), of baptism.

A third example: At one point the disciples urge Jesus to eat something. Jesus says, "I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32). The disciples take the word *food* literally and say, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:33-34).

However, as we shall soon illustrate, when we come to Jesus' discourse on the bread of life, John breaks this pattern. Jesus' listeners are completely repulsed by the literal meaning of his words. Instead of correcting their misunderstanding, Jesus insists on the truth of his statement, causing many to leave him.

Jesus' discourse on the bread of life appears after the story of the feeding of the multitude (John 6:1-15) and is explaining the deeper meaning of that story—the risen Lord feeds his people. After a lengthy discussion with the crowd, in which Jesus claims to be the bread from heaven, Jesus says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Jesus' listeners "quarreled among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him'" (John 6:52-56).

We see, then, that Jesus breaks the pattern that has been established: *Born* was a metaphor. *Water* was a metaphor. *Bread* was a metaphor. But Jesus seems to insist that *flesh* and *blood* are not metaphors, even though this manner of expression upsets his listeners. "As a result of this many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him" (John 6:66). What is John teaching by telling the story this way?

In John, the words, Jesus is pictured as using are *flesh* and *blood*. In Paul and the synoptic gospels, the words are *body* and *blood*. In every instance, the intent is not to make a scientific statement but a spiritual statement. In Eucharist, Jesus is alive and present in person, the whole flesh and blood person. When we receive Eucharist, we are not remembering a dead person; we are becoming one with, and being nourished by, an alive person: Jesus Christ.

John is teaching the same mystery that the church has traditionally taught by using words that name Greek philosophical

categories of thought rather than by using biblical images: words such as *transubstantiation*. In my youth, the meaning of this word was taught in *Baltimore Catechism Number 3*:

Question: What is the change of the entire substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ called? Answer: The change of the entire substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is called Transubstantiation.

As a child, I did not understand Greek philosophical concepts such as *substance* and *accident*. I think it is fair to say that many adult Catholics have no knowledge of these philosophical categories today, either. However, I understood that when I received Eucharist I received Jesus Christ. I believed that as a child, and I believe that now.

Scripture offers us a rich variety of images through which to teach the truths regarding Eucharist that we believe. As catechists, we can draw from this rich variety to meet the needs of those we teach. As Pope John Paul II said in *Ut Unum Sint*:

[D]octrine needs to be presented in a way that makes it understandable to those for whom God himself intends it...The expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning. (19)

As we catechists continue to echo the good news of Jesus' true presence in Eucharist, as we teach others about the unity which Christians have with each other as the one body of Christ, and as we give witness to of the responsibility to love others, especially the marginalized, that this identity places upon us, let us draw from the rich tradition that we have received. Let us draw not only from Tradition, but also from Scripture. |

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The Eucharist and Conversion

Frank P. DeSiano, CSP



There is, in our church documents, a bit of an assumption that conversion is something that happens before one partakes in the Eucharist. The assumption seems to be that people experience conversion and, after baptism, come to the Eucharist. The Eucharist, accordingly, serves the needs of the converted, of those already evangelized. Such a perspective, however, might blunt the obvious: that conversion happens in the Eucharist, is expressed in every Eucharist, and should be part of the object of every Eucharist.

We have, then, an assumed “model order,” one worthy of some exploration. In the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers state: “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before men can come to the liturgy, they must be called to faith and to conversion (9).” The document proceeds with the broad message of mission which often articulates mission “*ad gentes*,” to “those who do not believe.” Similarly, the whole structure of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults assumes that people move from unbelief, through inquiry, to the beginnings of belief; once those beginnings have developed into conversion, then catechumens are admitted to the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

In the introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults summarizes the steps of conversion for catechumens: the first step involves initial conversion; the second step involves the catechumens “having progressed in faith”; the third step, with the catechumens “having completed their spiritual preparation,” involves reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation (see RCIA, 6). Pope John Paul II implies the same process when he talks about the goal of mission: “The proclamation of the Word of God has Christian conversion as its aim: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel through faith” (*Mission of the Redeemer*, 46). Likewise in his encyclical on catechesis, the same pope outlines the normal process of evangelization (conversion) followed by catechesis, which expands and elaborates the initial gospel message. “The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion-bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ....” In the next paragraph, however, Pope John Paul II makes a decisive

observation: “But in catechetical practice, this model order must allow for the fact that the initial evangelization has often not taken place” (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, 19).

In other words, the “model order” of evangelization-conversion followed by catechesis and sacrament, cannot always be strictly maintained. Conversion and evangelization both place a steady demand on the follower of Christ. As *Mission of the Redeemer* puts it, conversion “gives rise to a dynamic and lifelong process,” that involves “accepting by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple (46).”

Does not the Eucharist play a decisive role in the Christian’s ongoing decision to accept the lordship of Jesus and becoming his disciple? Is it not time to look at the Eucharist precisely as an expression of conversion and discipleship? It is not absolutely

Does not the Eucharist play a decisive role in the Christian’s ongoing decision to accept the lordship of Jesus and becoming his disciple?

necessary, given the dynamics of modern life, that the Eucharist be viewed not simply as a rite done after conversion, but an active instrument—sacrament—of ongoing conversion itself?

When the fathers of the Second Vatican Council issued the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, they made the “full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebration” one of the central goals of reform. When they stated that this level of participation is the “right and duty” of every Christian “by reason of their Baptism,” (14) the council fathers certainly intended a contrast to forms of liturgical expression which de-emphasized participation and expression. Any Catholic older than sixty years of age remembers attending liturgies that were virtually devoid of participation—ceremonies in which priests whispered Latin to a wall and only the jingling of bells let the faithful know how far the Mass had advanced. Participation, obviously in distinction to non-participation or lackluster participation, expresses one of the key dynamics of the Eucharist.

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Pastors of souls must therefore realize that when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by its effects. (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 11)

If conversion continues after initiation, if conversion and evangelization are life-long dynamics of discipleship, if even the evangelized must still be further evangelized, then the Eucharist must play an essential role in this deepening Christian discipleship. Pope Paul VI elaborates the desire of the church “to deepen, consolidate, nourish and make ever more mature the faith of those who are already called the faithful, or believers...” (*On Evangelization in the Modern World*, 54). Pope Paul states:

In a certain sense it is a mistake to make a contrast between evangelization and sacramentalization, as is sometimes done.... The role of evangelization is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the Sacraments as true Sacraments of faith—and not to receive them passively or to undergo them. (*On Evangelization in the Modern World*, 47)

The Eucharist, then, has played two roles: on the one hand, it is the capstone for those who have been evangelized in the sense that they have come from unbelief to belief; on the other hand, it has a progressive role in evangelization, both of the baptized and, at least in part, on the unbaptized. The first role might be revealed in those injunctions about reserving holy things for holy people, according to one ancient formula, or giving holy things to dogs, pearls to swine, which we see in the gospel (Matthew 7:6). The second role is demonstrated in the role the Mass plays in the ongoing salvation of believers and in the initiation of catechumens who attend the first part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word.

It is this second role of the Eucharist in evangelizing, because of the widespread impact liturgy has on the faithful and catechumens, which deserves special attention, particularly in the way the general structure of the liturgy, especially the Liturgy

of the Word, reveals dynamics of evangelization and ongoing conversion.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE LITURGY

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* unpacks the general structure of the liturgy by pointing out its two fundamental parts, those actions associated with the Liturgy of the Word, and those associated with the liturgy of the Eucharist. “The Liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist together form ‘one single act of worship’; the Eucharistic table set for us the table both of the Word of God and the Body of the Lord” (1346). There is a dynamic unity between the two in that what the word proclaims forms the basis of thanksgiving (eucharist); and Eucharist celebrates and brings to a climax the saving presence of God proclaimed in the word.



Catechesis, of course, is the unfolding of the word of God through reflection, study, and teaching. “Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings” (*On Catechesis in Our Time*, 23). The Liturgy of

the Word in the Eucharist is one of the prime exercises of the word. “The ministry of the word also has a liturgical function since, when realized within the context of a sacred action, it is an integral part of that action” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 51). This means, in part, that the Liturgy of the Word, including the homily, forms part of the paschal mystery of the Mass; it shares in the process of death-and-resurrection which structures all Christian worship.

Conversion is the result of the preaching of the word; the word leads to evangelization and transformation. The *General Directory for Catechesis*, echoing Pope John Paul II’s sentiments in *On Catechesis in Our Time*, relates catechesis to conversion quite clearly:

In proclaiming the Good News of Revelation to the world, evangelization invites men and women to conversion and faith.... The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps. (53)

The Liturgy of the Word, with its proclamation of the Scriptures and its unfolding of their meaning in the homily, serves as one of the church's principal vehicles to bring about this conversion. The *General Directory for Catechesis* further elaborates what conversion means: "Faith is personal encounter with Jesus Christ making of oneself a disciple of him. This demands a permanent commitment to think like him, to judge like him and to live as he lived" (53).

It will be profitable to look at some specific elements in the Liturgy of the Word, and then see how they connect to the second part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

LITURGY OF THE WORD, FIRST PART OF THE MASS

Gathering is the first dimension of the word of God. "Christians come together in one place for the Eucharistic assembly" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1348). Catechists, pastors, and all the faithful are keenly aware today of how difficult gathering is. Study after study has documented ever-lowering percentages of Catholics attending Mass. Pastors and catechists express endless frustration with parents who do not attend Mass, even though these parents send their children for religious education or bring their infants for baptism. This means that all of us must be about the business of gathering, catechists in particular.

Who are we gathering? Families in particular, specifically parents who sense some importance in having their children receive the sacraments of the church but who do not see the reception of the sacraments as leading to a life of discipleship. If, in the past, parents might be caught up in faith through

their children's sacramental preparation, today this does not happen so often. Rather, people today, including our Catholic parents, think they can form a coherent, alternative picture of life's meaning without much reference to God or faith. In addition to parents, young adults remain an important constituency for gathering because of the very fluidity of their ways of life.

The issue here is not so much a loss of faith as an absence of identification with institutions that represent faith. Few people are outright secularists. Fewer are outright atheists. But almost all people are "post modern" in the sense of seeing reality as something to be constructed according to one's preferences. The task of the church in gathering people for Eucharist comes down to this: *helping people prefer Christ, as articulated in our Catholic family, in such a way that Jesus becomes the center of their experience.* Strategies for generating this kind of preference have to be rooted in personal experience. We pastors and catechists have to let our imaginations run a bit wild as we think of how to accomplish this change in peoples' preferences. We have not begun to scratch the surface of what we have to do for the evangelization of younger, and future, generations. Our approach to parents and young adults has to offer them experiences of conversion and commitment in ways that make sense to them.

A second element of the structure of the liturgy is the *word of God*—its proclamation and its elaboration in the Mass. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points to the purpose of the homily—"an exhortation to accept this Word as what it truly is, the Word of God, and put it into practice" (1349)—a

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phrase which compresses the whole object of our proclamation of the word of God. The word is proclaimed so that it can be *accepted*. Acceptance of God and God's word, that is, a reaffirmation of one's discipleship around the sovereignty of God, constitutes a basic way that people participate in the liturgy in a full and active way. These notions seriously challenge the "automatic pilot" aspect of liturgy in which ministers accomplish their various roles in a perfunctory way. The Catechism's word "exhortation" points to a kind of rhetoric whereby ministers seek to move people from one state to another. While the starting state might be the variety of moods in the congregation when the Mass begins, the ending state is a deeper acceptance of God's word, and its implications, in the lives of the faithful.

Pope Benedict XVI elaborates on the purpose of a homily by stating that it "is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful" (*The Sacrament of Charity*, 46). In other words, the point of the word of God, from its various scriptural readings to the homily, is to change lives. One has to wonder if many ordained to preach have this purpose clearly in mind when they give their homilies. One has to wonder, as well, what kinds of rhetoric (words, images, emphases, feelings, gestures, etc.) preachers have to employ to accomplish this purpose. Catechists often work before a class to find material that will engage their pupils. The congregation is hardly a classroom. "Generic and abstract homilies should be avoided," Pope Benedict says. Rather, the preacher is to relate the word of God to the Mass itself—what is happening in that assembly through the celebration itself—and to "the life of the community so that the word of God truly becomes the Church's vital nourishment and support" (*The Sacrament of Charity*, 46). Although liturgical styles differ according to parish, culture, liturgical music and other elements, "vital" lays out a consistent, and important, criterion for the liturgy as an evangelizing event.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST, THE SECOND PART OF THE MASS

Gathering and proclamation of the word (the two dynamics identified in the first part of the Mass) set the context for the second part of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. "There is an intrinsic bond between the word of God and the Eucharist," Pope Benedict writes. "From listening to the word of God, faith is born or strengthened (cf. Romans 10:17); in the Eucharist the word made flesh gives himself to us as our spiritual food" (*The Sacrament of Charity*, 39). The intrinsic unity of the Mass is the way each part corresponds to, and reinforces, the other, somewhat in the pattern of call and response. *Go and Make Disciples*, the plan and strategy for evangelization of the U.S. bishops, points to a call-and-response pattern in evangelization itself. "At its essence are the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, both being the works of the Spirit of God" (11), the document says with reference to evangelization.



One can then see the Liturgy of the Eucharist as the assembly acting out, in symbolic form through the rites, its discipleship. It does so at the invitation of Jesus Christ who calls them together; and it does so in the Spirit of Jesus who acts upon the congregation in transformation. All of this accomplishes what Holy Communion dramatically effects: the identity of the faithful with Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection, through a renewed expression of its conversion and discipleship. Catholics express this through our understanding of the Mass as a sacrifice, that is, as participation in the sacrificial death and saving resurrection of Jesus (the paschal mystery). In the Eucharist, Catholics participate in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a response to the word of salvation which they experienced in the first part of the Mass.

To elaborate this further: because the word of God reveals and proclaims God's action in human life, believers respond by identifying themselves with Jesus in his dying and rising; this identity becomes their sacrifice, the giving of themselves, with Jesus, in love and thanks. "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice...*" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1367). While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* parses this out primarily in terms of hierarchy, the first sentence in article 1369 is the operative one:



“The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ.” All believers, participating in the Eucharist, radically give themselves to God through the radical gift of Jesus in his death.

The drama of Jesus’ death and resurrection becomes, then, the drama of every celebration of the Eucharist and, by their participation, the drama of everyone at Mass. The faithful become one with Jesus in his death, in his total response to the Father’s love, in his total gift of self to humankind. The idea of sacrifice involves not only Jesus the Victim, or Jesus present in the elements which are offered; it involves the assembly as well. In the Eucharist, the word of God raises crucial questions for believers, questions that demand acceptance and conversion. Catholics give an answer to the word when they give themselves in Jesus by uniting themselves with his unending sacrifice. When the focus of sacrifice encompasses only the consecrated elements, we lose a substantial part of the meaning of “sacrifice” as well as the evangelizing implication of the liturgy. When Catholics come to see the Mass not as an event they attend, or even an important event they witness, but rather as a dramatic giving of themselves in love and service to the Father, in Jesus, then the power of the Mass to “make disciples” will be clearer.

Catholic participation in the sacrifice presents itself in the various steps that make up the second part of the Mass: *the Offertory* in which gifts, representing ourselves, are given; the *Eucharistic Prayer* through which the faithful become part of the paschal mystery of Jesus; the reception of *Communion* in which the Body “which is given up” and the Blood “which is shed” are taken into the bodies, and lives, of the faithful; and the *dismissal* which theologically is a “sending forth” of the faithful as disciples into the world. Each of these parts unveils a deeper level of conversion. We bring ourselves and our labors in response to the word (Offertory); we identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus in thanksgiving to God (Eucharistic Prayer); we accept Jesus in Communion and, in the same act, unite ourselves with him in commitment (Communion); we are sent forth as commissioned disciples to carry out the mission of Jesus in service to the Kingdom and the world. The evangelical impact of this array of actions at Mass is staggering.

This drama involves actors, agents, ministers; with the variety of their skills, they help make the meanings of the liturgy clear. Pope Benedict spends quite a few lines warning priests that they should not make themselves the center of attention. “Any attempt to make themselves the center of the liturgical action contradicts their very identity as priests” (*Sacrament of Charity*, 23), Benedict writes. To appreciate the evangelizing dynamic of the Mass, however, two important notes must be added to the Pope’s admonition. (1) Not only the priest, but all of the ministers should be careful not make themselves the center of attention in the Eucharist: lectors, deacons, musicians, greeters, etc. (2) But all ministers should use every skill available to make the meaning of the Eucharist accessible to the faithful. Pope Benedict notes that there is an art of celebrating (*ars celebrandi*), which he expands in the direction of “faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness.” He continues, “[I]ndeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers...” (*Sacrament of Charity*, 38). Such caution about faithful adherence to norms and rites cannot be taken as blunting the powerful call to conversion and renewal that is the heart of every Eucharist. Whatever might have happened over two thousand years, clear trends have shown themselves in modern culture in the past thirty years, particularly—but not only—in Europe. Norms and action cannot be at odds. Using skills of speech, gesture, music, singing, and movement should all add to the evangelizing impact of the Mass. God is speaking to us. What will our response be? Will we respond in Jesus Christ? Will we let his Spirit permeate our lives?

THE CHALLENGE NOW

Catechists, pastors and pastoral associates all face a significantly different world than that of just a generation ago. The erosion of identity with institutions in general, and religious institutions in particular, has created a population in which people form tentative connections based on immediate needs. Such a perspective does not make people open to receive the sweeping answers that Christian faith provides. Salvation answers questions about human meaning itself; this plays out

quite differently than the relief people might feel from one or another concern in their lives. People today find it harder to feel a need to answer the questions put at the start of the *Baltimore Catechism*: Who made me? Why did God make me?

This kind of culture, when it responds religiously, does not always find itself at home with structured liturgy, that is, with a repeated ritual. The diminished attendance of Catholics at Mass clearly shows this, not to mention the exodus of Christians from mainline denominations into evangelical congregations. For this reason, the evangelizing dimensions of the Eucharist need to be consciously operating in pastoral leaders and catechists. Gathering, hearing and responding, conversion and commitment, offering and self-gift, identity with Jesus, experience of the Spirit and carrying out the mission of Jesus: these are not incidental parts of the Mass. A tune can be played with its melody either sharply pronounced or somewhat muted. We Catholics can mute the evangelizing dynamic of the liturgy quite well. It is time we moved beyond the “beige” of much worship and began striking notes sharply

and powerfully. As we concern ourselves with a new translation and a closer conformity with the Latin text, we must also concern ourselves with the world in which the celebration of Mass takes place, one substantially different than most of the past two-thousand years. How will the Eucharist meet this world, engage this world, and transform it through the lives of the faithful?

The Eucharist itself has to grab the attention of this world. Urging or even hounding people will not grab their attention. But celebrating the Mass with awareness of its capacity to deepen conversion in the faithful, and bring about new conversion in unbelievers or those who have grown distant, may begin to reverse the downward trend of Catholic Mass attendance, and may help the Catholic people experience themselves as both evangelized and evangelizers. ■

Frank P. DeSiano, CSP, has extensive experience with Catholic evangelization on the national level and continues working on developing pastoral outreach tools.



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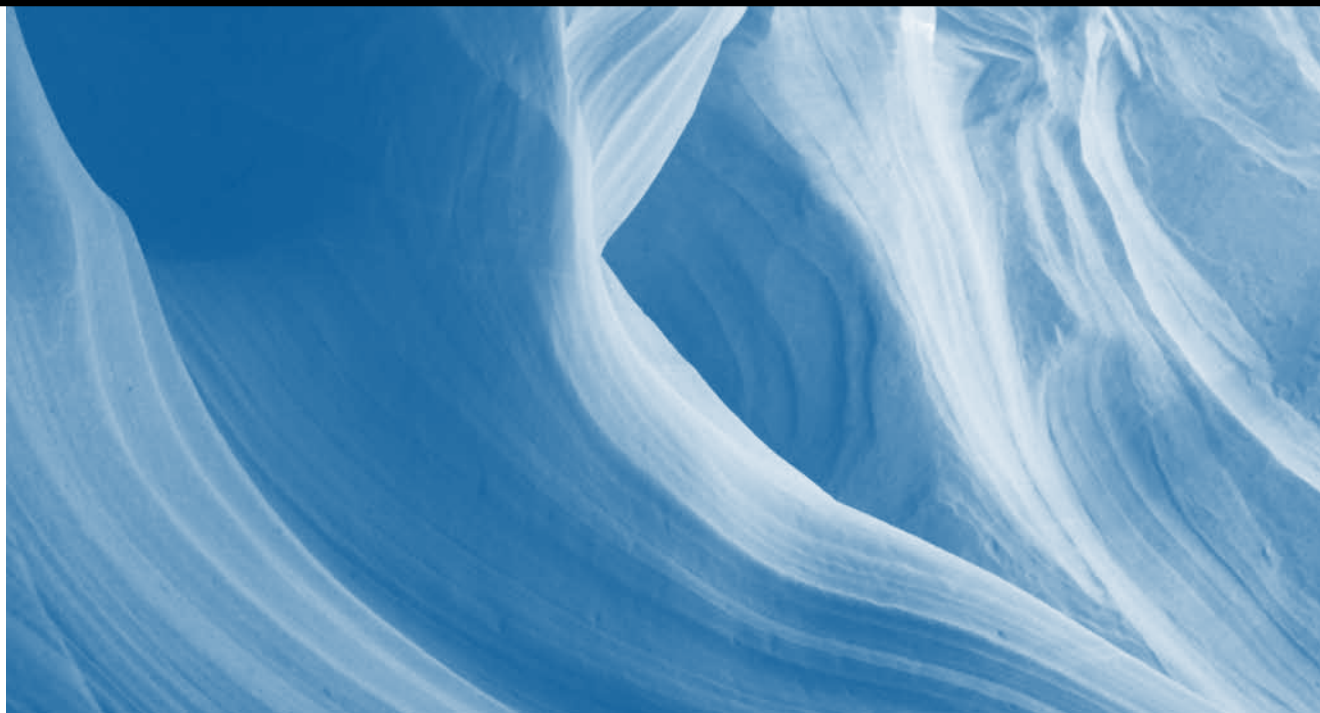
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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



NATIONAL CERTIFICATION STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES FOR LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTERS

Serving as Parish Catechetical Leader

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Five national Catholic ministry associations have come together to form the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (ACLEM), including the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), the National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM), the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM), the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM).

Task groups of the Alliance consisting of representatives from the five partner organizations have been working together for the past several years to develop the certification standards. These standards have been approved by the governing bodies of all five organizations and have given authorization for submission to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Commission on Certification and Accreditation (USCCB/CCA).

The section contains the proposed revision of the *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, originally approved in 2003 by the USCCB/CCA. The standards name core competencies common to all lay ecclesial ministers as well as specialized competencies for each of the lay ecclesial ministry roles. Herein are offered the standards and competencies for a parish catechetical leader seeking national certification.

PROPOSED STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES

Standard One: Human

1.0 STANDARD ONE

Lay ecclesial ministers demonstrate the qualities of human maturity needed for fruitful ministry with the people of God.

VISION STATEMENT

Lay ecclesial ministers, as all ecclesial ministers, develop their human character and relational abilities so that they can be “a bridge and not an obstacle” for people in their encounter with Jesus Christ.* This development entails the two-fold dynamic of strengthening positive traits that foster ministerial effectiveness and lessening negative traits that hinder it. Accordingly, lay ecclesial ministers strive to deepen their knowledge of self and others, grow from experiences of suffering and challenge, maintain a balanced lifestyle and positive relationships, appreciate and value diversity, and demonstrate basic human virtues. Cultivating such traits and skills within a Christ-centered community contributes to the development of “a healthy and well-balanced personality, for the sake of both personal growth and ministerial service” (*Co-Workers*, p. 36).

* Pope John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds: Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), no. 43.

CORE COMPETENCIES

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 1.1 Appreciate and affirm the dignity of the human person and the positive values of diverse cultures, races, and socio-economic groups within their respective self-understandings.
- 1.2 Identify personal gifts and limitations through self-reflection, collaboration with others, peer feedback, supervisory assessment processes, and/or spiritual companionship.
- 1.3 Engage in programs or practices of continuing ministerial formation and lifelong personal growth.
- 1.4 Recognize both the reality of sin with its personal and social consequences, and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation to heal persons and relationships.
- 1.5 Maintain a healthy lifestyle, and a reasonable balance among the legitimate claims of family, community, personal relationships, and ministry.
- 1.6 Manifest “*psychological health*, marked by integrity, appropriate interpersonal boundaries, and the ability to honor and safeguard the trust that people place in them as Church ministers” (*Co-Workers*, p. 36).

Understand the power inherent in positions of pastoral leadership, and be diligent in the responsible exercise of such power, for example regarding sexuality, confidentiality, supervision of others, and decision making.

Standard Two: Spiritual

2.0 STANDARD TWO

Sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized, a lay ecclesial minister demonstrates Christian spirituality as foun-

dational to ministry, integrated in service with the people of God, and possessing a sacramental view of the world that recognizes the world can be a vessel of God’s presence and God’s transforming grace.

VISION STATEMENT

Having encountered the person and message of Jesus Christ, the hunger of the lay ecclesial minister for union with the Triune God is constant. The result of this hunger is the call to holiness; built on the Word of God, experienced in the liturgy and sacraments, formed through suffering, nurtured in joy, and sustained in community with all the baptized and through the Church as Mystical Body. The minister gives witness to a well-formed spirituality through a rich and diversified prayer life, theological reflection, and action rooted in Catholic social teaching. Spiritual formation is grounded in the understanding that “If ministry does not flow from a personal encounter and ongoing relationship with the Lord, then no matter how ‘accomplished’ it may be in its methods and activities, that ministry will lack the vital soul and source needed to bear lasting fruit” (*Co-Workers*, p. 38). Therefore, open to the mystery of God’s love and in touch with the world’s realities, all actions of the lay ecclesial minister flow from “that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one’s life” (*Co-Workers*, p. 38).

CORE COMPETENCIES

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 2.1 Give witness to an integrated spirituality formed by scripture, theological reflection, sacramental celebration, communal worship, and active participation in parish life.
- 2.2 Live a life of private and communal prayer that is both formed by and reflective of the breadth and depth of the Catholic spiritual tradition.
- 2.3 Bear witness to the profound significance of Eucharist in one’s own life, in the life of one’s parish, and in the life of the whole Catholic community.
- 2.4 Demonstrate a sensitivity to the spirituality of the sacred arts, i.e., art, music, and architecture, and the value of their expression in liturgical and communal prayer.
- 2.5 Honor the call to ministry that is rooted in one’s baptism by developing ministerial goals that flow from one’s spirituality and reflect an integration of Gospel values.
- 2.6 Demonstrate an ability to discern the “signs of the times” and address current realities in the church and the world in light of the Gospel.
- 2.7 Accept and articulate one’s ministerial vocation as coming from God and confirmed by the ecclesial community.
- 2.8 Display an openness to ecumenical prayer, work, and practices that promote Christian unity, and acknowledge the

gifts afforded the human community from the various world religions.

2.9 Model the spirit of Jesus in one's life and identify with and promote the universal church and its global mission so that all prayer and ministerial activity flow from that mission.

2.10 Develop a spirituality sensitive to diverse cultural expressions based on conversion, communion, mission and solidarity.

Standard Three: Intellectual

3.0 STANDARD THREE

A lay ecclesial minister demonstrates understanding of the breadth of Catholic theological and pastoral studies, as well as the intellectual skill to use that knowledge in ministry with God's people from diverse populations and cultures.

VISION STATEMENT

"Formation for lay ecclesial ministry is a journey beyond catechesis into theological study" (*Co-Workers*, p. 43). A lay ecclesial minister's faith and ministry is formed by the study of the Catholic theological tradition focusing on the following core elements: Scripture and its interpretation, dogmatic theology, church history, liturgical and sacramental theology, moral theology and Catholic social teaching, pastoral theology, spirituality, canon law, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, the social sciences, humanities, and culture and language studies. Based upon this study, a theologically competent minister can articulate and interpret this Catholic theological tradition with disciples from diverse communities. A key dynamic of effective lay ecclesial ministry is the integration into ministry practices of the key documents and principal theories of pastoral ministry.

CORE COMPETENCIES

A lay ecclesial minister will:

3.1 *Scripture and revelation.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of revelation as embodied in Scripture, tradition, and creation.

3.2 *Dogmatic theology.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice Trinitarian theology, Christology, pneumatology, missiology, Christian anthropology, and ecclesiology.

3.3 *Church history.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of the major events in the history of the Church, with special attention to the Second Vatican Council, and the perspective those events provide on the life of the Church today.

3.4 *Liturgical and sacramental theology.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice theologies of liturgy, worship, and sacraments.

3.5 *Moral theology and Catholic social teaching.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of the moral life, including Catholic social teaching for the transformation of church and society.

3.6 *Pastoral theology.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a theology of pastoral ministry, as well as guiding principles for the practice of ministry in a given context.

3.7 *Spirituality.* Know and integrate the history and theology of Catholic spirituality into prayer and ministerial practice.

3.8 *Canon law.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of canon law.

3.9 *Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a respect for other Christian communities and other religious traditions.

3.10 *Social sciences and humanities.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice a foundational understanding of the social sciences and humanities.

3.11 *Culture and language studies.* Know and integrate into ministerial practice knowledge of intercultural communication and linguistic/cultural skills.

Standard Four: Pastoral

4.0 STANDARD FOUR

A lay ecclesial minister demonstrates a range of leadership and pastoral skills needed for functioning effectively in ministry.

VISION STATEMENT

As a response to their baptismal call, lay ecclesial ministers accept the grace of leadership and manifest a range of skills and pastoral gifts which allow them to function effectively in ministry. In their role as evangelizers, they operate in a parochial setting which has

various dimensions—faith formation, worship, cultural diversity, community life, social

justice, and apostolic service. They are effective listeners who foster respect and offer

compassionate care within varied family, community, and cultural settings. In the spirit

of the Gospel, they serve others as companions on the journey of faith. These ministers

demonstrate good stewardship, work collaboratively with other lay and ordained

ministers, and exhibit human resource and management skills. They have an ability to

discern and nurture the gifts of all the baptized in order to build the Kingdom of God.

Lastly, these ministers embrace a professional code of ethics worthy of Catholic ministry

and abide by civil and Church law. "Pastoral formation cultivates the knowledge,

attitudes, and skills that directly pertain to effective functioning in the ministry setting

and that also pertain to pastoral administration that supports direct ministry" (*Co-Workers*, page 47).

CORE COMPETENCIES

A lay ecclesial minister will:

- 4.1 Exercise sound practices of compassionate pastoral care.
- 4.2 Foster a pastoral ministry that empowers people to inculcate the gospel in their own culture, and to foster unity in diversity in the Catholic Church, by utilizing human, spiritual, theological, and pastoral approaches proper to each culture.
- 4.3 Implement the principles and processes of evangelization and faith formation as outlined in national and universal Church documents.
- 4.4 Employ the use of modern means of communication technology to proclaim the Gospel.
- 4.5 Work effectively with others through utilizing leadership skills of collaboration, visioning, planning, communication, decision making, delegation, and conflict management.
- 4.6 Exercise effective supervision of employees (part-time or full-time) and volunteers.
- 4.7 Continually seek opportunities to improve skills.
- 4.8 Develop and nurture the prayer life of the community in which one serves.

Catechetical Leader: Specialized Competencies

By their baptism every Christian is called to proclaim the Good News. The Spirit singles out persons and invites them to the specialized role of a catechetical leader within their faith community and many respond in faith to that invitation. As a competent catechetical leader they collaborate with others in creating a culture of formation within their faith communities that enables each committed Christian to nurture and grow in their relationship with God.

As such the catechetical leader will be well formed in the study of Catechesis - its theology, its history, and its right praxis.

A parish catechetical leader will:

- CL 1 Direct the parish catechetical program through design, implementation and evaluation of parish catechetical processes.
- CL 2 Implement the catechumenate model as inspiration for catechesis in age-appropriate ways.
- CL 3 Develop a comprehensive life-long vision and plan for parish catechesis based on ecclesial catechetical documents.
- CL 4 Insure the centrality of catechesis in the development of the parish as an evangelizing and catechizing community.
- CL 5 Develop and implement parish catechetical policies in accord with (arch) diocesan policies and guidelines.
- CL 6 Provide orientation and in-servicing of catechetical committee members and formation teams in their areas of responsibility.
- CL 7 Exercise effective supervision of catechetical employees and volunteers while fostering leadership abilities.



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Shaping the Future



As we celebrate the gift of 75 years, we are called to face and shape the future. What digital opportunities lie ahead in the evolving 21st Century? We are all facing the growth and development of digital tool. One of the first steps in facing and shaping our future will be our growing understanding of technology and how it can be a tool for evangelization, communication, and ongoing learning.

Your conference committee has been working hard to provide a conference program at all levels that will be exciting and interesting to you. We invite you attend one or more of the many technology sessions that will be offered at this 75th conference. You will have an opportunity to hear from teams of presenters on topics designed to support your understanding of social media and how these tools may be used in catechetical ministry.

Join us for the pre-conference program—"Our Covenant Story: A How to and not to Form Digital Natives to be Digital Disciples"—presented by NCCL and Interactive Connections.

At this session, Mary Hess, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership, who also teaches the Media and Technology in Parish Education course at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota and Caroline Cervený, SSJ-TOSF, a catechetical educational technology specialist, and a local representative, will help you to learn how to be a digital disciple where each of us can:

- ◆ become a 21st Century catechist or catechetical digital disciple, comfortable with tools of our digital natives, in order to share faith with others
- ◆ celebrate, promote, and model digital citizenship and responsibility
- ◆ advocate, model, and teach safe, legal, and ethical use of digital information and technology
- ◆ promote and model digital etiquette and responsible social interactions related to the use of technology and information (i.e., cyberbullying and more)
- ◆ learn to create digital activities for free or almost free with available technologies

Our technology conference workshop sessions will focus on the theme of "Forming Missionary Disciples in a Digital Age." These learning sessions with a three-person team will focus on:

◆ Viral Marketing of Your Parish Programs

- ◇ Comparison between Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- ◇ Setting goals for what you are going to communicate to your audience

Caroline Cervený, SSJ-TOSF

- ◇ Best practices of viral marketing using your website and social media tools (Blogs, Podcasts)

◆ Catechist Formation

- ◇ Forming today's catechist—the challenges to change mindsets
- ◇ The basic tools for today's catechist—on a basic budget
- ◇ Motivating today's catechist to engage today's student using digital tools

◆ Collaboration With New Media Tools

- ◇ What is this new media—Web 2.0? Why is it different than anything we've ever been exposed to?
- ◇ What are the best tools for collaboration with catechists and with students?
- ◇ Best practices in education and faith formation—new media tools

◆ Social Media Communication

- ◇ The blessings and challenges of social media—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube
- ◇ Social media guidelines: best practices in organizations and dioceses
- ◇ Social media: connecting with the younger generation

Watch for additional tech learning sessions that will be presented by Richard Drabik and Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski from the University of Dayton.

I believe you will experience a conference focus on how we will be catechists in the 21st Century. We will need good theology and good practice! And some of our catechetical practice will be in digital formats! Are we ready?

So, in the words of Anthony C. Marchica, our 2011 Planning Committee Chair:

I find the greatest of these gifts is that change motivates people to engage. Once engaged, they will bring forward their greatest strengths simultaneously to maintain from the past what has value and to use everything available to shape the future.

So together, we will work and gather in Atlanta for the 75th anniversary of our organization and celebrate our past and shape the future! ■

Caroline Cervený, SSJ-TOSF is the 2011 Planning Committee Catechetical Educational Technology Advisor.

“What Else should I have done?”

James Tucker



*Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?*
(Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day”)

Whether the fortunes of life bring our time as a diocesan catechetical leader to a close sooner than we expect, or we enjoy a run far longer than others in our company, the words above can ring hauntingly in the ears of anyone who has spent a significant portion of their life in ministry.

In 2008, I retired as Catholic formation services director for the Diocese of Helena after 23 years of service in that position, and seven years prior in Catholic school and parish ministry in western Montana. At our bishop's request, I stayed two more years in a part-time capacity to direct our diocesan lay minister formation program until my successor had sufficient opportunity to get “the lay of the land.” Overall, some might say it was too long a run, others not. In the end, everything dies at last.

In that light, for the benefit of newcomers to NCCL and especially those serving as diocesan directors, I was asked to offer whatever wisdom I had distilled in this period since leaving diocesan employment. I can do so in two simple pieces of advice. They may seem banal, perhaps even Pollyanna-ish, but they mark the intersection, the crossroads, of our journey: get to know your people, and get to know your bishop.

GET TO KNOW YOUR PEOPLE

Moving from Washington, DC (my birthplace), to Montana (my wife's) in 1978 was a culture shock for someone with a big-city experience of the church and its ways. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, the Diocese of Helena was a hot-house for implementing the decrees of the Second Vatican Council. We arrived at a time when collaborative ministry among priests and parishioners was booming. Our Catholic population, lay and ordained alike, was predominantly Montana-born and -raised, yet wonderfully open and hospitable to newcomers like myself.



School and parish ministry in those first years gave me wonderful opportunities to learn “who’s who” not only in the local setting, but also across the wider church in western Montana. In a locale that had taken the Council’s vision and energy to heart, stepping up to the diocesan level when the director’s position came open in 1985 was the best of all worlds.

With only a half-dozen large cities and countless small towns in between, distance in our diocese is always an issue. Yet the concerns of people here are little different from those elsewhere in the country. Traveling the diocese each year for parish in-services and deanery-based gatherings gave me first-hand the broader perspectives of our priests and people. Many whom I had come to know in the early years, I could now get

further acquainted with on their own turf. Sitting at the table with pastor or parishioner and often times both, whether in a rectory or home or local café, I came to learn more deeply “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties” of each.

As the Third Millennium approached, it became more apparent that, even if we once so thought and ministered, we were not entirely homogeneous in our identity as a diocesan church. Generational differences in spirituality and ecclesiology among priests and parishioners alike made it all the more important to be in frequent contact and conversation with the folks in the field. Whatever its origin or bearing, change requires that we know our people, for everyone’s benefit.

continued on page 26

“WHAT ELSE SHOULD I HAVE DONE?” *continued from page 25*

GET TO KNOW YOUR BISHOP

We reached a point in my tenure where the Diocese of Helena had four bishops within an eleven-year period. Except for our current bishop, who was already an auxiliary in our region, each was ordained a bishop in and for the Diocese of Helena. Despite such rapid succession, our task as diocesan staff persons remained one and one only: to help each new bishop be the best bishop he could be.

I don't know if it's completely true that we get along better with the one who hires us than the ones who inherit us. To be sure, a different working relationship developed with each new bishop, as each brought something different to the table in his style of episcopal leadership.

Though vast geographically, the Diocese of Helena has a small curial infrastructure which for a long time allowed ready access to each bishop when he was around. With several, conversations around diocesan catechetical needs and endeavors could often be held the moment they were requested or later the same day. With all, opportunities to discover each bishop's priorities and make them your own were countless.

And therein lies the occasional rub. New bishops bring new vision and new approaches to the life and ministry of the local church. Not all diocesan directors enjoy timely access to their

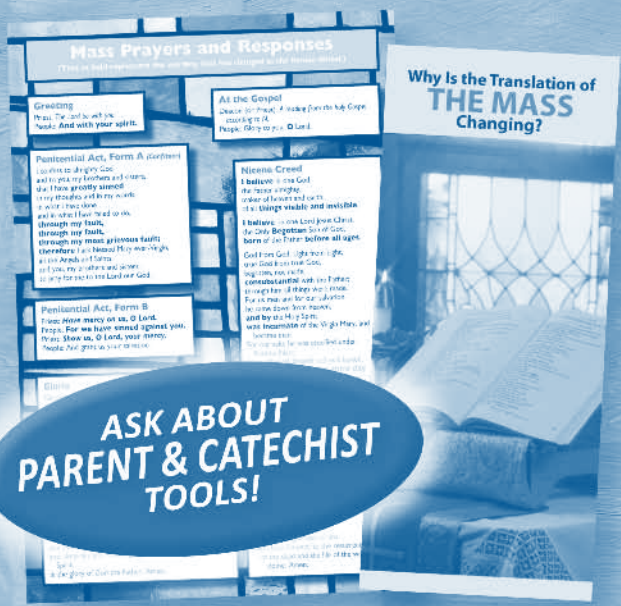
bishop, and many may not know him as well as they would like. When personal contact and conversation with the bishop are not a regular occurrence in diocesan ministry, a clear sense of his priorities can suffer in translation. Adjusting your own vision and approaches will always be both a requirement and a challenge. As with our people, change requires that we know our bishop, again for everyone's benefit.

A FINAL THOUGHT

As only a man of his background could, Teilhard de Chardin encouraged people to “trust in the slow work of God.” For diocesan catechetical leaders, getting to know your people and your bishop takes time over time. If we've done both as well as we could, we need not ask when the end comes at last, “what else should I have done?”

James Tucker is the retired diocesan director of formation from Helena, Montana. Contact him at tucker556@bresnan.net.

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Conference Update

Anthony C. Marchica



Planning for the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership is an enormous undertaking, even without the added pressure of it being the 75th anniversary celebration. Speaking on behalf of the membership, I would like to thank the many people working so hard to make this conference a unique

and valuable experience. The planning committee has had the help and support of so many! It is truly an example of a member driven organization.

On behalf of the planning committee, I would like to assure you that we are committed to serving our members as well as the entire faith community in the rich traditions and teachings of our church. We have listened well to the voice of our membership through conversations, evaluations, surveys, and the platforms that our organizational leaders were elected on. We have combined that with sage and collected wisdom and are carefully planning our way forward.

“Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights.” -Pauline R. Kezer

We are fortunate to have a long and positive history on which to draw from. But as this quote points out we cannot be passive or static if we are to grow toward our fullest potentials. Eucharistic liturgy is at the base of our roots as well as our faith and hope for continuity. Catechesis, prayer, praise, and worship are all to enrich and support the sacraments as the sacraments are there to support and enrich our faith. Therefore, the first priority is Liturgy, prayer, praise, worship, community and catechesis done well and woven together in a seamless journey rather than compartmentalized periods of time. One will lead directly into the other, building and connecting to bring us deeper. We will even use the help of a weaver to smooth the journey and the transitions.

“Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait for the train of the future to run over him.” -Dwight D. Eisenhower

Our history can teach us many things. The most important of these is that we are always evolving. There are always new discoveries, inventions, new technology, new ways of doing things, insights, deeper understandings, new questions. It is our challenge to use everything at our disposal to accomplish our mission rather than allow those things to bulldoze or distract us. This conference will use technology more at every stage from planning, to promotion, to registration, to presentation, and evaluation. It is in this way that we will speak to, attract, invite, and embrace young people in the spirit of evangelization.

“Things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly.” -Francis Bacon

Our understanding of adult learning processes has grown exponentially over the past couple of decades with the necessity of continuing education in the workplace as well as the wisdom of our bishops emphasizing the need for adult faith formation and religious education. Our conference needs to be an example of adult learning praxis looking at issues from different perspectives, through different lenses, using multiple senses and mediums. Some of our keynotes will use a TED-style format. TED presenters are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and represent the world’s leading thinkers and doers. The issues will be looked at through various lenses such as the spiritual, psychological, sociological, anthropological, cultural, and familial. The learning sessions will offer opportunities for individuals to discern not only the topics, but the depth and diversity that they want to pursue.

“Those who expect moments of change to be comfortable and free of conflict have not learned their history.” -Joan Wallach Scott

Though these goals have been extremely exciting and rewarding, the challenges have not been easy to overcome. It would be easier and certainly faster to do things as they have been done before. But easier and faster is not what will carry us into the future. A firm and solid commitment to quality, relevance, and significance, as well as our unwavering faith are what will lead us.

“Change always comes bearing gifts.” -Price Pritchett

The gifts that change brings can be wide and diverse. I find the greatest of these gifts is that change motivates people to engage. Once engaged, they will bring forward their greatest strengths simultaneously to maintain from the past what has value and to use everything available to shape the future.

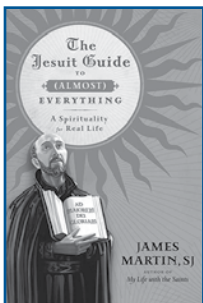
So together, we will work and gather in Atlanta for the 75th anniversary of our organization and celebrate our past and shape the future!

Anthony C. Marchica is the 2011 Conference Planning Committee Chair. He is the director of the Office of Catechetical Leadership and Youth Ministry Formation for the diocese of Palm Beach, Florida. Contact him at amarchica@diocesepb.org.

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

The 75th Annual NCCL Conference welcomes a variety of presenters and authors, including James Martin, SJ, and Chris Lowery.



Martin is the author of a variety of titles including *My Life with the Saints* (Loyola Press) and most recently *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life* (HarperOne).

The review in *America Magazine* states, “*The Jesuit Guide* is practical, engaging, crisply written and spiritually enriching for readers of all ages. Enhanced by personal stories, sidebars and background information on the Society of Jesus, founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, *The Jesuit Guide* is destined to become a classic work enjoyed by a huge readership.”

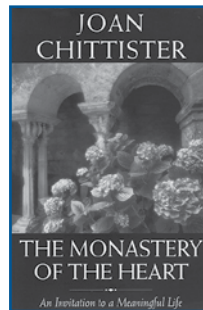
The Jesuit Guide has sold more than 75,000 copies, has received numerous awards, and is used in parishes for book group discussions. An excellent reading guide is available at HarperOne Publishers’ Web site. And make sure you visit James Martin on Facebook.

Lowery is the author of *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World* (Loyola Press) and *Heroic Living: Discover Your Purpose and Change the World* (Loyola Press).

In *Heroic Leadership* the publisher explains, “Lowery examines organizational principles of effective leadership derived from the history and teachings of the Jesuits and applies them to modern corporate culture. Based on the four core values of self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism, this book identifies practices that sixteenth-century priests developed to foster dynamic,

effective leadership and achieve longevity.”

Richard Rohr, author of *The Naked Now*, says that in *The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life* (BlueBridge, 224 pages), “Joan Chittister has emerged as a wisdom figure for our time. Here she takes her wise monastic tradition and takes it on the road for all to love.”



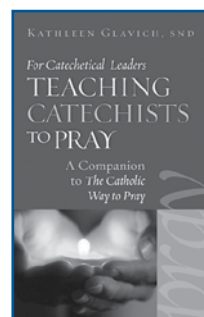
According to the publisher, “*The Monastery of the Heart* is Joan Chittister’s powerful spiritual guide for all of us who are seeking a more purposeful life today, in a time of social upheavals and global transformations. It is written for seekers of any faith or none—individuals, couples, families, and small groups who are looking for true meaning while facing seemingly countless options, both spiritual and secular, and are feeling overwhelmed by choices. It builds on the ancient *Rule of Benedict* to show us new ways of meaningful living in the very center of our own world—without ever withdrawing from it. *The Monastery of the Heart* is anchored in the *Rule*, rooted in its values, but attempts to redefine it for seekers today. Fresh in its form and focus, it invites us to become within ourselves monastics of the heart.”

Note: Monasteries of the Heart is a movement of seekers interested in becoming part of a community of seekers, either online or with others of their own choosing, who form to support one another in shaping their spiritual lives around Benedictine values and priorities. For more information about the book, the movement, videos, and e-Courses, visit monasteriesoftheheart.org.

For Catechetical Leaders—Teaching Catechists to Pray: A Companion to the Catholic Way to Pray by Kathleen Glavich, SND (Twenty Third

Publications, 280 pages) is a handbook on prayer that provides guidance and resources to nurture the personal and communal spirituality of both catechists and children in various settings.

In the introduction Glavich explains, “that as a DRE, one main facets of your ministry is to motivate and guide your catechists in carrying out their responsibility to teach prayer. It’s hoped that this book will be an invaluable tool for you in accomplishing this job. It contains the fundamental concepts of prayer, giving you the background to explain prayer and field questions about it. In addition, the book provides an overview



of the many types of prayers and prayer methods, a feature that may expand your own prayer repertoire! What you may find most useful in helping your catechists understand and teach prayer

are the anecdotes marked ‘Story’ and the numerous ‘Tips.’ Your catechists will probably most appreciate the practical ‘Classroom Activities’ listed at the end of each chapter.”

The companion book, *The Catholic Way to Pray: An Essential Guide for Adults* by Kathleen Glavich, SND (Twenty-Third Publications, 112 pages) includes information and inspiration in 12 chapters on varieties of prayer, Jesus as teacher of prayer, times to pray, challenges to prayer, liturgical prayer, scriptural prayer, and more. It is an excellent gift and a resource for all catechists. ■

Dan Pierson served as director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for seventeen 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).



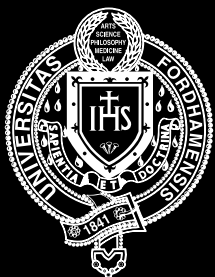
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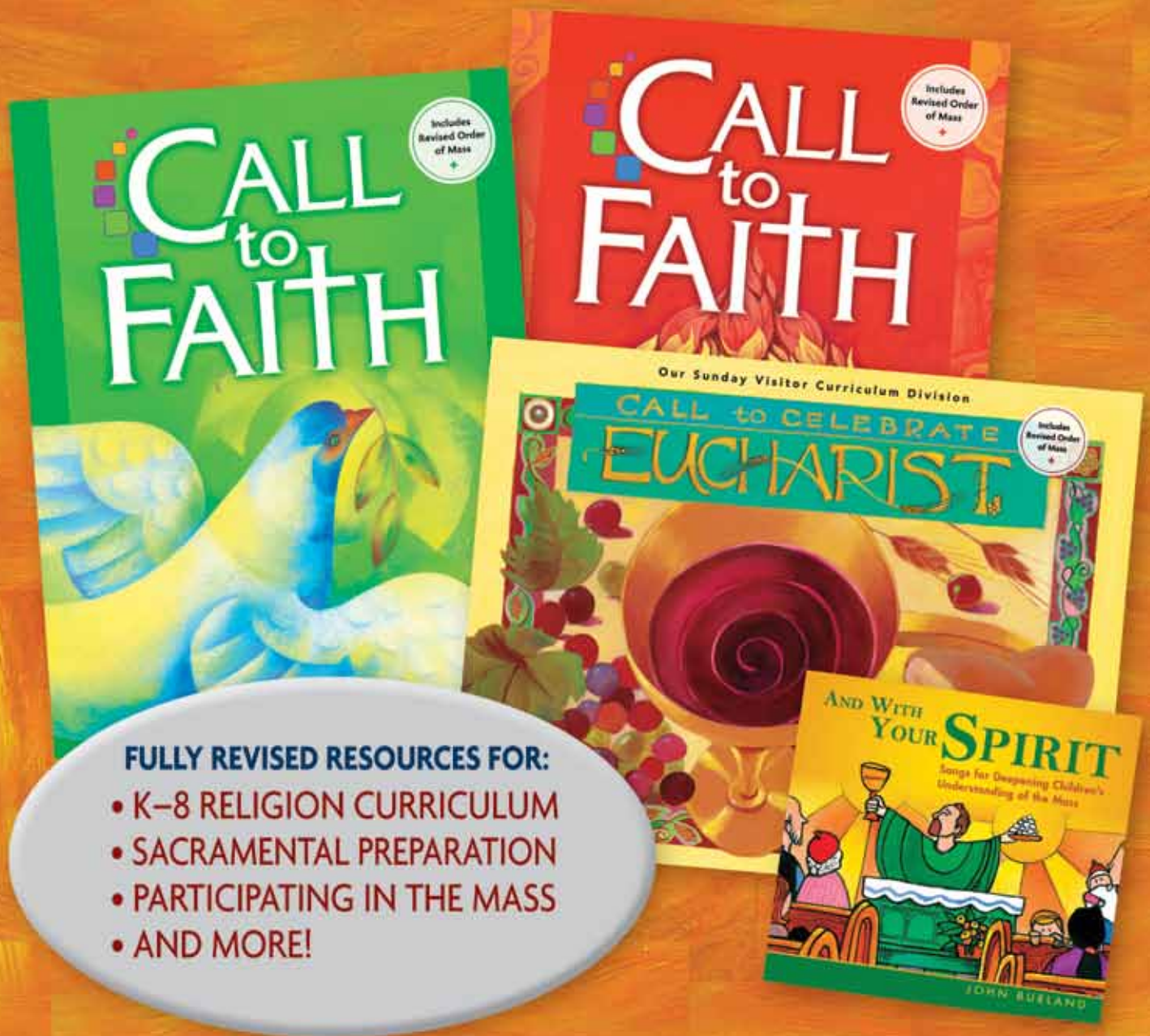
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