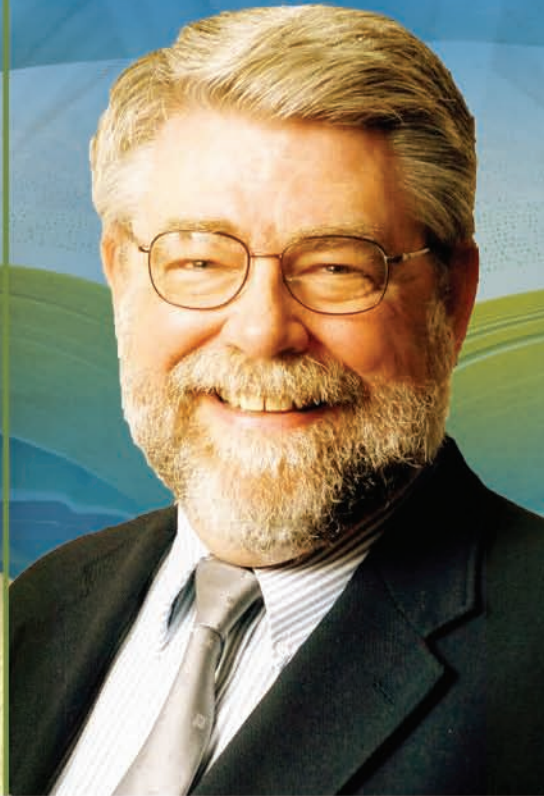


c | CATECHETICAL LEADER



THE ROLE OF THE DIOCESAN LEADER



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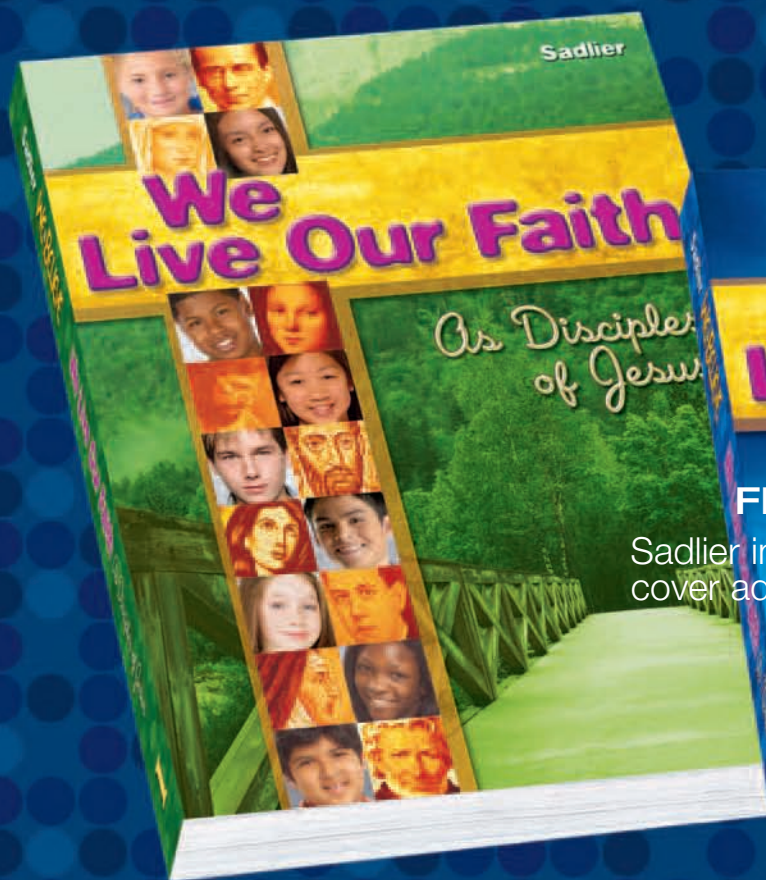
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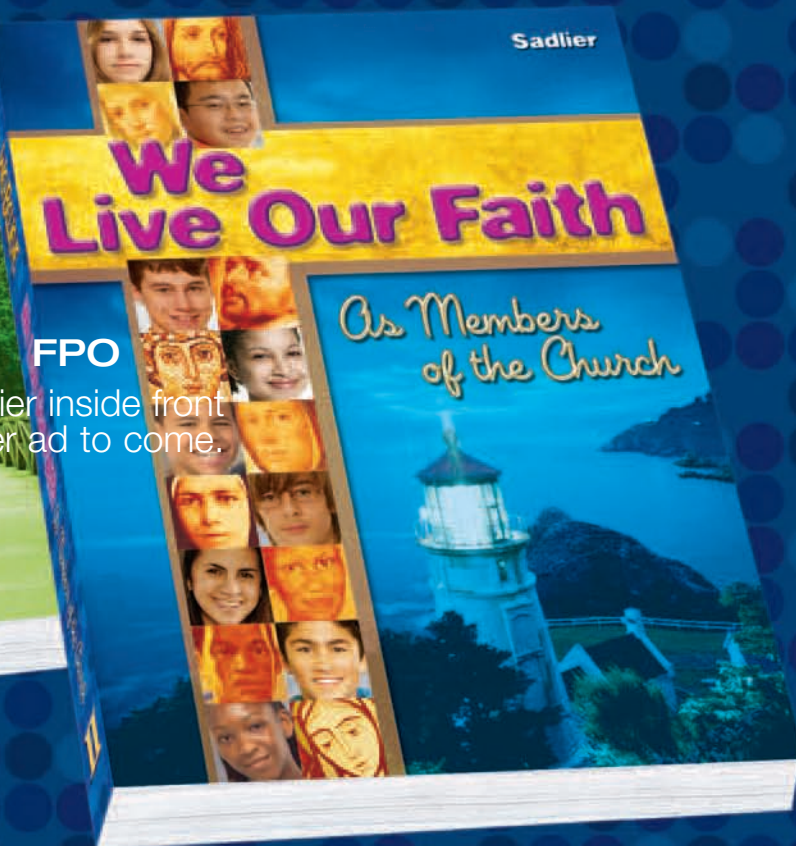
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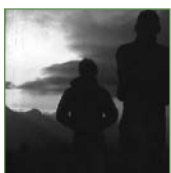
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REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL CHALLENGED TO EXAMINE ITS ROLE

Mary Ann Ronan



Our Representative Council just spent two days reflecting on NCCL's vision, identified key components of our structure and examined the unique role the Council has in attaining our mission "to go make disciplines".

The Council is unique in association governance. Our Council is vital in our governance model because the members articulate the values of NCCL and represent all of our membership constituencies: diocesan directors, diocesan staff, and parish catechetical leaders. The Council serves as consultant to the Board of Directors and elects the at-large members to the Board.

The critical work of the Council preserves our grass roots spirit and core value, ownership/membership. Through the constituencies at the Council we hear the values and issues from the province level. We know that there is a need to have all constituencies present so their voices may be heard. Province gatherings raise the bar high in the promotion of catechetical excellence.

*The critical work of the Council
preserves our grass roots spirit and
core value, ownership/membership.*

As a board, we have been encouraging you to join a committee. The committees feed the Council as well. Committees talk about the issues on many levels. Your voice is heard through the committee structure. Committees not only enable the work of NCCL to get done, but also surfaces leadership.

As president, I concluded the Representative Council speaking about what I saw and heard over the two days. These are a few of my observations about the members:

- Their passion and energy for the mission "to go make disciplines"
- Their integrity
- Their renewed awareness of their individual role and the responsibility they have to the Council, as well as their commitment to articulate this at the provincial level

MEMBERS COME TO REPRESENT THE BIGGER PICTURE.

The Council accepted the following tasks to be completed:

- Communicate with constituencies regarding the work of our October meeting.
- Continue reflection on accountability to constituencies as well as Council itself.
- Create strategies and proactive methods called for in the by-laws for reaching out to those not present at the Council: specifically diocesan and parish catechetical leaders.

The hard work accomplished by the Council does lead us to a better future. ■



MAKING A SERIOUS CASE FOR ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

Neil A. Parent



In the late 1970s, while I was working as a director of religious education for a parish in Northern Virginia, I received a call from a colleague of mine who was at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“Neil, there is going to be an opening in the position of adolescent catechesis in the Department of Education at the USCC,” he said enthusiastically, “and I think that you should apply for it.” I was surprised by his suggestion because both my current position and my recent graduate work were in adult education. While I had done adolescent catechesis in my earlier years as a DRE, I had left the field long ago, when the parish hired a youth minister who assumed the catechetical responsibilities.

Mulling over my friend’s suggestion, I replied, “Dan, I haven’t done adolescent catechesis in years. Quite frankly, I don’t know anything about contemporary adolescent catechesis.” Undeterred, he laughed and said, “What difference does that make? No one knows anything about adolescent catechesis!”

Now I knew that Dan’s swipe at adolescent catechesis was in part his trying to be funny. But I also knew that as a former DRE and the father of five children, he was, if nothing else, a realist. I understood that his views of adolescent catechesis were in part shaped by his belief that as catechetical leaders and youth ministers we were much better at theorizing on adolescent catechesis than we were at producing results.

When that conversation took place some thirty years ago, we were on the threshold of major developments in catechesis, including much of it aimed at adolescents. In 1979, the National Catechetical Directory, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, was published. Within months, *On Catechesis in Our Time* was released, followed by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1994. Then came the *General Directory of Catechesis* and *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, both in 1997. Now we have the *National Directory for Catechesis*. And this is only the official stuff. The amount of effort that has been poured into adolescent catechesis from all sectors of the church in the past three decades has been enormous.

And yet, despite this impressive record of resources, attention and effort, there remains a persistent uneasiness about how successful we

have been. Indeed, the data shows all-too-disappointing results — at least on the grand scale.

In an effort to address this concern, the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture hosted a consultation November 2 – 3 on the topic of “Catholic Teenagers: Faith at Risk?” The focus of the Center’s program was the data collected in the massive national study of teens and religion conducted by the University of North Carolina and published in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton (Oxford, 2005).

Smith, who is now at the University of Notre Dame, was one of the presenters in the opening public session and he participated in the following day’s consultation with some twenty-five church leaders. He repeatedly emphasized his surprise to find that Catholic youth scored considerably lower on measures of religious strength than teens in most other faith expressions. “The bottom line,” he said, “is that in terms of engaging, educating, and forming the faith of its teens, the church is doing badly.”

But Smith also had some advice and encouragement for the church based on his findings. “The most important factor in shaping the religious life of youth is parents. We as adults will get what we are.” He encouraged the adult community to be clear and specific with teens about what information is important for them to know about their faith. Where this has been done in other faith expressions, he noted, there is greater teen identity with the church.

He also stressed the importance of reaching out, engaging and building relationships with teens on behalf of the faith community. “When teens feel like they belong,” he said, “that is where they want to be.”

*We may not have all the answers,
but we know what it takes to make
kids feel wanted and needed.*

As someone noted at the consultation, teens are not the future of the church; they are the church now. We may not have all the answers to what constitutes effective adolescent catechesis, but we know what it takes to make kids feel wanted and needed. Let’s start with that, and maybe the answers will start to come. ■

Learning to Prune and Cultivate the Vineyard

by Maureen O'Reilly



As a born and bred Detroiters, I've always loved Motown music, and the captivating musical introduction to Marvin Gaye's rendition of "I Heard It through the Grapevine" has always been one of my favorites. That image of grapevines in vineyard serves as a wonderful framework for reflecting on the role of the diocesan or archdiocesan director, and indeed, of all catechetical leaders.

While for vineyards competition is a fact of life, collaboration is a vital factor for the life of diocesan offices. Thus the variety in office names and staffing patterns across the country. The size of one's diocese and its Catholic population create a tremendous variety. The various names for our offices and size of our staffs reflect these and other differences. Learning one another's history and rationale is a fruitful undertaking. No one size fits all, but we share much in common with one another — and with vineyards around the world, as the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* emphasizes.

WELL-WORKED SOIL

Good grapes can only be grown in the right kind of soil and climate. Looking at wine labels in the local store leads one to discover which parts of our country have that perfect combination of soil and climate. (In recent years it's been discovered that the western shore of the Lower Peninsula here in Michigan is just such a location!)

At this stage in the history of Catholicism in the United States, it seems safe to say that none of us in diocesan leadership are the first to prepare the soil of our own particular area. And even if preparation before us might not have been the most thorough, we have a wealth of new tools with which to work. Fortunately, I am blessed to follow a long line of wise, skilled people, passionate about catechetical ministry, who tilled and enriched the soil of our archdiocese over many years.

As is the case for many diocesan directors, it's not only the history of our own office, but that of the departments in which we're "planted" that can make a very positive contribution to the quality of fruit that we bear. For example, our Department of Education director, Sr. Frances Nadolny, OP, was so inspired by the opening scripture quotation in the *NDC* that she adapted it for use every Monday morning as her encouraging send-off after our time of prayer, formation and update: "Now, go and make disciples of all people!"

A second example of the rich soil here is one I didn't discover until the middle of last year. With absolutely no suggestion on my part our Catholic schools staff, under the direction of Sr. Mary Gehringer, OSM, the superintendent, studied one chapter of the *NDC* at each of their meetings throughout the year. Still another joy to me was the amazing diversity of participants at our day with Bishop Richard Malone last March, as he led us into a deeper understanding and appreciation of the *NDC*. Not only adult faith formation coordinators and parish catechetical leaders, but Catholic school principals, coordinators of youth ministry, college campus ministers, pastors and others came together for that day of formation. Indeed, our office is blessed to minister in good ground!

HOSPITABLE CLIMATE

When it comes to climate, the diocesan director has a distinct advantage. The most experienced and highly motivated vinedresser simply cannot grow grapes in a desert. Nor can the director control the rainfall in his or her diocese, but the climate needed for catechetical ministry is of a different kind. It is tempered by the message that one sends out — not only in written or spoken words but also in one's general attitude toward catechetical ministry and everyone involved in it.

Do catechetical leaders throughout the diocese know without doubt that they can rely on the diocesan office for leadership, guidance, resources, and for listening minds and hearts? In Detroit, we're indeed blessed with a staff large enough to reach out to everyone, and thus some would see me as the glue holding everyone together in this ministry to the archdiocese. While adult faith formation receives the full attention of one person, each of our other associate directors serves as liaison for about one fourth of our vicariates and each one serves the entire archdiocese in various other ministries, such as PCL certification, early childhood ministry, catechist certification, young adolescent ministries, special needs and others. Yes, questions and situations come to us that require our reaching out to other archdiocesan offices, since we do not have all the expertise to address every question of every parish and person in our six-county area. But through that collaboration and our fearlessness in saying, "I don't know, but I'll find out and get back with you," people generally see us modeling what church is to be.

Do catechetical leaders sense trust? Do they share the conviction that the diocesan office is operating not out of a superior mode but rather one of collaborative ministry — seeing them as people with great gifts to give *to* those in diocesan leadership? A recent conversation with one of our parish catechetical leaders introduced me to a person with remarkable insights in psychology, with enormous personal strength, and with true passion for her ministry — just one example of the many very gifted catechetical leaders in this archdiocese who truly inspire me.

Some time ago, a national speaker sponsored by one of the catechetical publishers addressed our parish catechetical leaders. During a break, she told one of our staff that she was pleasantly surprised to see so many of us from the “downtown office” at her session. The response she heard was simple: “Well, our PCLs are here, so we wanted to be here with them.”

Do catechetical leaders find in the diocesan office a model of teamwork, of collaboration both within the office and between the

office and other diocesan, vicariate/deanery and parish staffs? As I list these climate “requirements” I am once again deeply grateful for the climate in which I find myself. The staffs with whom I have been and am blessed to minister form a team that is the envy of many of our parish catechetical leaders. Readers who know any of us will recognize the diversity of personalities, skills, and interests we

The climate needed for catechetical ministry is tempered by the often unspoken message that one sends out.

represent. Yet we work together as ministers, each one knowing he or she has the support of the others. Do we always agree on every point? Of course not, but in the end we arrive at unified approaches to the work before us.

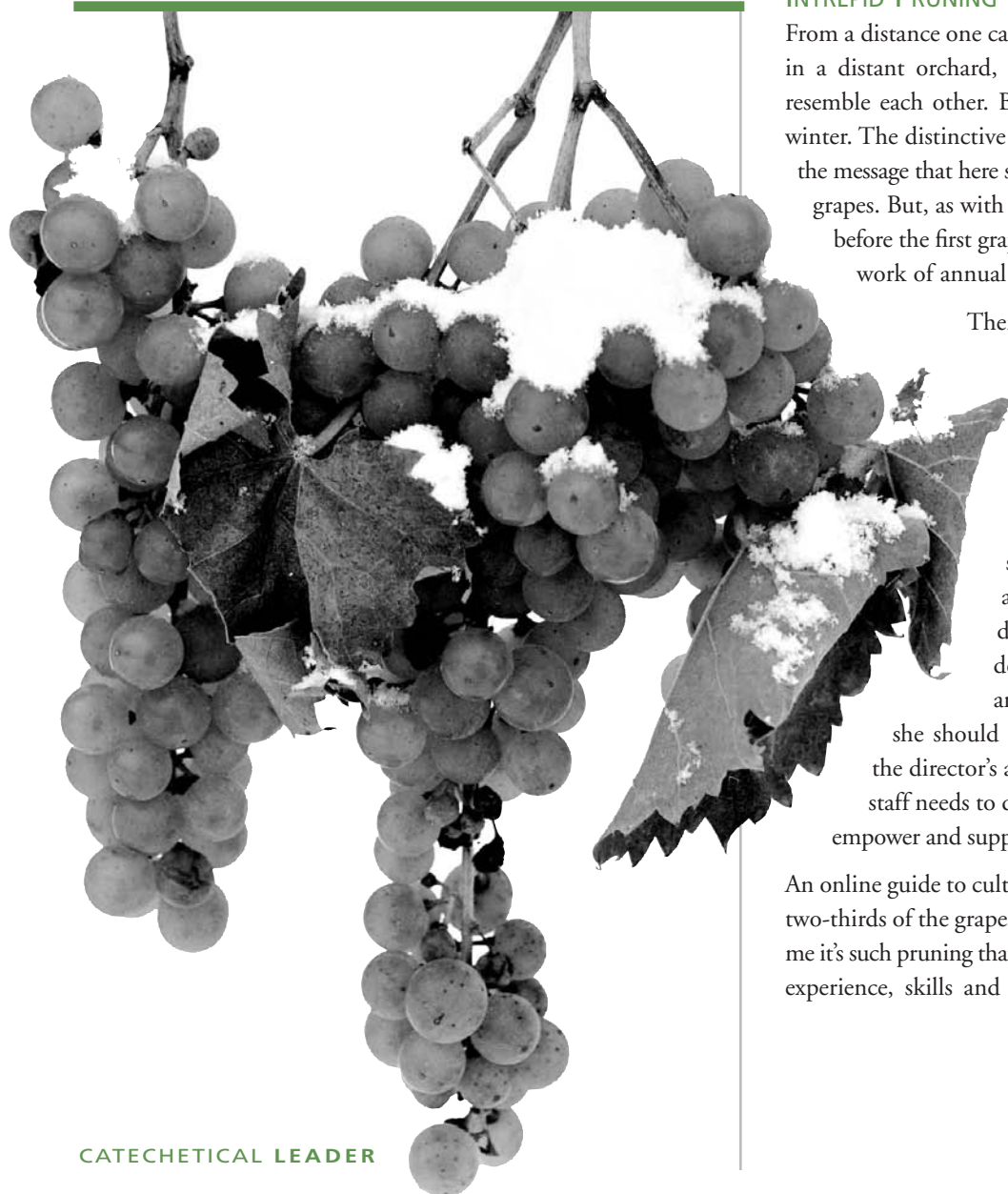
INTREPID PRUNING

From a distance one cannot usually tell which kind of fruit is grown in a distant orchard, since apple, cherry, peach, orange trees all resemble each other. But there’s no mistaking a vineyard, even in winter. The distinctive long rows of trellises covered with vines give the message that here serious work is going on to produce wonderful grapes. But, as with all fruits, it takes many years of patient labor before the first grapes appear — and after that comes the serious work of annual pruning.

There are remarkable parallels between a diocesan director’s ministry and growing grapes. I was struck by reading horticultural advice on not tying vines too firmly in the early years of growth, lest one stifle the branch’s natural expansion. Read: “*Beware the danger of micromanaging!*” A director who spends too much time checking out every aspect of a staff member’s work is doing two damaging things: dampening the spirits and decreasing the fruitfulness of that staff person, and decreasing the amount of time that he or she should be giving to that which rightfully demands the director’s attention. Instead, the director blessed with a staff needs to discern their gifts and talents with them, then empower and support each person in carrying out their ministry.

An online guide to cultivating grape vines recommends cutting back two-thirds of the grapes in each bunch after the vine’s first years. For me it’s such pruning that is most difficult. With each diocesan director’s experience, skills and personality likely determining her/his own

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Leadership in Wide Open Spaces

by Don Kurre



I flew into Grand Island, Nebraska, for my interview with Bishop Lawrence J. McNamara for the position of director of religious education. As I walked into the airport I noticed a person who appeared to be a priest standing in the waiting room smoking his pipe. Coming from a large Indiana diocese, I assumed someone had come from the chancery to pick me up.

Reaching out my hand I said, “I’m Don Kurre.”

“Bishop McNamara,” he said taking my hand. I knew at that moment that if he offered me the job I would take it. My first impression of the diocese proved to reflect accurately the nature of the Grand Island diocese, which is still more like a family than a corporation.

MORE COWS THAN CARS

The Diocese of Grand Island covers 42,000 square miles in western Nebraska, so distance is not a problem; it is a reality. The Religious

Education Office, along with the other outreach offices — REMEX (Religious Education Media Exchange), Hispanic Ministry, Tribunal Office, and Youth Ministry — are located in North

Platte, a scant 150 miles west of the seat in Grand Island, so

that they are more accessible to most of the diocese. From North Platte, which is off Interstate 80 at the east-west midpoint of

the diocese, the most distant parish is about a five-hour trip by car, not counting the time

change. Our diocese is split between the Central and Mountain Time zones. Accounting for time zones is something you get used to as a factor of diocesan ministry.

Once you leave I-80, you travel on two lane state highways. Drivers in passing cars usually greet each other with the classical one finger wave. I appreciate the human contact since when traveling to most of our northern parishes it is not unusual to see more cows than cars.

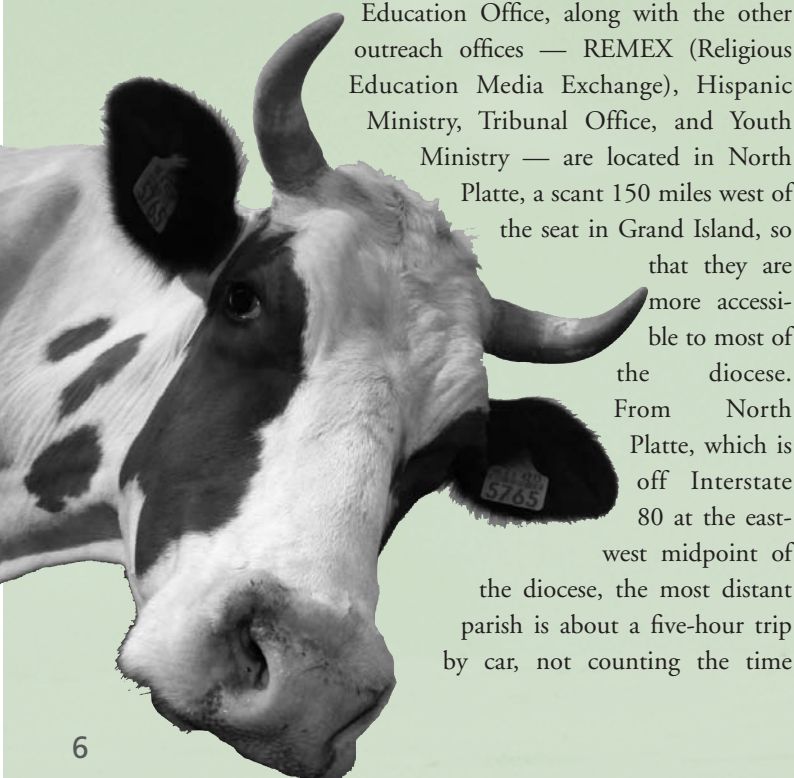
On my first trip to St. Pius X in Ainsworth I was driving through the Sandhills, 19,300 square miles of rolling, grass-covered hills in the center of the diocese sitting atop the Ogallala aquifer, one of the largest underground water sources in the United States. This location, with plenty of water and over seven hundred species of grasses, makes the Sandhills a prime grazing area for cattle.

As I came over a small hill I faced a herd of cattle being moved down the highway. I’m a city boy and in this strange world had no idea what to do. I slowed to a crawl as the cattle surrounded me as if I were a large boulder. The ranch hands waved me on as they focused on their cattle. “Welcome to ministry in Nebraska,” I said to myself

The Grand Island diocese is still more like a family than a corporation.

as I watch the herd continue its journey south.

We talk about the weather a lot in our ministry — not because we are making small talk but because the weather is vital to the livelihood of farmers and ranchers. Minute changes in rainfall often make a difference in the quality of the crop. Moisture at the wrong time, although always welcome in these days of drought, can delay a day’s work and wages. We know from experience what it means to pray for good weather. Agricultural images in Scripture make sense in our ministry even in an age of large farms. We know what it means when Scripture says a seed must die before it can produce a hundredfold. This metaphor is powerful in our rural ministry.



ADJUSTING TO SIZE AND DISTANCE

Newcomers like Sister Rita, who was beginning her ministry in one of our larger parishes, are sometimes taken aback. I remember her introduction: Twelve of our thirteen PCLs (parish catechetical leaders) had gathered in preparation for the Administry, our eight-session course designed to train beginning parish catechetical leaders. As is our custom we were talking and exchanging stories waiting for the course to begin. When Sister Rita entered the room I noticed the shocked look that crossed her face. "Hi" I said, "I'm Don Kurre. You must be Sister Rita. Welcome to the Administry class." Feeling more comfortable, she shared the source of her surprise as she walked into the room. "I planned to leave at lunch time and do some shopping before going home," she said. "In my former diocese no one would have noticed. You're going to notice if I don't come back."

"Yes," I said, "we will notice." Sister Rita stayed for the entire first session. Fostering a sense of community among the PCLs is an important part of our ministry.

One way we foster a sense of community is by using our DRE-web. We set up a Yahoo group to provide DREs and our office with a tool to share information and support across our diocese. DREs use the DRE-web to share ideas for Christmas pageants, penance services, media resources, and more. The DRE-web is easy to maintain and empowers DREs to access catechetical experience and information not available in their community. The DRE-web allows us to develop an invaluable archive of catechetical information at a low cost.

The DRE-web also enables the Religious Education Office to spread information quickly to parish catechetical leaders. We share information about our programs, resources we've received from publishers, and new media titles in the REMEX library. The DRE-web bridges the distance and brings us together.

Like most diocesan offices of religious education we offer the basic catechetical services. For example we maintain a library of sample catechetical textbooks and provide support for parishes choosing catechetical materials.

Since many of our parishes combine grades, choosing textbooks can be a challenging task. "My students are in sixth through eighth grade," a catechist will say. "What materials can I use for my class?" We've found NCCL's resource, *Choosing Catechetical Textbooks*, helpful. Using this publication, we work with parish DREs and catechists to find the texts or combination of materials that will work best in each parish. We've talked with several publishers about the possibility of producing a resource for parishes that needed to combine grades. This is a small market so we're on our own more often than not.

PROVIDING TRAINING

We provide training for parish catechetical leaders and parish catechists. Our present bishop, William Dendinger, saw a need to renew our efforts for providing doctrinal training for our catechists and religion teachers. As a result we are developing a new approach to our certification process, moving the certification process to a competency-based system at the basic level. We created a four-session course based on the Compendium to provide what we are calling core certification. Fifteen hundred people teaching the faith in religious education programs, schools and RCIA programs will participate in this course by 2008. To reach these catechists and teachers we are offering the course in a number of locations and with the aid of the Internet.

Our role is to offer support and encouragement to people who often find themselves isolated.

For the last twelve years we've sponsored the Nebraskaland Festival of Faith. The Festival, as it is commonly known, is a conference that brings nationally known speakers, publishers, and other exhibitors to the diocese as an opportunity for catechists and PLCs to see and talk about catechetical resources. The Festival atmosphere is as much a family reunion as it is a convention. We host the Festival one year in the eastern end of our diocese and the next year in the western end. The Festival began in North Platte but quickly outgrew the only hotel in North Platte—the only one in the Grand Island Diocese. The shift has made the Festival available to a wider audience.

Our role as a diocesan office is to provide opportunities for people to network, to offer support and encouragement to people who often find themselves isolated by distance and access to catechetical resources. The Festival provides this service.

We also host frequent gatherings for PCLs. "Yoke Mates" is one such gathering: PCLs

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The Art of Diocesan Catechetical Ministry: Gift, Grace, and Call

by Wendy Scherbart



It was a visionary undertaking and a collaborative effort: On November 10-11, 2006, the Diocese of San Jose co-sponsored a Faith Formation Conference with the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Dioceses of Monterey, Oakland and Stockton. As a planning team we saw the peaks and valleys — we experienced it all: the discouragement of the naysayer, the joy of unexpected support, and mounting expenses coupled with registration straggling in in drips and drabs.

Our Office of Pastoral Ministry had decided we would collaborate with the other dioceses to host the 2006 conference. The planning committee consisted of staff from each diocese. With new players at the table, we needed to broaden the vision of the conference to helping *all* ministers and leaders connect Christian faith with their daily lives in the culturally diverse church in Northern California. We moved the site of the conference from the city of San Francisco to the centrally located Santa Clara Convention Center in the heart of Silicon Valley. We adjusted tasks and responsibilities to involve the different gifts and talents represented on the planning committee. This did not come about easily. There were frustrations, irritations and miscommunications. The conference theme, *Rooted in Faith, Embracing Our Future*, inspired the committee to forge onward.

I was the first to arrive in the conference center parking lot as the sun rose over the mountains. The day was gorgeous and full of promise. It was show time! The people began to stream in, expectation on their faces. The planning team armed with walkie-talkies functioned like a well oiled machine. Every request was answered with a helpful response. I greeted speakers, exhibitors, colleagues and strangers who represented a diversity of ages and cultures, all there for a faith formation conference that we had built for them to experience. The buzz was in the air, and I could feel the anticipation.

The purpose of all the hard preparation work of the conference was made clear in the experience of the bilingual reflection following the morning prayer. The assembly, (all 1700 of them!) were invited to move out of their seats, place a hand on the person in front of them, until all of us were connected by touch and song in blessing of our

two speakers, Bishop Sylvester Ryan and Sister Maria Elena Martinez. After the blessing, these two speakers reflected mystagogically upon what we had just experienced in prayer together. They spoke rhythmically, with passion, becoming the voices of faithful disciples. In the same way that we had connected physically, they connected poetically with the soul of the assembly in an intimate movement of gift, grace, and call. It was at that moment that I realized these three words — *gift*, *grace*, and *call* — sum up my role as diocesan director of catechetical ministry.

I am the associate for catechetical ministry in the Diocese of San Jose, California. The Diocese of San Jose is coterminous with the boundaries of Santa Clara County (Silicon Valley) which includes fifteen cities or townships and some unincorporated areas under county jurisdiction. We are a midsized diocese with a community of 600,000 Catholics, encompassing fifty-two parishes and missions, twenty-nine elementary schools, two high schools, and three college and university campus ministries. As Northern California's most populous county, our valley is filled with the opportunity and challenges of economic, cultural and ethnic diversity.

*In my role as diocesan director I gift
others with servant leadership.*

As associate for catechetical ministry, I work in the Office of Pastoral Ministry under the direction of the episcopal director of pastoral ministry. There are five other associate positions: Hispanic catechetical ministry, youth and young adult ministry, Hispanic youth and young adult ministry, peace and justice, and liturgical ministry. We are structured to work collaboratively with each other.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* (No. 59c) lays out the specific functions of my office. My job description articulates my tasks within our diocesan structure for pastoral ministry. It helps define my role within the diocesan system. The roles, rules, hierarchy and communications patterns of the diocesan system are important to know in order to function effectively as diocesan catechetical director. My role



The most effective way I can form new parish catechetical directors and coordinators is through a mentoring program.

is not contained in a silo. My responsibilities interface with others and demand collaboration to be effective. This article will address some of these functions within the overall role in terms of gift, grace and call.

GIFT

In my role as diocesan director of catechetical ministry, I gift others with servant leadership. My leadership depends on vision. As a catechetical leader the vision has been provided for us in the general and national directories for catechesis. This vision puts forth catechesis as an aspect in the evangelization process, as relational, as putting us into intimate communion with Jesus Christ. Catechesis takes into account the cultural context in doing its ministry. It is life-long, with adult faith formation as the priority and is modeled on the catechumenate. Catechesis attends to the signs of the time. It connects the experience of the person with Scripture and tradition.

How do I implement the vision? One step at a time. I know I am not leading alone as God is with me every step of the way, along with those who have walked the path before me. We discover who we are as we make the journey together.

Step one: Assess the current situation. I stand on the strong foundation built by my predecessor, Jeannine Lechner, and honor what has gone before. The Catechetical Advisory Board made up of parish catechetical leadership assists me to assess and analyze the needs of catechetical ministry in order to build upon this foundation. Our current priority is to enable the implementation of the diocesan infant baptism policies based on the catechumenal model. The board is surveying parishes for current practices and brainstorming strategies to meet this goal. It is my hope that the National Profile of Catechetical Ministry will help us to assess other catechetical needs of the diocese. Our diocesan pastoral plan guides our Office of Pastoral Ministry to collaborate in addressing the faith formation goals of leadership, youth and justice.

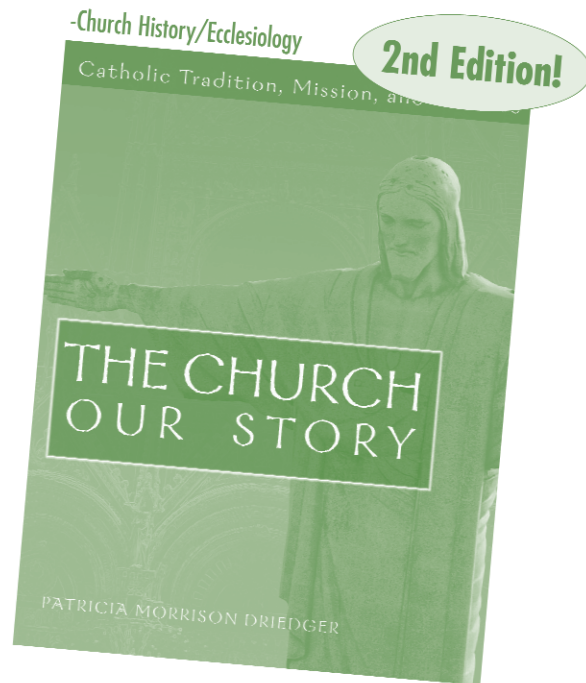
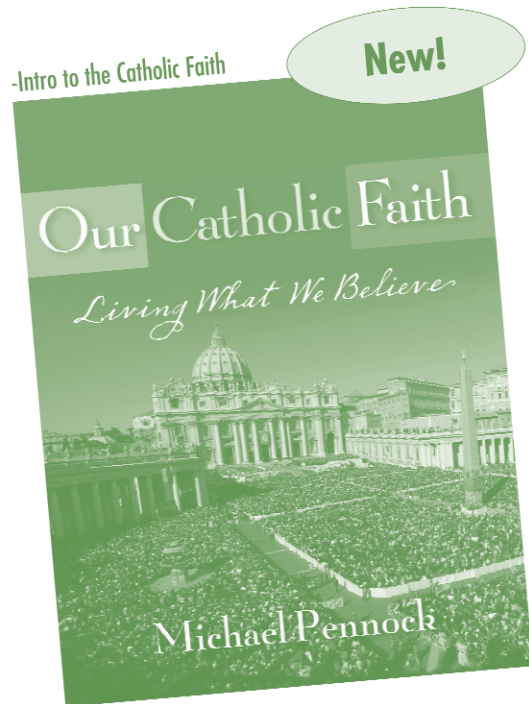
Step two: Mine the treasure. There are catechetical leaders throughout the nation that are implementing the vision of the *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* and the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)*. I network with these leaders, and I read their books. I attend meetings of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership. I hobnob with the wizards at diocesan directors meetings. These actions show me the latest trends in catechetical models that meet the needs of our diocese. My awareness of catechetical innovations such as whole/total community catechesis, “Generations of Faith” intergenerational catechesis, prophetic and transformative catechesis leads me to take the steps towards the future. Richard J. Reichert in his book, *Renewing Catechetical Ministry*, and Jane Regan in her book, *Toward an Adult Church*, hold the vision steady to guide our efforts.

Step three: Form, train, and provide resources. The *NDC* states that “the most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader.” I have discerned that the most effective way I can form, train and provide resources for new parish catechetical directors and coordinators is through a mentoring program. Mentoring is “a grace-filled partnership that supports, empowers, and nurtures an apprentice’s ability to imagine what formation ministry can be,” observed JoAnn B. Paradise in *Catechetical Update*. A mentoring program encompasses vision, goals, definitions of terms, content of the program, qualities of a mentor and mentee, roles of the mentor, resources, and orientation.

I invited seasoned directors and coordinators to be mentors and encouraged those newly hired to join the mentoring program. With my assistance, the mentees chose their mentors from an approved list. The mentoring process establishes a trusting, personal relationship, develops professional skills and knowledge, and provides resources and assistance in navigating rough spots. A self-assessment

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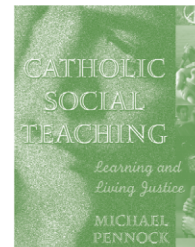
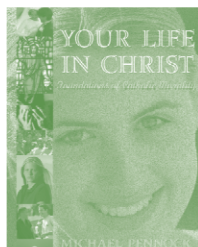
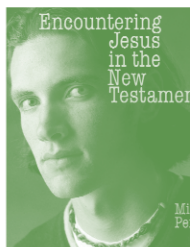
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The American Cultural Context for Adolescent Catechesis

by William D. Dinges

The problem today is not the decline in Catholic identity; it is the decline in Catholic communalism and the commitment to the church's institutional expressions.

Handing on the faith never occurs in a vacuum. Aside from individual, life-cycle and interpersonal family dynamics, a complex array of social, cultural, and historical factors, each with their own mechanisms and patterns, both foster and impede this process. In the reflection that follows, I discuss aspects of the cultural context in which catechesis occurs among young American Catholics.

THE AMERICAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

Young people today — and at an ever younger age — are exposed to numerous cultural forces with significant implications for faith development. These forces include a pervasive commercialism, the blandishments of mass marketing, and a pop culture milieu saturated with violence and hyper-sexuality. They also include increasing age and generational segregation along with transformations in how we define 'family.' There is also the communications revolution globalized through the Internet. This digital revolution dramatically facilitates networking and the ability to access and convey information. Through chat rooms, weblogs, mySpace.com, spam and games, it influences the computer savvy young and competes aggressively for their attention.

In addition to these influences, Catholicism in America continues to be transformed by a new church and world relationship stemming from Vatican II and by the demise of the ethnic Catholic subcultures that long carried Catholic identity. ("New wave" Hispanic and Asian Catholic immigrants as obvious exceptions to these trends). The waning of anti-Catholicism, long-term alterations in the Catholic class structure, and growing evangelical influences on Catholics are also elements of the wider cultural *gestalt* impacting the task of catechesis.

THE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS GESTALT

What about the religious temper of American culture? What relevant trends contextualize the transmission of faith? While many aspects of the contemporary religious *gestalt* are important, three

stand out: religious diversity, the commodification of religion, and the enduring influence of American individualism.

DIVERSITY

No society is as religiously diverse as the United States. Our religious diversity is kaleidoscopic. Every major world religion can be found in America today. Religious diversity means not only the presence of world religions but differences within them, an ever-curiously array of "sects and cults", and the spread of new and increasingly unconventional forms of individual spirituality.

Although it is now something of a minority view, some see religious diversity in more negative terms, especially where this diversity promotes an attitude of "religious pluralism" that is perceived as corrosive of religious certitudes. Accordingly, and especially in a political environment that separates church and state, they maintain that religious pluralism relativizes all religious beliefs, weakens claims to uniqueness, and promotes the privatization of religion and a deeper cultural relativism encapsulated in the "I-have-my-truth-you-have-your-truth" view of reality.¹

This perception of the relativizing impact of religious pluralism stems from a growing awareness of historical contingency and of the socially constructed nature of *all* human knowledge. It also derives from contradictions and logical falsifications posed by competing religious claims. And it is promoted by a postmodern cultural climate in which civility and the aversion to being perceived as "intolerant" or "judgmental" temper tendencies toward assertive or absolutistic claims on the part of many individuals.

Collaterally, and especially within the parameters of Christianity in America, religious diversity also gives expression to a denominational sensibility. This, too, has important consequences with regard to relativism, even where denominational loyalty has grown weaker, and where "liberal" or "conservative" value orientations are often stronger predictors of belief and behavior than denominational identity per se.

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Denominationalism is a form of religious association. Denominational membership is *strictly* voluntary and typically reflects “social sources” relating to race, class and ethnicity. Unlike sects, denominations are more culturally accommodating. And, while each denomination is more or less a faithful expression of the Christian tradition, *none* makes any absolute claim to objective fidelity to the will of Christ or to being *the* church founded by Christ. While a denomination may not regard all other denominations as orthodox, the concept presupposes equality not only before the law, but in terms of giving up claims to comprehensiveness and supremacy. Many Americans think of religious institutions in terms of this denominational sense.

Where religion becomes highly individualistic, it also tends to become more subjective, more privatized... another example of “bowling alone.”

A more positive and contemporary take on religious diversity bypasses the issues of relativism or denominationalism and asserts, instead, that diversity vitalizes religious traditions, especially in a free market religious economy. Religious monopolies, in contrast, are inherently weak. They are plagued by “free riders.” Too many individuals reap benefits with little or no contribution.

Religious diversity, especially where it fosters competitiveness among religious groups, responds to the logic of market niche needs. Competitiveness stimulates organizational vitality. Accordingly, groups do well that eliminate free-riders, that develop distinct identities, that make “stricter” membership demands, that achieve appropriate levels of tension with the surrounding culture, and that “sell” better (supernatural) products. In contrast to the lethargic situation in Europe, much of the vitality of religion in America has been attributed to our diverse and free market religious economy. ⁱⁱ

THE COMMODIFICATION OF RELIGION

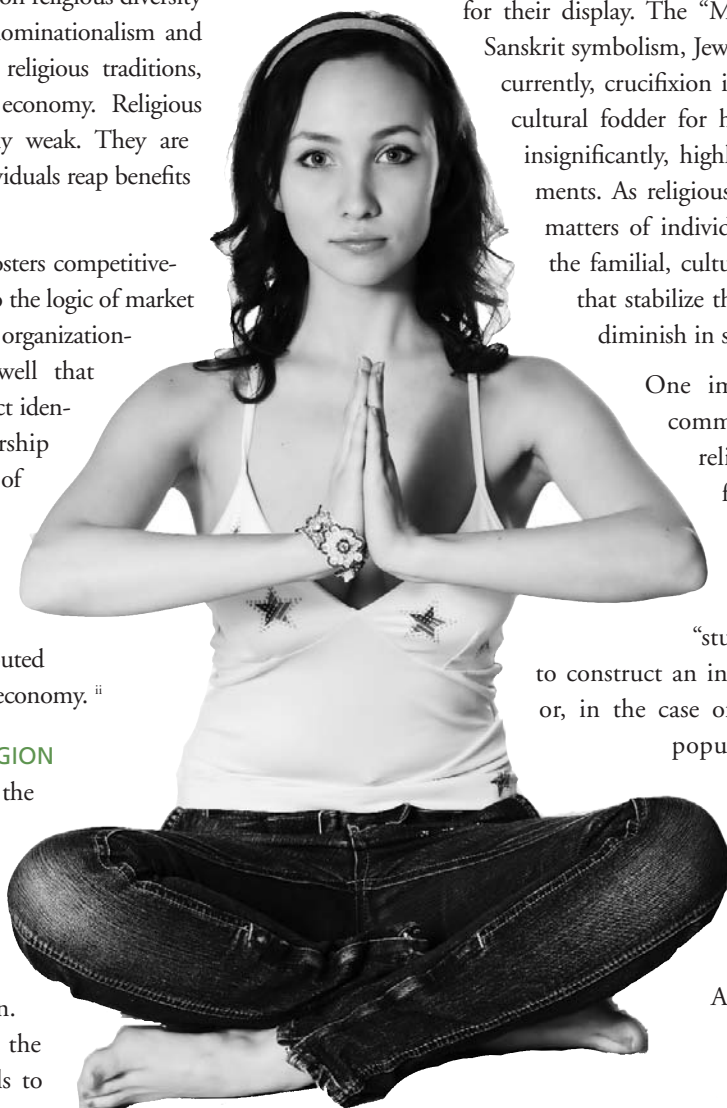
A second important cultural *gestalt* is the commodification of religion. By commodification I mean the tendency in a commercially-driven society for religious wares (especially symbols and rituals) to be transformed into “things” and objects of consumption. This is significant because it works to the detriment of these symbols and rituals to

signify a community with a common faith identity and to connect the individual using them with other community values and norms mediated by these symbols.

Religion is hardly exempt from the commercial pressures of post-industrial capitalism. Consider how difficult it is for religious traditions to control their symbols — in contrast to the ability of corporate America to do so. Religious symbols and practices are often fragmented, lifted from traditional contexts, and bastardized by commercial, therapeutic and entertainment interests. They sell other products (cars, real estate, computers) and are, themselves, reduced to aesthetic artifacts and “life style” commodities. They are easily transformed into objects of choice serving the needs of identity enhancement, especially for those deprived of traditional sources of identity. Rosaries, crucifixes and crosses become fashion accessories; sculptures of the Buddha become yard and garden art, and so forth.

In the Wild West realm of American popular culture, entertainers like Madonna have been extremely adept at manipulating religious symbols to commercial advantage — whatever else the alleged rationale for their display. The “Material Girl’s” employment of Sanskrit symbolism, Jewish Kabbalah (red strings) and, currently, crucifixion imagery, renders these symbols cultural fodder for highly individualized and, not insignificantly, highly narcissistic needs and statements. As religious symbols increasingly become matters of individual choice and manipulation, the familial, cultural and institutional networks that stabilize their particular meaning further diminish in strength. ⁱⁱⁱ

One important implication of the commodification of religion is that religious traditions increasingly function not so much as communities of faith, but as cultural tool-kits. They provide an array of religious “stuff” from which it is possible to construct an individualized religious identity or, in the case of something like the current popular appropriation of yoga meditation/exercise, a discipline largely oriented toward beauty and health-care needs. This tool-kit dynamic is facilitated both by the scope of religious diversity in America and the significant numbers of institutionally disconnected “spiritual seekers.”



RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALISM

A third cultural context for catechesis has to do with the influence of individualism. Individualism is a pre-eminent American cultural trait. It touches virtually every aspect of American life. It is closely related to the ethic of commodification I have just described. For many Americans, the ultimate criterion of identity and lifestyle validity is *individual* choice. As the sociologist Christian Smith has observed, it is by choosing a product, a mate, a lifestyle, an identity — and a religion — that one makes it one's very own: personal, special, and meaningful. Such a dynamic stands in contrast to what is “merely” inherited, assumed, or passed on as part of a collective identity.^{iv}

The individualism I am highlighting here is not, of course, something uniformly negative. Individualism is good where it exemplifies personal maturity and a sense of ownership and responsibility. In the Catholic case, individualism is important where it exemplifies laity rightfully acting as producers — and not merely consumers — of their tradition. Catholic identity (like all authentic religious identity) necessitates personal and responsible self-appropriation.

What I am pointing to here is an excessive individualism that accentuates personal autonomy, jeopardizes the common good, and eviscerates the experience of community and commitment. Where religion

*The meaning of ‘identity’ today
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individuals select a world of significance
from a variety of choices.*

becomes highly individualistic, it also tends to become more subjective, more privatized, and more loosely tied to institutional expressions. It becomes another example of Robert Putnam's “bowling alone” phenomenon — a metaphor for the trend toward disengagement in the civic sphere.

As I previously noted, religious identities and practices in contemporary American culture are increasingly viewed as individual projects. They express the preeminent norm of “choice.” Outside of more conservative and fundamentalist-like enclaves, or those in which ethnic bonds remain strong, they are less likely to be bound by any doctrinal or creedal categories. They are also less social and communal in strength — in spite of an apparent paradox.

On the one hand, religious institutions are obviously alive and well. Thriving congregations and parishes can be found in many places. The majority of Americans belong to some type of religious organization.

On the other hand, a spate of research over the last four decades shows that significant numbers of Americans believe that involvement in religious institutions is no longer necessary or, in some cases, even desirable. The number of Americans who self-identify

their religious affiliation as “none” has been gradually increasing (now 14 percent). There has also been a long-term membership decline in many mainline denominations. And, although “mega-churches” have become popular, they do not evoke strong institutional loyalties or have a strong theology of church. They appeal largely because they are consumer friendly and satisfy *individual* needs, not community ones.

Another indication of the cultural power of individualism is the uncoupling of spirituality from religion. For a significant numbers of Americans, there is little or no connection between being spiritual and being part of a historic tradition or a disciplined community. You know: “I'm spiritual, but not religious.” Studies also show that significant numbers of Americans believe that a person should arrive at his or her religious beliefs (and practices) independent of any external religious authority. In summary, as Alan Wolf observes in his book *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (2003), when people today speak of their relationship to a religious institution, it is often not primarily in terms of its rules and ecclesiastical structures per se, but in terms of their own spiritual quest and their *individual* needs in this regard.

THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS INDIVIDUALISM

The pervasiveness of religious individualism stems in part from the hegemonic influence of Protestantism in American culture. It is also a by-product of skepticism toward institutions of any kind growing out of the social and cultural turmoil of the 1960s. Heightened individualism also reflects complex cultural processes relating to identity construction in a postmodern context, especially among the more affluent social classes — where more and more American Catholics now reside.

Briefly, the meaning of ‘identity’ today emphasizes its self-constructed nature, especially in the context of the fragmentation and radical openness of social life, the pluralizing of contexts of action, global cultural synthesis, and the mixing of diverse authorities. In the postmodern context, many individuals select a world of significance from a variety of choices. They do so largely on the basis of individual consumer preference. They try to negotiate and sustain a coherent, yet continuously revived biographical narrative within options that are filtered through the media and various social systems. One consequence is that traditional patterns of authority are attenuated. This is because any given form of authority — including religious authority — is but one “authority” among others, part of the indefinite pluralism of choice and expertise in the postmodern context.^v

THE IMPACT OF THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

The degree to which the cultural dynamics I have summarized here — religious diversity, the commodification of religion, and religious individualism — actually impact American Catholic adolescence is an empirical question. Cultural dynamics are never uniform across generational cohorts. Nevertheless, American Catholics of all ages are hardly immune from these influences.

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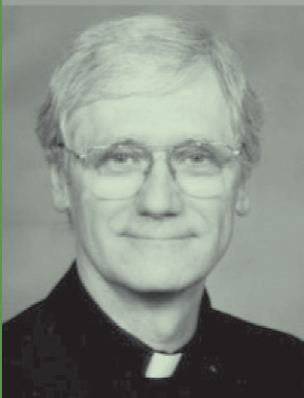
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A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

NEW WINE, OLD BOTTLES

SERVANT LEADERSHIP REQUIRES HUMILITY AND CORE COMPETENCY AROUND A NEW SKILL SET

by Stephen R. Covey



The adage about “you can’t put new wine in old bottles” still holds true, as evidenced by attempts to outfit senior executives with new leadership styles.

For thirty years I’ve worked with chief executives in many organizations, training them to be better coaches, servant leaders, and sources of help rather than be judges, policemen, motivators, and magicians.

Most training programs try to put new wine in old bottles. For instance, they take the marvelous “new wine” concept of servant leadership, which the Greenleaf Center has created and implemented so

successfully, and they mix it with the old command-and-control or benevolent authoritarian approach.

But such mixing only compounds the original problem because it gives the boss an aura of respectability as a coach or servant leader, when in fact he’s fundamentally unchanged in his basic style. He’s now a wolf in sheep’s wool.

That’s why most people resent performance appraisals. In fact, when I speak to an audience, I know how to get a fast reaction. I simply say, “The latest artifact of modern-day bloodletting in management is performance appraisal.” The audience will almost stand and cheer.

Stephen R. Covey is the author of *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and several other books on leadership, personal effectiveness, family and interpersonal relationships. *Update* features some of Covey’s guidelines for personal growth for effective leadership. Even though the articles were originally published several years ago, Dr. Covey recommends them for all catechetical leaders today. NCCL wishes to express our gratitude to the Covey Institute for making it possible for us to use these articles in this issue of *Update*.



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Servant leadership is not soft or touchy-feely. When you set up performance agreements and become a source of help, people have to be tough on themselves.

People have had it with performance appraisals where management uses a human relations approach and a coaching style, but there's no clear performance agreement. And so the person is still not the one ultimately responsible for results.

Servant leadership requires humility of character and core competency around a new skill set, not just directing, motivating and evaluating people using traditional performance appraisals.

THREE STEPS TO TRANSFORMATION

To become servant leaders, executives need to take three steps: building relationships of trust, setting up win-win performance agreements, and then being a source of help.

Build a new relationship: The new relationship is horizontal, not vertical, and is based on the principle of mutual respect and equality, not on power and position within the organization. You view the roles of worker, manager, and leader in a new light. The roles are equal, but different. Only when you have built relationships of trust do you have the foundation necessary to set up a meaningful performance agreement.

Create a new psychological contract or performance agreement:

The agreement represents a clear, up-front mutual understanding and commitment regarding expectations in five areas:

- **Purpose** — specify the quantity and quality of desired results;
- **Guidelines** — focus on principles, not on procedures, policies, or practices;
- **Resources** — identify available human, financial and physical resources;
- **Accountability** — schedule progress reports and specify performance criteria; and
- **Consequences** — state both positive and negative rewards that reflect the natural consequences of actions taken.

The new agreement gives the other person total freedom within the guidelines to accomplish objectives. The moment such an agreement is set, the leadership paradigm shifts from one of benevolent authoritarianism to one of servant leadership. You become a source of help to those individuals who have entered into this agreement with you. The accountability process is based on self-evaluation, using feedback from different stakeholders. In fact, I often refer to this agreement as “stewardship delegation,” since in such agreements each person becomes a “steward” over certain resources and responsibilities.

Historically, the servant leader tends to have a longer tenure.

Become a source of help: With the transfer of power and responsibility for results, the leader becomes the servant and a source of help. Once you establish performance agreements with a clear understanding of common purposes and a deep buy-in by all parties, then people can do whatever is necessary within the guidelines to achieve desired results. The leader then takes the position of a servant. He is no longer one who directs, controls, or judges. Instead, he becomes a coach and resource who can interpret the data or lend experience, but the individual or team makes most decisions including staffing, budgeting, and coordinating. If the person or team hits a brick wall or finds the resources and guidelines insufficient, you may have to revisit and renegotiate the performance agreement with them.

In the mutual accountability sessions conducted by the person or the team, the servant leader asks four questions:

- How's it going? or, What's happening?
- What are you learning from this situation?
- What are your goals now? Or, What do you want to accomplish?
- How can I help you?

These questions keep the person responsible and accountable for results. Without that new mindset and skill set, servant leadership won't work.

Servant leaders form relationships based on trust, shared vision, common purpose, and access to all the information.

FLYING HIGH

I once had an experience that for me was a simulation of servant leadership. I was working with the Oregon Air National Guard and was scheduled to go up in an F-15. But because Congress has put its foot down on such flights without special permission, it was canceled. (When I checked into it and saw the kind of strength you need in your back and neck muscles to deal with those G-forces, I was glad my flight had been canceled.)

Anyway, they put me in a flight simulator, and while I was in the simulator, I was attacked by different “bandits” that tried to shoot me down. An instructor taught me how to use the stick in my right hand and the guns in my left hand to fight the bandits. My teenage son, Joshua, could easily have killed these bandits, because he plays all these video games, but I was just total thumbs and they shot me down one right after another.

Then they sent across the screen a “dumb bandit.” It couldn’t shoot me down, but I had to shoot it down. Well, I sat there for 15 minutes, and I could not kill this bandit. Finally, the commander put his hands on my hands and showed me how to do it.

Next, they took me into a room where pilots go after they’ve had their “dog fights.” In this room, the pilots see visual recreations of the encounters as captured from the perspective of the other planes. So I sat there as they showed the pictures taken from different angles by planes involved in this simulation.

The commander sat next to me and showed me how my plane was seen from all the other angles on these simulated combat missions. So, in this way, I had access to all the data. The commander helped me interpret the data and understand what was happening and why. He explained why I should have done this or that. Of course, I was very open to his instruction because we share the same objective to save our lives, to win the battle, and to preserve the peace. So we quickly formed a relationship based on trust, shared vision, common purpose, and access to all the information.

From this experience, I gained important insights about servant leadership. At first, I had a limited vision and had trouble working the controls. I was being shot down all the time. Even

with the instructor’s hands over mine, I could hardly shoot down a dumb bandit.

But after seeing the big picture, the shared vision and mission, I had a much broader awareness of what was going on. With a servant leader by my side, I learned fast.

This experience represents the difference between “go-fer” delegation (“go for this, now do this, now do that”) and empowerment (“let’s spend the time to set up the agreement and to operate within the guidelines, but from the moment we set it up, you’re responsible for desired results, and I’m a source of help”).

In her book, *The New Science of Leadership*, Meg Wheatley teaches the same basic principle. She says what you need is a common vision and purpose and free information flow, because it’s going to be chaotic, and you’ve got to expect it. But use chaos to your advantage. Let people have whatever information comes in, and then become a source of help to them.

The servant leader often has to help expand vision and perspective, and then bring to bear his experience. But people want it. They’re asking for it because their lives are at stake. They know that their organizations are fighting for their economic life. And so the people working under





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the servant leader have more responsibility and accountability. They're at the controls and sense that they're in charge, that this isn't a game any more, that there's something at stake here.

EXAMPLES OF SERVANT LEADERS

In many organizations I've worked in or with, I've seen examples of servant leaders who have really made a difference. For example, when I was just twenty years old, I served as an assistant to the president of an organization. One time I asked him, "Why don't you ever give me any feedback? You never tell me if you like my speeches." And he said, "Do you want to be dependent upon me? You know within yourself what's happening. If you want some help, you just ask me. I'm here." From then on, I was free of the president. I didn't have to worry about his reaction. He never praised me or blamed me, but if I wanted help, he'd give it. So I would ask him, "What do you think of this?" He served me as a source of help.

You can manage things, but you must lead people, and that leadership takes time. Remember: with people, fast is slow, slow is fast.

Later in life, I served as a vice president under a benevolent dictator. The servant leader who replaced him was actually tougher. That experience taught me that servant leadership is not soft or touchy-feely. It's a much tougher style because when you set up performance agreements and become a source of help, people have to be tough on themselves. They just can't sit around and blame others.

I've come to greatly admire the leadership that Horst Schulze, president of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, provides to his management and staff. He's a very authentic person. His energy, commitment, and service to his people has created a culture of "ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen." While recently staying at the Ritz-Carlton at Amelia Island, I walked through the kitchen and was amazed to find that it was as clean as the lobby. The people there were in a class of their own. I'm convinced that it's the culture that has drawn out the best in them.

I've also been thrilled to see models of servant leadership in action at Saturn. I recently read that Skip LeFauve, president of Saturn, now heads up the small car group of General Motors. Both he and Mike Bennett, head of the UAW, have had enormous influence in creating a spirit and model of synergistic teamwork. The results speak for themselves.

At the Toro Company in Minneapolis, chairman Ken Melrose has certainly made a difference. Only an exceptional chief executive would subject himself voluntarily to internal scrutiny and external accountability, involving all the stakeholders. Melrose is one such executive. He even posts his personal goals outside his office for all to see, along with an accounting of his performance against those goals. Both his office and his mind are open, and people at all levels are invited to share their ideas. He freely shares information in good times and bad, thus creating a culture of trust.

By inviting people's involvement, he gains influence and commitment. He empowers others. His sense of stewardship, not ownership, of his resources makes him a model of servant leadership.

I recently attended a football game that demonstrated a magnificent contrast between the servant leadership and benevolent authoritarian styles of management. Both teams had great coaches. But as I watched the game, I could see one coach pacing up and down the sideline, making every decision on both offense and defense. In stark contrast, the other coach only got involved in the pivotal decisions, because he had set up a system of empowerment with his assistant coaches.

Historically, the servant leader tends to have a longer tenure. In many organizations, leaders, like coaches, come and go. They have two or three years to turn things around, or they're out. Servant leaders, like the second coach I described, often have 200-win careers that span several decades. But often their contributions are rather subtle and long-term. The critics of servant leaders are people who want more dramatic near-term results; however, you don't get real and sustained success this way. You can manage things, but you must lead people, and that leadership takes time. Remember: with people, fast is slow, slow is fast. ■

"New Wine, Old Bottles" © Stephen R. Covey, December 1994. Reprinted with permission.

PAY THE FULL PRICE

by Stephen R. Covey

You can't talk yourself out of problems you behave yourself into — particularly if you're constantly apologizing, but your behavior pattern and style remain unchanged.



The principle of “paying the uttermost farthing” is that you apologize when you make a mistake or fail to meet expectations and then behave better.

An executive once told me: “My biggest worry and concern is my poor relationship with my most creative people at work and with my

teenage son at home. In the past, I have lost my temper and yelled at them. How can I improve these relationships and change the image they have of me?”

There is no greater heartbreak for leaders than to feel they are losing or have lost influence with people they most want and need to lead. Fortunately, no situation is hopeless. There are several powerful ways to heal a broken relationship, to restore the emotional bank account, and to have positive influence again.

Consider carefully what was taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”

THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

People often get offended — or they offend others — and then neither party has the humility to take full responsibility for their part. Instead, they rationalize and justify themselves. A collusion then occurs as they look for evidence to support the perception of the other person, and that only aggravates the original problem. Ultimately, they put each other in a mental-emotional prison.

You can't come out of prison until you pay the uttermost farthing. The “uttermost farthing” means exactly that — the uttermost, not the first, second, or third. It means a humble and complete acknowledgment of your responsibility for the problem, even though the other was partly responsible as well. If you take full responsibility for your part in it and acknowledge it and apologize out of deep sincerity and concession of spirit the other person will sense the utter sincerity of what you say.

Of course, your behavior must then comport with that expression so that others can see your integrity. Paying the uttermost farthing requires behavior consistent with the apology over a period of time, because your emotional bank account with that person may be so overdrawn that no apology will redeem it. You have to do much more. You have to show your sincerity. You can't talk yourself out of

If you pay only the first farthing, expecting other people to also acknowledge their part and their responsibility, that is insufficient.

problems you behave yourself into — particularly if you're constantly apologizing, but your behavior pattern and style remain unchanged.

If you pay only the first farthing, expecting other people to also acknowledge their part and their responsibility, that is insufficient. The other person may pay a farthing with the attitude, "Well, I'm sorry, but it's not all one way. You've been a party to this thing as well." But he won't pay a second farthing until you pay the uttermost farthing.

To pay the uttermost farthing, you might say, "I was wrong. I embarrassed you in front of your friends." Or, "I cut you off in that meeting, when you had made this tremendous preparation. And I'm not only going to apologize to you, but also to the other people who were in that meeting because they could see the way I dealt with you, and it offended them as well."

You make no effort to justify, explain, defend, or blame in any way, only an effort to pay the uttermost farthing in order to get out of prison.

What happens when you pay the full price? Assume, to begin with, that relationships are strained and that you are at least partly responsible. If you merely try to be better and not to confess and apologize, the other person will still be suspicious. He has been hurt and wounded; therefore, his guard is up. He will question your new behavior, your "kind face," and wonder what might happen next. Your improved behavior and manner won't assuage his distrust. Nothing you can do will change it, because you are behind bars and walls in a prison of his own making in his mind. The bars and walls are the mental and emotional labels that he has put on you. Only by making a complete, and specific acknowledgment of your own failings or mistakes do you break down these bars.

THE PRINCIPLE IN PRACTICE

I constantly rediscover the efficacy of this age-old principle in my work with people who are low in desire and responsibility and who tend to blame others for their poor performance.

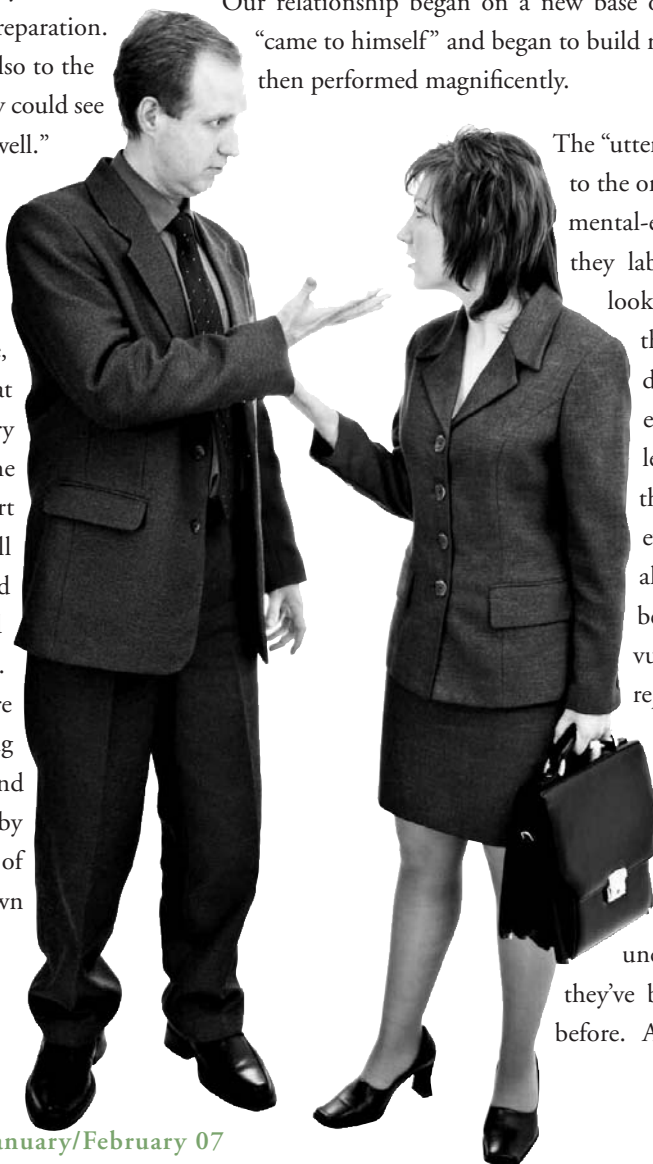
Once I worked with a young man who was barely getting along in the organization I was leading. I labeled him as an underachiever, and for months, every time I saw his face or heard his name, I would think of him in this way.

I became aware of how I had labeled him and how this label had become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I realized that people tend to become like you treat them or believe them to be. I decided that I needed to "pay the uttermost farthing." I went to this young man, confessed what I believed had happened and how I had played a role, and asked for his forgiveness.

Our relationship began on a new base of honesty. Gradually he "came to himself" and began to build more internal controls; he then performed magnificently.

The "uttermost" price must be paid to the ones who keep you in their mental-emotional prison, where they label you and where they look for evidence to support their label. Labeling defends and protects their egos, thus making them less vulnerable. That's why they're not willing to pay even one farthing, let alone the uttermost one — because it makes them too vulnerable, too exposed to rejection, exploitation, or manipulation.

The theme of many novels is unrequited love, where people simply refuse to love unconditionally because they've been wounded and hurt before. And so they recoil and



defend themselves by going inside and being cynical, suspicious, or sarcastic. They're not open because they don't want to be vulnerable.

I once told my daughter after she had been hurt in a relationship, "Be sure you maintain your vulnerability." She said, "Why? It hurts too much." And I said, "Well, you don't need to get your security from that relationship. If you get your security from your integrity toward timeless principles, you can still maintain your vulnerability. That's what makes you beautiful and lovely — your willingness to be open and authentic. If you reject other people and new opportunities on the basis of having been rejected, you will build a shell around yourself that will keep you from being loved. One of the lovely things about you is your willingness to trust and to risk being hurt."

CLEARING THE LEGAL HURDLE

Many people face a legal barrier to paying the uttermost farthing. For example, some lawyers might caution their clients against making any form of apologies, but to maintain "100 percent" innocence, because apologizing to anyone might imply guilt.

Many executives have their own thinking straight-jacketed by legalities and by an attorney's mind-set. While protection is prudent in some cases, thinking like a lawyer contributes to future problems. It's like drafting a premarital contract: "In the event we have a divorce, this is how we'll settle the estate." Such contracts may actually contribute to a break-up. They may be realistic, but they're not idealistic. And if we abandon our ideals, we abandon the essence of our humanity — our ability to rise above tendencies of protectiveness and defensiveness.

As we develop a legal mind-set, we imagine worst-case scenarios, assume the worst of other people, and seek evidence to justify our position. Such thinking becomes a causal, contributing force of adversarial behavior. We need to work with attorneys who have the ability to transcend the legal mindset, who know when and how to properly apply their skills but who have a more positive attitude toward life and people.

Many problems can be resolved by executives and their business partners, if only someone will admit up front, "I was wrong." For

example, I once met with a chief executive who said that the union had walked out of an important meeting with him earlier that day. I asked, "Why?" He admitted that the company had mistreated some union member but that it was a "very minor issue." I said, "Well, to that union, your minutiae is their mission. And you've got to apologize. If you're wrong, you've got to acknowledge it — right now, today. Don't go another hour. Call them up at once while you are still on speaking terms." The chief executive did as I suggested, and his sincere apology was well received by the union leaders; in fact, it caused them to come back to the meeting.

I'm convinced that this principle will work wonders to resolve differences, heal relationships, settle strikes, and foster international business deals. When a relationship is formed between people on a very personal level, the spirit of paying the uttermost farthing is stirred up. People say, "I was wrong on that. I apologize, and I want to make it up to you."

Many executives have their own thinking straight-jacketed by legalities and by an attorney's mind-set.

Paying the uttermost farthing also means making the effort to get to know the other person better. In some languages, "enemy" and "stranger" are the same word. When we get to know our "enemies" on a very personal level, they will cease being strangers — and enemies. Little by little, we create a culture of civility and charity where members know that each person has weaknesses, but they have the humility, authenticity, and honesty to confess them and to try to compensate for them.

In most situations, paying the uttermost farthing works not only to obtain a release from "prison" with its new opportunity to communicate and to influence, but also to inspire, not force, others to make some hard admissions and resolves also. Pride often keeps us from paying the full price.

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As in the past you can order additional copies of *Catechetical Update*. Many of our membership find it a valuable resource for use in their ministry. To order call the NCCL office (202) 884-9753 or email Sr. Kathy Kandefer, BVM, at kkandefer@nccl.org. *Catechetical Update* reprint costs: 1–49 copies \$1.29 each, 50 or more \$0.79 each (plus shipping).

THE PRICE OF RELEASE

When applying the “uttermost farthing” principle to any seriously broken or strained relationship, I emphasize six points:

- We must honestly admit to ourselves that we are at least partly to blame for the problem. Upon reflection, we can see how we embarrassed, insulted, or belittled another, or how we failed to understand, or how we were inconsistent in discipline or conditional in love.
- Often what happens when leaders fail to pay the uttermost farthing is that they lose their moral authority. Moral authority makes up much of the power we have where there are many knowledge-workers. In an information world, you can't throw your weight around. Your moral authority is the most powerful thing you've got.
- When one is deeply hurt or embarrassed, he draws back and closes up. To avoid being disappointed, he expects nothing. He simply refuses to believe us, to open up, to “release” us from the mental prison he has us in. To avoid future hurt, he judges us as unkind, unfair, or not understanding, and puts us behind prison bars.
- Improving our behavior alone won't release us from this prison, simply because he can't afford to trust us again. It's too risky. He's suspicious of this new behavior, this new face, this “insincere” entreaty. “I trusted him before, and look what happened.” Although inside he is crying out for direction and emotional support, he will still keep us in his mental prison for an indeterminate sentence.
- Often the only way out is to go to him and admit our mistakes, apologize, and ask forgiveness. In this reconciliation we must be specific in describing what we did that was wrong. We make no excuses, apologies, explanations, or defenses. We simply acknowledge that we know we did wrong, we understand what put us in prison, and we want to pay the price of release. If we only make a stab at this process but inwardly hold back by saying, “He should be sorry also. I can only go so far but no further until he acknowledges his part,” then our peacemaking is superficial, insincere, and manipulative. Under the surface, the suspicion and turbulence still rage, as the next stress on the relationship will reveal.
- This approach must be utterly sincere and not used as a manipulative technique to bring the other around. If this approach is used only because it works, it will boomerang. Unless sincere change takes place deep within us sooner or later we'll trespass again on tender feelings, and the new mental prison will have thicker walls than ever. Others simply will not believe us when we say again how sorry we are. Repeated token repentance wins no confidence or forgiveness.

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MORE GIFTS FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

Cultures Apart? The Catholic Church and Contemporary Irish Youth by Oliver V. Brennan. Dublin, Ireland: Veritas Publications, 2001 (\$12.68).

New Directions in Religious Education by Finola Cunnane. Dublin, Ireland: Veritas Publications, 2004 (\$18.69).

Reviewed by Daniel S. Mulhall

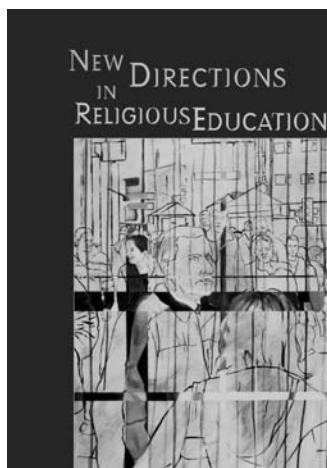
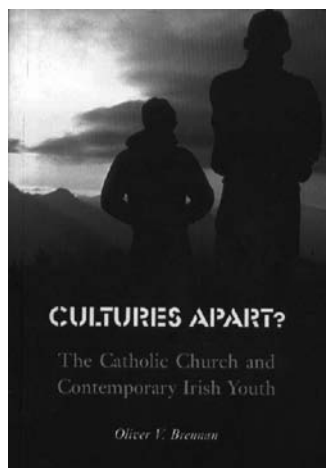
Ireland has gifted the Catholic Church in the United States with many remarkable men and women of faith. Although the numbers of priest and vowed religious coming to the United States from Ireland in recent years have diminished, Ireland continues to produce remarkable men and women who continue to offer us new and intriguing insight into faith and how it is handed on. Two who have recently shared their gifts with us in writing are Dr. Oliver V. Brennan and Dr. Finola Cunnane. Their two books offer us valuable insights into our work in catechesis.

Let me begin by saying that I know Brennan and Cunnane personally. We met several years ago at the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress (LAREC). At that time they were doctoral students at Fordham University in New York and were attending LAREC to gain a better insight into catechesis in the United States. Over the years we've met again at LAREC several times and have had a number of conversations on catechesis and the changing culture in Ireland. It was through these conversations that I became aware of these books.

The two books are different in subject matter, language, and style, but both books suffer from the same malady: they were both developed from the research and dissertations the authors wrote for their Fordham doctorates, and they read that way, Cunnane's more so than Brennan's. While the research conducted for such a degree guarantees accuracy and depth, dissertations are written in a tone and style that only a review committee can love; the approach comes across as labored and not reader friendly. However, both books are worth the effort.

GROUNDING YOUNG ADULTS

Brennan formerly served as the director of pastoral studies at the Pontifical University in Maynooth and is currently the parish priest of Haggardstown and Blackrock, Dundalk, County Louth. In this book he looks at the relationship of faith and culture and illustrates this relationship through conversations with contemporary Irish young adults. Through the use of five personal case studies, Brennan shows how the church's traditional catechetical practice in Ireland is being undermined by the rapid cultural change in the new Tiger of Europe. The Irish young adults Brennan interviews tell tales terribly familiar to American ears: while taught their catechetical lessons as children, the young adults quickly fell away from the belief and practice of the Catholic faith once they moved to the city for work and college.



According to Brennan, the current approach to catechesis in Ireland fails to ground the young in a Catholic way of life in such a way that they can sustain that faith when it comes in contact with the lures of modern society.

Brennan writes "Just as culture implies a common understanding and way of life as well as a common set of values, so also religion expresses a particular group's way of life, gives its members meaning, and provides them with understanding. Religious institutions that are perceived as having a sustaining and supportive role for people in a particular culture will be participated in and supported. However, when there is disruption in culture, religious institutions can face a crisis. Ireland would appear to be a good example of this phenomenon."



This passage summarizes Brennan's key argument, although he doesn't make it as strongly as I'm about to do now: in order to catechize people effectively in today's culture, we must make sure that we (1) ground them in our "group's way of life" (give them a grounded Catholic identity), (2) help them find meaning in life through the faith (learning must be integrated into living), and (3) equips them to live this faith in the larger society.

This is an excellent book and needs to be read by anyone interested in catechizing effectively today. Though written about Irish young people, I believe it serves as a mirror for us to see ourselves.

LIFELONG AND COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Cunnane is the director of religious education in the Diocese of Ferns. A devotee of New York University professor Gabriel Moran, Cunnane's work borrows much of her approach from him. Here she provides a detailed and concentrated argument for religious education, with serious attention to the use and meaning of language.


Cunnane attempts to develop an adequate theory of religious education based upon three of Moran's major themes "1) the meaning and forms of education; 2) the meaning and forms of teaching, and 3)

moral education and educating morally." She argues that a lifelong, comprehensive approach to catechesis is needed, one that engages family, schooling, work and leisure aimed at embodying "the educational values of community, knowledge, work and wisdom." She distinguishes between teaching religion and teaching others to be religious. While stressing that both are necessary, she also notes that confusing the two efforts leads to serious problems.

This book is for those who wish or claim to be professional catechists, not for the casual reader or the beginning catechist. It would make a quality text for courses in catechetical theory at the college, graduate, and master catechist levels. The book contains a solid bibliography, although with some notable absences: the writing of Pierre Babin and Mike Warren are somehow ignored.

Both books can be ordered online from Veritas Publishing at www.veritas.ie. They are well worth the price and the effort.

Daniel S. Mulhall currently serves as the Assistant Secretary for Catechesis and Inculturation at the USCCB, Department of Education. He may be reached at dmulhall@usccb.org. ■



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Catholic Leadership Training Continues with Prison Vigil

by John Valenti



After a conference for diocesan leadership at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland, I had an opportunity to participate in some grass roots activities that highlighted our Catholic Church teaching on peace and social justice. Guided by Lasallian Christian Brother Henry Werner, my Catholic leadership training continued as a supplement to the scheduled agenda and included attendance at a protest against the death penalty and a visit to the Jonah House, a community for peace and nonviolent resistance.

The evening was cold. Despite the snow and bad weather, approximately fifty people assembled outside the federal prison in downtown Baltimore to request that the life of convicted murderer, Wesley Baker, be spared. The Catholic Church teaches that killing is wrong and therefore we are against the death penalty. Those who braved the weather and public opinion carried signs which read, "Do Not Kill in My Name," and "Thou Shalt Not Kill." I was conscious of the fact that Jesus himself was executed as a criminal and the instrument of his death, the cross, is our universal symbol of the love he taught and gave us. While we marched on that night of December 5, 2005, Baker was executed by lethal injection at 9:18 PM. He was the 1,001st person to be executed in the United States since the death penalty was reinstated.

The following day we met with Liz McAlister, widow of the late Phillip Berrigan, and their son, Jeremy, at the Jonah House. Jonah House has become symbolic of nonviolent opposition to war and has over the years become synonymous with peace and justice initiatives. Sitting at the kitchen table and looking out the window while Liz got a cup of coffee, I marveled at the array of llamas and spring hens roaming the Catholic cemetery outside. The animals were recently incorporated onto the property to help keep the grass cutting to a minimum. Actually, I thought their presence was an appropriate metaphor for the diverse group of people who feed their souls here at Jonah House.

As a director of evangelization and faith formation, I was interested in discussing what topics she thought should be included in our religious education curriculum and life-long adult faith formation programs. Liz was passionate about the "immorality of war" and God's commandment against murder. "Our Catholic Church must

have a more unified vision for peace and justice," she said. "Killing is always and absolutely wrong... Everyone is a child of God."

Reflecting a belief that Catholics need to vocalize and live out our church teachings on all pro-life issues, Liz said, "We live in the margins of mainstream public opinion and we stay there being the kind of community that we want our church to be." She added, "We resist the crimes of the worst kind...war, terrorism ...but also the *planning for war*." For example, a record crowd of over 19,000 people recently conducted the sixteenth annual demonstration against the former School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. Renamed "The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation" in 2001, the facility trains Latin American soldiers in tactical warfare. Opponents blame the school for human rights abuses in Latin America.

When I asked, "What about the need for national defense?" Liz said, "Preparing to kill is wrong... Killing is always and absolutely wrong." As a leader of non-violent civil disobedience, her late husband Phil Berrigan spent many years in jail for literally "beating swords into plowshares," a reference to Hebrew Scriptures in which God commanded his children to "study war no longer."

He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

—Micah 4:3

When I asked how others could get involved to inform their consciences, Liz and her son, Jeremy suggested the following resources: Saint Peter Claver Catholic Worker Community in South Bend, Indiana; Catholic Peace Fellowship; and the video, "Just Faith." Another resource is the USCCB-sponsored Campaign for Human Development.

We concluded our visit by making a pilgrimage to the room at Jonah House where Phil Berrigan died and to his gravesite just outside the house. The stone simply quoted the words of Jesus, "Love one another."

John Valenti is the associate director of evangelization and faith formation for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. E-mail: jvalenti@archindy.org. ■

CATECHIST FORMATION: A WORD TO DIOCESAN DIRECTORS


by Jo Rotunno


Most diocesan catechetical leaders believe that catechist formation and leadership development are the most important responsibilities of their offices. They know that catechists and parish catechetical leaders who are well-prepared for their ministries will be more successful in leading children and adults to deeper conversion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When parish-level catechists are not well-formed for ministry, the best diocesan guidelines or curriculum materials will not be enough.

Echoes of Faith Plus is concerned with this basic formation of parish catechists. Since this month's issue of *Catechetical Leader* addresses the role of the diocesan director, it seems an appropriate time to explore useful ways for diocesan directors to support this project of your national association. Whether your diocese uses *Echoes* as an integral part of its diocesan formation program or lets the modules be used at the discretion of your parish catechetical leaders, your approach to the project will affect its success.


Echoes was created originally to set a minimum standard for catechists in U.S. parishes. The leadership team for *Echoes* worked from the assumption that it is reasonable to expect all catechists who work with children and youth to achieve a minimal level of knowledge, skills, and spiritual formation. *Echoes* sets a common baseline for that formation and training. You, your parish catechetical leaders, and the parents of the young people all have a right to expect that all catechists meet that standard, and the flexibility of the *Echoes* modules makes it possible for them to do so. The diocesan director's enthusiastic advocacy for this formation is a key factor in its achievement.

Diocesan-level Formation. A number of dioceses across the country have adopted *Echoes of Faith* as their program for certification. Rural dioceses in particular find that where trained presenters or facilitators are not readily available to parishes, the video/reflection booklet format of *Echoes* makes quality training accessible to a greater number of catechists in either group or self-directed formats. Some diocesan





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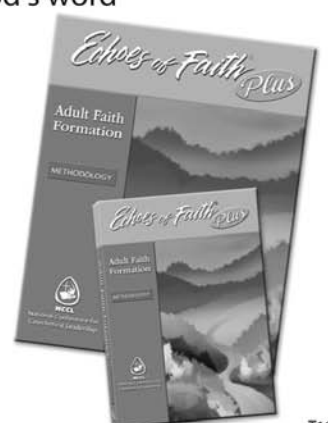
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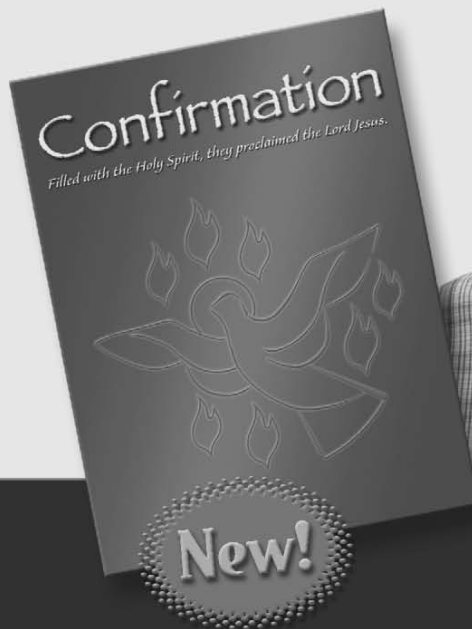
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ECHOES OF FAITH *continued from page 18*

directors are incorporating one or more of the *Echoes* modules as a formation track at their diocesan conferences. Most dioceses find that the scope and sequence of *Echoes of Faith* meets most if not all of their diocesan requirements. Where they find occasional gaps they supplement the *Echoes* modules with the additional topics they require. Be sure to check the *Echoes* Web site at echoesoffaith.com if you do not have a copy of this scope and sequence.

Parish-level Formation. Many parishes use *Echoes* modules for their beginning or untrained catechists as an entry-level formation process prior to their entry into the diocesan certification program. Such an approach gets all the catechists onto the same page regarding knowledge and skills and allows a true community of faith to develop among them. The formational approach of *Echoes* also whets their appetite for deeper formation.

An Equivalency Approach. Some dioceses that have well-developed catechist certification programs have opted to offer equivalency credit to catechists who complete specific modules in

Echoes of Faith. This can offer an important option to catechists who have been unable to attend all or part of a diocesan formation program due to illness or work commitments, or who have moved into the diocese after the program is underway.

However you use *Echoes of Faith*, it is your unwavering support and commitment to basic catechist formation and your collaboration with parish catechetical leaders in this vital work that can make the difference between high catechist turnover and catechists who are truly competent, capable, and committed to the great work of handing on faith.

Jo Rotunno is director of creative development at RCL — Resources for Christian Living, which produced the Echoes of Faith project for NCCL. She has worked in catechist formation for the past twenty-five years. Her column on catechist formation using Echoes of Faith appears in each issue of Catechetical Leader.



particular challenges, don't all those grapes look equally nourishing, equally important? Yes, "pruning" is easy when phone calls, mail, personal visits and conversations with others yield material that is obviously that of another office or person on our staff. Then one simply delegates.

But far more often, almost everything that comes my way is related in some way to my role, and thus the dilemma. A parish catechetical leader is often in the very same quandary and herein lies another parallel with grape growing. Consider this question and the expert's response:

"I have a 4-year old grapevine growing up... and have plenty on growth... but no fruits. What am I doing wrong?"

"Prune harshly this winter."

Do I want to produce a vine with a hundred small, sour grapes incapable of producing good wine or — keeping in mind the purpose of this vine and trusting that, in the long run, God is more than able to take care of all those "other" needs if I just attend to those that are truly given to me — do I proceed to prune with determination?

Do I want to produce a vine with a hundred small, sour grapes — or do I proceed to prune with determination?

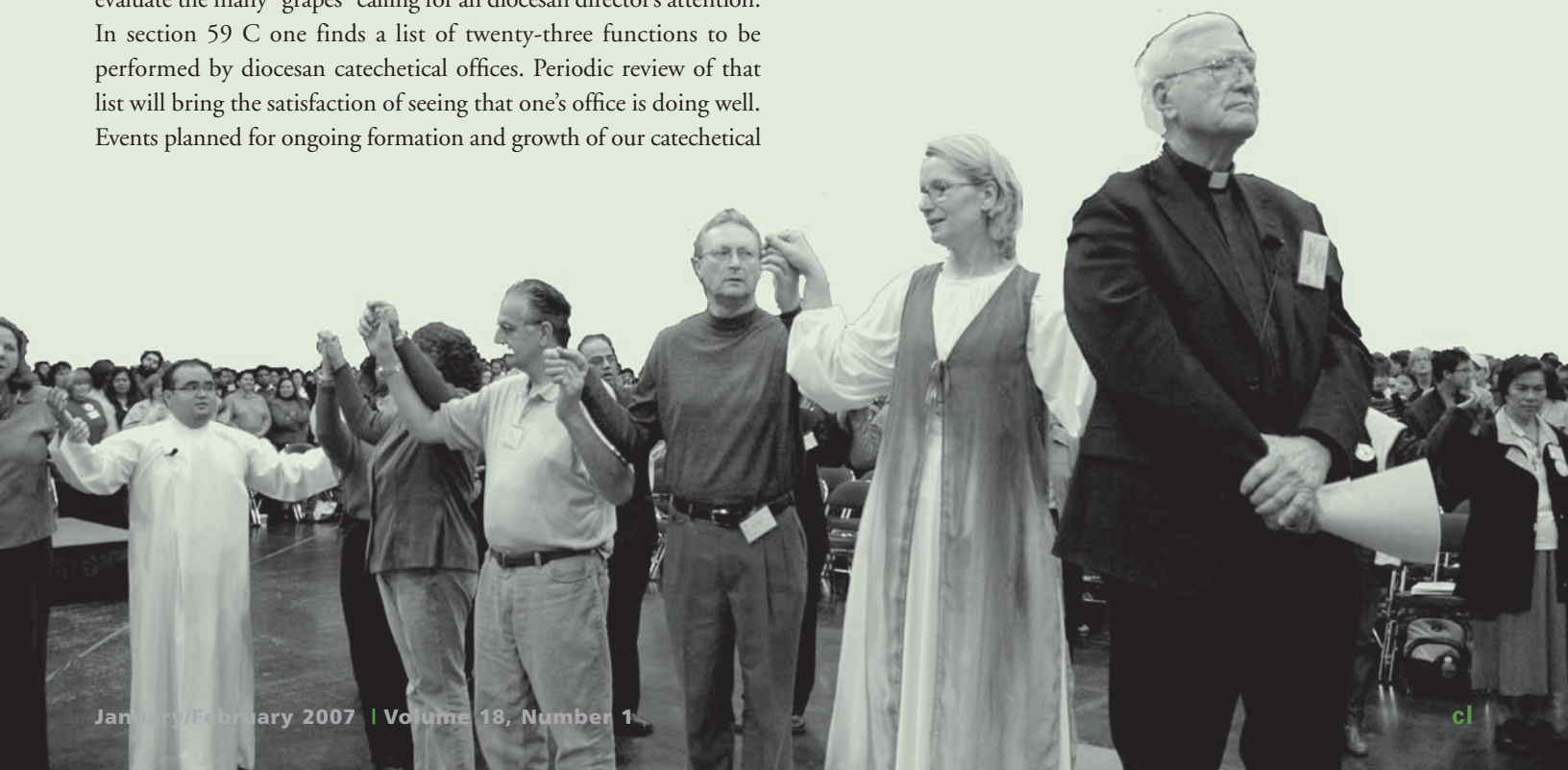
The *NDC* itself can provide an excellent standard against which to evaluate the many "grapes" calling for an diocesan director's attention. In section 59 C one finds a list of twenty-three functions to be performed by diocesan catechetical offices. Periodic review of that list will bring the satisfaction of seeing that one's office is doing well. Events planned for ongoing formation and growth of our catechetical

leaders, consultation and collaboration with others at parish, vicariate, and other diocesan offices all perform many of those functions. We need to prioritize those that we have not yet addressed and develop strategies for their eventual attainment. From work such as this, I can begin to see which demands for my attention fit into that list and which simply need to be dropped or perhaps given to others. In other words, pruning must be done for the good of catechesis in this archdiocese.

Several years ago one of our associate directors gave me a small stuffed monkey to represent work that I should delegate rather than allow to ride on my own back. Recently, I presented it back to her, asking her to be at a meeting I couldn't attend due to an upcoming trip. When I returned, the monkey was back on my desk, its work having been accomplished!

ONGOING CULTIVATION

Naturally, the ordinary of the diocese sets the broad catechetical vision for the people he serves as leader. Nevertheless, the diocesan director, acting in concert with the bishop, must still help that vision come to life. Some among us are highly gifted in this area. If vision is not one's strongest gift, the following advice from a very wise leader is most encouraging: when the leader of a group does not have a strong sense of vision, the group can still move as intended by the Holy Spirit, as long as the leader enables and empowers those who do have that gift to exercise it for the good of all. That is where the staff with which we are blessed is so very important for our archdiocese!





One of the ways we bring vision to life is to set just a few major goals for the period of a year or two.

One of the ways we bring vision to life is to set just a few major goals for the period of a year or two. Those we have discerned for the Office of Faith Formation/Catechetics in Detroit at this time are three: professionalism of the catechetical leader, adult faith formation, and multiculturalism. In turn, catechetical leaders throughout the archdiocese have been asked to keep those goals in mind in their own ministries.

And just as parish leaders need to connect with colleagues from their vicariate and the whole diocese, our staff needs to meet on a regular basis with the other dioceses of our province. In Michigan, there are two provincial meetings a year — one involving diocesan catechetical leadership along with one or two parish catechetical leaders from each diocese; the other involving the above plus as many PCLs as possible from around the state. The first meeting is primarily focused on business issues, while the second is one of formation for everyone along with time for each forum to meet on its own. If diocesan directors don't plan and participate in such gatherings, their "vineyards" are less fruitful as a result.

Participation is equally beneficial on a national scale. Active membership in the NCCL is absolutely essential, with "active" lived out in various ways, such as membership on the Representative Council

and/or the numerous committees bringing life to the whole body. Both have been wonderful ways for me to gain a much broader vision of the catechetical ministry to which all of us are committed.

Humbling for all of us over the last year has been the heroic efforts of our colleagues in the South, since Katrina devastated their homes and the homes of their parishioners as well as the offices of PCLs and diocesan personnel alike. Yet, with help from NCCL members across the country, coupled with their own truly inspiring commitment, they continue to share and echo God's Good News! Talk about rising to the role of diocesan director!

The role of diocesan director is challenging, but just as with every role in every ministry, is made very possible by time spent with the one who called us, through baptism, to that ministry — the True Vine whose Father is the vine-grower. Quiet time spent with them in prayerful reading of John 15 brings forth fruit of a quality that even the finest vine grower on earth has never dreamed of!

Maureen O'Reilly has extensive experience in catechetical ministry and leadership. She has worked in the Archdiocese of Detroit's Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics since 1990, first as an associate director and, since 2000, as director. Her personal interests include the international, ecumenical Faith and Light communities centered on people with cognitive limitations, in which she served as international coordinator for many years. She has master's degrees in special education and in pastoral studies with a focus on catechetics. ■

from the eastern end of our diocese meet once a month. These meetings provide for socializing and support among PCLs, training, and an opportunity to pray together.

Over ninety percent of the people serving as DREs come from the local parish. The need to help parishes identify potential PCLs led us to offer the DRE Perceiver as one way to discover whether a potential PCL had the talent to serve as a DRE. And the Perceiver not only helps a pastor identify people within the parish who have the skills but more importantly identifies the approaches the pastor and parish can use to support the DRE once that person begins his or her ministry. Since most of our parish catechetical leaders also serve as youth minister (and often it's the fourth grade catechist) we search for unique ways to help PCLs be successful.

We spend a significant amount of time working with parishes as they evaluate models for their programs.

Since there are no Catholic colleges or universities within the Grand Island diocese, we've partnered with several other organizations to provide education and training for catechists and teachers.

We partner with the University of Loyola New Orleans, using the Loyola Institute for Ministry Extension Program (LIMEX) to provide advanced formational opportunities. Our LIMEX facilitators often find themselves traveling great distance to be with a group. The facilitator of our first LIMEX group traveled four and a half hours one way each week over the duration of the course.

The diocese also partners with the University of Dayton and the VLCFF (Virtual Learning Community of Faith Formation) program to provide educational and formational programs for catechists and teachers. VLCFF provides just one example of how the Internet is proving to be a valuable tool in reducing the impact of the distance within our diocese.

PROVIDING RESOURCES

The Diocese of Grand Island was one of the first dioceses to sponsor a centralized media center. Ours is known throughout the diocese as REMEX, the Religious Education Media Exchange. When 16 mm films were \$800 each and filmstrips the normal AV medium, REMEX lent on average thirty titles a day. Because of the distance parishes accessed the extensive library by mail after phoning in their orders. So central to our ministry was mailing media that our offices closed any day the

Post Office was closed (a practice abolished about thirteen years ago). We converted our collection to video and now we are rapidly converting to DVDs. Eight-hundred dollar films have been replaced with \$29.95 DVDs. Since parishes that could not afford their own film collections are now creating their own DVD libraries, REMEX is reevaluating its mission. Through REMEX we are able to educate catechists in using media as a tool for catechesis. When catechists call, we help them name their goal and find appropriate media to meet that goal.

Parishes with a total population of thirty students (which might include eight second graders but no third or fourth graders) call on us to help them provide religious education. We spend a significant amount of time working with parishes as they evaluate models for their programs. We have worked with parishes as they explored Generations of Faith and Whole Community Catechesis as models for providing systematic catechesis. We do establish guidelines for sacramental preparation programs and try to keep a record of the number of students and catechists in parish programs.

Like the ranchers and farmers of our diocese, we've learned to adapt and address various issues in catechesis and parish life to the agricultural environment in which we work. Parishes in communities losing population in the face of agricultural transformation are faced with fewer people to staff their programs and fill the classrooms. Our challenge is to provide systematic formation for students in smaller communities with fewer and fewer students. As part of a smaller office, my role includes working with parish catechetical leaders in ways that help them be successful.

With the people of the Diocese of Grand Island, it is easy to remember that as John Paul II said, "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ."

Don Kurre serves as the director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Island, Nebraska, a position he has held since 1985. He and his wife Imo live in North Platte and are the parents of three children. He is a past president of NCCL and was recently elected to the North Platte City Council. Reach him at dkurre@gidiocese.org. ■



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tool is used by the mentee to assess his or her competencies and develop goals for professional development within the support of the mentoring relationship. With the help of Joe Swiss from the Archdiocese of Baltimore and his team, our diocesan committee put together a self-assessment tool based upon the National Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministry. The mentoring process ends with a public ritual when the mentor and mentee are transitioned from a mentoring relationship to a peer relationship. Effective mentoring by my predecessor has enabled me to acquire knowledge and skills for my role.

Annual ongoing professional growth series, advanced and master catechist programs, basic catechist certification, ongoing communication, the *Echo Christ* blog, cluster meetings, days of prayer, parish visitations and seasonal days of appreciation and recognition form, train and provide resources for the catechetical leaders and ministry in our diocese.

Our diocese has recently provided an important parish resource for catechetical ministry. We have developed catechetical standards for

first through eighth grades based upon Jack McBride's model from the Diocese of Madison. We have built curriculum around our own stated and desired competencies for catechetical ministry. Diocesan catechetical standards will allow pastors, catechetical directors/coordinators, parents, catechists and the entire parish to see what is expected at each level and enable them to contribute to the faith formation process. Standards will promote consistency in catechetical programs across the diocese. The emphasis is on the learner and the family. These standards will motivate parents to learn for themselves as adult learners as well as to learn for their children. They will strengthen the partnership between the primary educators of children — their parents — and the supporting educators — pastors and catechists. The standards were written to encourage the entire parish to become a learning community. Our next task is to develop catechetical standards for youth and adults. Our adult standards will be based on the content provided by the USCCB document, *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us*.



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GRACE

Any good I do is a response to grace. The good I do is not so much my doing as it is God's doing. Gratitude allows God's grace to grow in me. I see my role as director of catechetical ministry more as analogous to the position of a quarterback. I am out on the field with the team, calling plays, deciding who has the gifts, time, and talent to catch and run with the ball. Sometimes I carry the ball myself because the time is not right for others to do it. It is important as a catechetical leader to be aware of my deepest desire to love and be loved. The more I love, the more I am not afraid. Faith, hope and love flows from my relationships with God, my family, and my companions in the fields of the Lord. I recognize the presence of God in each person, am open to the Spirit working within me, allowing the Spirit in others to affect me, to improve my leadership ability. Attending to these relationships allows me to mirror Christ. Grace is God's presence in the cheerleaders who support me, harassers who wake me up, prophets who speak the truth, and spiritual guides who lead me to a more intimate relationship with God.

My main work is to call forth the gifts of others in service to catechetical ministry.

It is grace that guides me to take the difficult steps in the face of challenges and obstacles. The challenges are numerous. For example, the school model is still prevalent, with children as the primary focus of catechetical activity. There is a lack of resources, trained leaders and financial support for catechesis in the parishes. The low compensation, downsizing of catechetical personnel and increasingly larger responsibilities in parish administration are major obstacles to renewing catechetical ministry. Secularism, consumerism, materialism, media morality and the busyness of the culture compete with the values and teachings of Christ's message and make adults complacent in their faith. The demands of the technological revolution and the variety of needs related to diverse cultures are challenges that take a considerable effort to meet. The personality conflicts in ministry among staff and emotional illness and sin in ministry are among the obstacles a diocesan catechetical leader faces. Flexibility, hospitality, honesty, and forgiveness are the grace-filled virtues that meet these challenges. All are essential for servant leadership. Artful leadership overcomes these obstacles. The art of the possible rather

than impossible make things happen. The artful leader helps those he or she supports take the next step with confidence and hope. It is grace that allows the catechetical leader to meet these challenges and capitalize on the moment in time that will move us forward on the path.

CALL

My main work is to call forth the gifts of others in service to catechetical ministry. My task: nurture the next generation of catechetical leaders and embrace, intentionally, those God calls to carry on the mission. As I live out my own baptismal call, I call people to do the same.

Self-awareness of my strengths and weaknesses and my personality skills is required to call and lead others. The next step is to build trust, create a sense of safety, and identify and use talents. In order to discern the gifts and talents of catechetical ministers, I am mindful of their interests and skills and call forth their gifts in collaboration with others to take another step together toward the vision.

It is a person-to-person ministry where bonds are formed through the sharing of stories that touch the heart. I need to be open so those I lead know me. I am in my third year as a diocesan director after twenty-one years as director in two parishes. What have I learned in the first two years of my role as associate for catechetical ministry in the Diocese of San Jose? Be aware of boundaries. Do not cross these boundaries even with good intentions of helping out another colleague. If I am stressed, breathe, and resist dragging others into the mess with me.

I rejoice in these moments of gift, grace, and call that form our common identity as disciples of Christ, put us in intimacy with Jesus — the heart of catechetical ministry. The following quote from *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us* reassures me:

This is the Lord's work.

In the power of the Spirit it will not fail

But will bear lasting fruit for the life of the world.

(No. 183)

Wendy Scherbart is the associate for catechetical ministry at the Office of Pastoral Ministry in the Diocese of San Jose and is responsible for the formation of the leaders in catechetical ministry within the diocesan churches. She has over twenty years of experience as director of catechetical ministry at St. Patrick and St. Catherine in Morgan Hill, CA, and St. Patrick Proto-Cathedral in San Jose, CA. She is a certified master catechist and holds an MA in Catechetics and an MA in Education Administration from Santa Clara University. ■

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Studies show that significant numbers of Catholics, especially younger ones, are weakly connected to institutional Catholicism even as they continue to maintain a ‘Catholic identity.’ Many have embraced a denominational ethos, have a weak or diffused sense of the tradition, and express their Catholicism along more individualistic lines. In our highly consumerist cultural context, many Catholics — young and old — live as self-defined Catholics without depending on the church for normative authority to do so. They practice more of a consumer Catholicism than an institutionally validated one.^{vi}

THE CULTURAL CHALLENGES OF DOING ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

The cultural setting for Catholics in American society is vastly different than it used to be. The environment has changed from the hostile one of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century to the accommodating one of today. Controversies such as those over the legitimacy of Catholic schools, alleged Vatican control of American Catholics, and Catholic loyalty to American political ideals are largely a thing of the past. A church once apart is now one included. Religious diversity, the commodification of religion, and religious individualism are also all aspects of this new situation. They are highly relevant to doing catechesis within it.

In the context of religious diversity, catechesis must not only speak to ecumenism and interfaith dialogue; it must also address the challenges posed by relativism, the denominational mentality, and the emphasis on a generic “Christian lifestyle.” In such a context, what is unique and distinct about the tradition must also find expression. As James Davidson, Dean Hoge and their respective colleagues observed in their studies of young American Catholics, a religious education that emphasizes ecumenism and a common Christian heritage but that fails to include a focus on what is distinctive about being Catholic — *and why that matters* — will have detrimental consequences for the future of the church.^{vii}

This is not a resurrection of ‘triumphalism.’ It is not about disparaging what is different about non-Catholic traditions, or about promoting intolerance. It is about affirming in positive ways the value of Catholicism’s communal, ecclesial and sacramental dimensions.

Catechesis must also address the challenges surrounding the commodification of religion. Young Catholics today must learn how to make a responsible reappropriation of the tradition’s symbols and rituals while protecting their integrity as such from the fetish of consumerism. How they do so is complicated when these elements of faith and identity are easily trivialized through therapeutic and entertainment pirating, as I indicated earlier, and through egregious holiday commercialism at times like Easter and Christmas. The task is also problematic where knowledge of the meaning of these rituals and symbols within the historical and theological development of the tradition is weak, and where symbolic expression within Catholicism has, itself, experienced a certain leveling-down.

It is also obvious that sound catechesis must address the cultural ethos of individualism and tendencies to see the Catholicism as another life-style “choice,” a purely individual appropriation, or even as a “me and Jesus” sensibility — replete with a sacramental and ritual veneer — that otherwise has little communal or institutional significance. Catholicism is a profoundly communal tradition, not a Lone Ranger one.

In addressing all of these challenges, it is important to remember that handing on the faith is never a matter of handing on doctrine alone; it is the handing on of a broader sense of belonging and connectedness to a living tradition. The problem today is not the decline in Catholic identity — even as that identity is contested and re-defined; it is the decline in Catholic communalism and the commitment to the church’s institutional expressions.

The social and institutional ecology of the church must find new vitality in the face of the cultural trends I have described. The atrophy of Catholicism’s communal participation and the need for a socially embedded experience of the tradition (in ministries, parish life, associations, and societies, and in prayer, social justice, and formation groups) must also be addressed in catechetical efforts if the church is to engage and transform American culture from a position of vitality and strength.

- i Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), 138.
- ii Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992).
- iii For a thorough and perceptive analysis of these trends see Vince Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2004).
- iv Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 103.
- v On these trends see Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991).
- vi See Dean R. Hoge, William D. Dinges, Mary Johnson, S.N.D. De N., and Juan L. Gonzales, Jr., *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001). William V. D’Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Katherine Meyer, *American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment* (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 2001).
- vii James D. Davidson, et al., *The Search for Common Ground: What Unites and Divides Catholic Americans* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1997). Hoge et al., *Young Adult Catholics*.

William D. Dinges, associate professor of theology and religious studies at The Catholic University of America, also is a fellow of the CUA Life Cycle Institute and a co-author of Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice (University of Notre Dame Press, 2001). ■

THE LEADERSHIP OF DIOCESAN DIRECTORS

by Megan Anechiarico

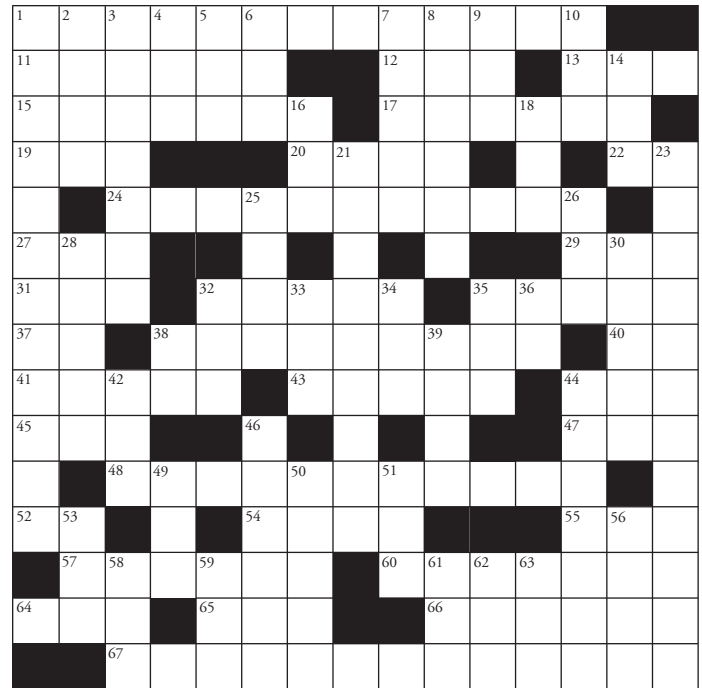
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 24 Diocesan directors' relation to parish CLs, frequently
 27 Tampa airport code
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 32 Sister's daughter
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 43 Situation
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- 55 Nova Scotia's time zone - abbr.
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 60 Italian potato dumplings
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 65 Eur. Univ. Assoc. acronym
 66 Sound for one who does 41A
 67 Diocesan directors' role concerning 21D

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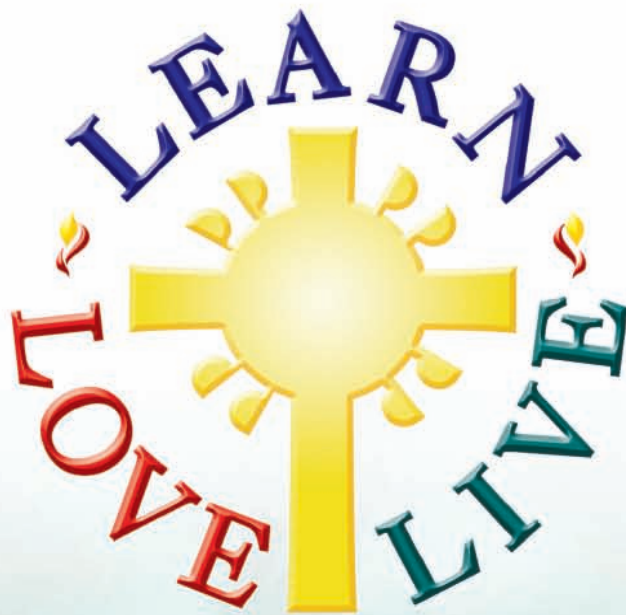
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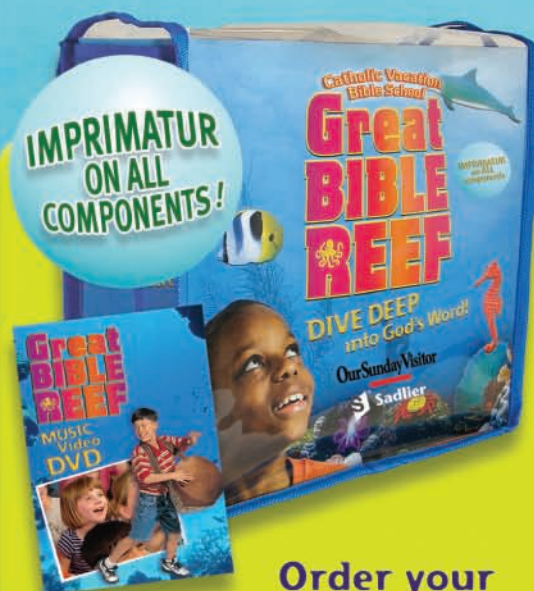


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