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CATECHETICAL
LEADER



SMALL STEPS TO GREAT FAITH

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the New Evangelization
The Year of Faith
and the New Evangelization

CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

Catechetical Leaders, Yesterday,
Today and Tomorrow

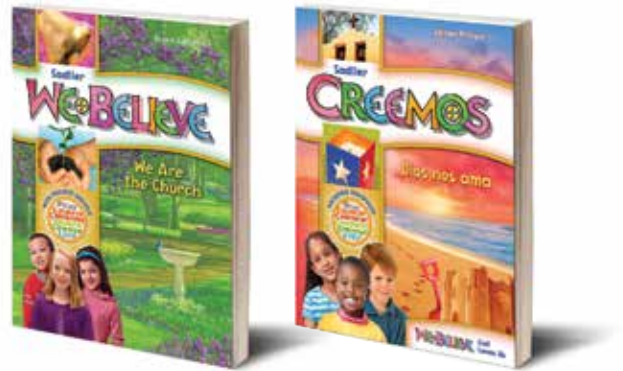
In declaring a Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI expressed the hope that it would enable every believer

“...to rediscover the content of faith that is professed, celebrated, lived, and prayed, and to reflect on the act of faith...”

(PORTA FIDEI, 9).

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ON DEATH...AND RESURRECTION

Bill Miller

National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



At this time of year, I periodically find myself thinking about death. The theme is certainly a popular one for this lenten season, as sacred Scripture and the church call us to die to sin in order to be born to new life. However, there is another aspect of death that has been on my mind lately as well; recently, I have heard from several of my friends who have lost people very close to them. Add to this the fact that, at 63 years of age, I have already outlived my mother who died many years ago at the age of 61.

My prayers and reflections on the subject of death led me to action. I decided to see what my favorite pontiff, the faithful, joyful and wise Pope John XXIII, had to say on the matter...what thoughts guided his own process of preparation for physical death.

In the book: *A Joyful Soul: Messages from a Saint for Our Times*, the editor, Jerome M. Vereb, CP, assembled some of Pope John XXIII's most memorable statements relating to life and to death. Therein, he revealed a very Ignatian approach to living and dying when he said, "Lord, I need only...in this world to know myself and to love you. Give me thy love and thy grace; with these I am rich enough and desire nothing more" (26).

Throughout his pontificate, as a constant source of prayer and inspiration, Pope John meditated on the image of Christ dying on the cross. He kept a crucifix in his bedroom opposite his bed, because he wanted that to be the first thing he would see when he awoke in the morning and the last thing he would notice at night before he closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep. In *Praying with Pope John XXIII*, Bill Huebsch writes that, when asked about this practice, Pope John said: "The secret of my ministry is in [the] crucifix...Those open arms have been the program of my pontificate: they mean that Christ died for all, for all" (101).

Huebsch also writes that Pope John: "...lived his entire life as though death might call him at any time; he kept before him always his mission to offer the world the life

of Christ" (103). Is that not the mission that each of us has accepted by virtue of our assent to the baptismal call?

While he was here on earth, Pope John XXIII often talked about engaging the culture, dialoging with culture and looking for ways to "meet people where they are" and present to them the Good News of God's love for them, as expressed in the person of Jesus Christ. Not coincidentally, I was listening recently to a song titled "It's Good to Be Alive" by Jason Gray, a contemporary Christian artist whose songs have "gone viral." While it was playing, I imagined Pope John tapping his feet to the rhythm of a song which could easily have been written to describe his philosophy of life and death. For me, the following lyrics in particular resonate with the spirit of Pope John:

I want to live like there's no tomorrow,
Love like I'm on borrowed time.
It's good to be alive....
I won't take it for granted, I won't wait another second,
All I want is to give You a life well-lived, to say:
"Thank You."

I implore you to listen to this song on YouTube. As you listen to the song, reflect on the lyrics and choose one or two that speak to you about living for God and preparing for your transition from this life to the next.

Taking this time to prayerfully reflect on death has reinforced for me the notion that it is indeed good to be alive. And, as I strive each day to give our God a life well-lived, I say "Thank you — Thank you, Lord, for the gift of life right here, right now, and for the infinitely greater expression of life that is to come. Thank you for Pope John XXIII, who modeled for us a wonderful way to live in the here and now and prepare for life everlasting.

May this Lenten season be, for each of you, a time of great holiness and blessing; and may the coming feast of Easter be a time of ecstatic joy, based on the fact that God lives, God loves us, and God is gradually calling us home. ■

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THE MATHEMATICS OF LENT

Leland Nagel



In Lents of long ago, you could find three jars under the sink in my mother's kitchen; a jar labeled for each of us. Whenever we received a piece of candy during Lent, we were to put it in the jar that accompanied our name. There was discipline in this practice; it taught me self-control. I was fasting from sweets, at least until Easter Sunday when it was returned to its original owner...me.

Sundays were not free days when I was growing up; they were a part of Lent. I did not think about counting the actual 40 days until high school. Before I was old enough to go to school, Lent was about subtraction. Everyone asked what you were *giving up* for Lent.

Grade school offered us an opportunity to *give* instead of just *giving up*. We collected money to be given for the poor. I am pre-Rice Bowl. I gave part of my weekly allowance to save a pagan baby. I remember being introduced to the word *tithing*. Ten percent of my weekly allowance meant one less piece of penny candy. Lent was still about subtraction, but this time my end product was less.

In middle grades, Lent became a time to spend more time with God. You could make a visit to church during recess or after school before you walked home, you could make a spiritual bouquet, or pray a decade of the rosary every day for the conversion of Russia. These were the foundation of my spiritual exercises. Parents and teachers inquired as to what you were *doing* for Lent.

I had learned my prayers and by the end of Lent I could say them even faster. Lent was about addition and it fed my consumer mentality. It was a practice drill so I would never forget my prayers; just like the multiplication tables. I was earning more and more grace with every prayer I said.

As I aged, maybe even matured, Lent could no longer reside in only one mathematical function; it had to incorporate two. Subtracting was only worthwhile if the time I saved could be used to add more time getting to know Jesus better. If I gave up 30 minutes of television, then I would have 30 more minutes to read Bible stories about Jesus. By subtracting, I was

multiplying my time with Jesus; sometimes I even acquired a new habit that continued after Lent.

Lent was a time to subtract bad habits from my everyday life. Forty days was enough time to add a new ritual to my spiritual practices. With each passing year, the emphasis on various mathematical functions gave way to three words: *pray*, *fast*, and *give* in contrast with the two concepts to *Prayfast* and *give*; and the discipline of prayer gave way to discipleship.

Discipleship is about love and love knows no bounds. As anyone in love, I want to spend more time with the One who knew my name before I was in my mother's womb. I desire to know more about the One who was human like me and gave his life that I might have life. I crave the silence where the whispers of the One of Truth inspire me to find the God within. In seeking a deeper relationship with the Three-in-One, I must exercise discipline.

Now, on my adult journey to discipleship, I no longer worry how long Mass lasts; I don't count the number of times I stop and pray; nor do I keep account of the monies I share with those less fortunate. I'm more concerned about engaging the person

seeking assistance and treating them like a child of God than I am about giving them a few dollars and sending them on their way. I'm more disciplined about practicing *lectio divina* with the upcoming Sunday's gospel than I am about reading four different reflections. I engage in theological reflection as a way of integrating faith and life.

The mathematical numbers associated with quantities have given way to the depth of quality. I would rather be late for work, if I overslept, than cut short my morning prayer as I hold my pillow crucifix in my hands and offer my heart, my being, my whole day to Jesus. Lent is still about adding and subtracting but now I understand the formula; Lent no longer feels like a sacrifice but rather an act of love. Lent, like all things Catholic, is more about *both...and*, than it is about *either...or*.

May your Lenten practices be the spark that ignites the fire of your faith. Subtract yourself from your daily tasks and add the renewal and spiritual dimensions of our 77th conference and exposition, *Ignite the Fire of Faith, Enciende el Fuego de Fe*, to your May 20-23, 2013, appointment calendar. ■

*Discipleship is about love
and love knows
no bounds.*

Catechesis in the Year of Faith

Bishop Daniel E. Flores



Since Pope Paul VI wrote, “On Evangelization in the Modern World” in 1975, the church has been talking about the importance of sharing the gospel message throughout the world. While Pope Paul VI states in this document “it is important to proclaim the gospel through wordless witness so as to stir

up irresistible questions to those who see how Christians live,” he also states the need for explicit proclamation. “Even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified — what Peter called always having ‘your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope you have’ — and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life... This proclamation — kerygma, preaching or catechesis occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization” (22).

In the 1990 encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, “Mission of the Redeemer,” he raises a need for evangelization in three areas, one of which is the new evangelization, “an intermediate situation particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel. In this case, what is needed is a ‘new evangelization’ or a ‘re-evangelization’” (33). The awareness that the people of God within our churches need evangelization is becoming evident; the faithful themselves seem uncomfortable or unable to witness.

Finally, fast forward to the year 2012, where the *Lineamenta* points to a direct need for the new evangelization for the transmission of faith and asks for “new methods and means for transmitting the Good News to people in our world today with a renewed enthusiasm proper to the saints, who were joyous witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The document states,

A reassessment of our experiences and attitudes concerning evangelization, not simply at the practical level, will lead to an improvement in our practice

and approach to proclamation. On a deeper level, this process will allow us to ascertain the caliber of our faith, to determine our sense of ‘feeling’ and ‘being’ Christians and disciples of Jesus Christ, who are sent forth to proclaim him to the world, and of our being witnesses filled with the Holy Spirit and called to make disciples of all nations (2).

AUTHENTIC AND ARTICULATED FAITH

When discussing the new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith, the one thing that needs to be developed is each person’s authentic and articulated faithful witness of the presence of God, their relationship with Jesus Christ, through the air we breathe.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, asks the church to spend a year in time focusing upon the gift of faith; it is like asking the church to breathe in and out slowly and to take note of the air that makes our life possible. The faith of the church is like the air we breathe, it surrounds us, and it sustains us. It was and it is being handed to us. The hope of this year is that the quality of our handing this faith on to others will improve if we consciously think about the gift that makes it all possible. This, in the end, would be the greatest fruit of the Year of Faith called for by the Pope. Conscious handing on of the gift of the faith is in a real sense the heart and soul of both evangelization and catechesis.

Babies breathe before they know they are doing so. So also we enter into a world where the faith of the church is present, and for most of us, we began breathing it in even before we knew we were doing so. Catechesis is like taking a child of about five years old (somewhere around the age of reason) and asking her to breathe on purpose. In other words, catechesis builds on a reality that is already there — the child has been breathing since birth. So it is that catechetical formation is always a work of forming and building upon the mystery of faith already making itself present in the life of the persons we teach. If they are children, it is the faith that they received at baptism, and which was (or was not) nourished by a home and family life imbued with a sense of faith. If they are adults coming to an RCIA class, mysteriously drawn to the faith of the church, catechesis builds and forms the nascent awareness of the person that there is something out there that is calling

to them, something they want to know more about. What is that “something out there?” It is the faith of the church.

WHAT IS THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH?

Well, perhaps it is best to note that the faith of the church is bigger than any of us, and wider and deeper than any of us can take in. The disciples believed Jesus, and they believed in him. He is the one they received in faith; he is the one we embrace in faith. He is also the one we want others to encounter in faith. But there are so many facets to this humble acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The wide breadth of the content of the faith emanates from the initial embrace of Christ in faith.

The church’s Profession of Faith, the Creed, in a very real way, expresses in words what we believe and live. That is why the creedal formulae have always had a privileged place in the catechetical tradition of the church. We hand on the baptismal Creed to those who seek the grace of faith; we also teach our young people the words of the Creed. The creedal formula expresses our Trinitarian life; it marks the space within which we believe, live, and move as Catholics.

We believe in *God the Father, maker of heaven and earth, ... and in Jesus Christ his only Son and in the Holy Spirit*, One God who lives and reigns forever and ever. Why do we believe this? Why do we teach it? Because to know Jesus Christ is to be introduced to the mystery of his relation to the eternal Father, and to his relation to the Spirit he sends into the church and into our hearts. *We believe in the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of the Saints*. How so? To believe in the Lord Jesus is to believe in the ever-widening circle of relations he establishes with men and women who, by the grace of the Spirit, are connected to him by faith, hope, and charity. This wellspring of communal relations in the church are all mediated by the person of Christ, who as God made flesh, connects us to the Trinity, to the saints and to each other.

The content of faith, though, is not simply the creedal or catechetical formulation; it is the whole of our lives of prayer, liturgy, works of mercy and service. The faith of the church includes all of this, and of course more. The creedal formulas summarize the teaching of the gospel in a way that makes possible continued openness to the full dimensions of the mystery transmitted. But, it is good to remember that our children, our adolescents, and young-adults, are not in our catechetical formation because they were handed a copy of the Creed at baptism. Likewise, not many of our RCIA candidates come to formation because they found a copy of the Creed on the Internet or in a public library. Why are they with us then? Because of the Spirit in the church; this is where Christ is encountered in flesh and blood mystery. This surrounds us, and if we choose to, we breathe it in.

THE CREED READ BACKWARDS

There is a sense in which receiving the gift of faith follows the contour of the Creed read backwards. I know this sounds

strange, but let me explain. We begin breathing the faith of the church before we know what it means. The gift comes to us mostly in the memorable ways we encounter its expression. A candle lit in front of a statue of the Sacred Heart, a blessing before meals, a rosary left on a nightstand, a feast day procession, family celebration of a newborn’s baptism. All these lived activities accompany the lives of Catholics and they make an impression on the souls of young and old alike, on both believers and non-believers. For a youngster in a religious education class, they are the things that they ask about, that they wonder about, that they sometimes even rebel against. But they are out there, as reminders that the faith of the church is first of all a lived mystery. It is lived and that is how it is transmitted. We build on this in catechesis; we elaborate, and put context to it.

This is what I mean by the faith of the church following the contour of the Creed read backwards. The third paragraph pulls us toward Christ as he continues to draw us to himself through the work of the Spirit in the church. The gift of the Holy Spirit flowing from the Paschal sacrifice of the Son continues to live in the church, and it pokes at our insides by means of all these mysterious expressions of lived faith that surround us. It is the Spirit that, in the twinkle of an eye, makes a child notice the lit candle on the kitchen table, or makes an adult notice that someone made the sign of the cross while walking in front of a Catholic Church. And not simply notice these things, but actually take note of them in a way that leads to a question. It was the same way with the first disciples. They saw something, heard something having to do with Jesus, and asked a question: “Master, where do you live?” It is the church, first-born gift of the Spirit, which carries forth the grace of the gift in the world. Through the tug in our gut toward the mystery of Christ, this grace breathed into ourselves leads ultimately to our encounter with Christ Jesus in the sacraments.

Thus, in life, the Spirit acts invisibly and quietly to draw us to the mystery of Christ. This leads to the second paragraph of the Creed. The mystery of Christ is concisely yet comprehensively expressed here, and it should rivet the attention of the catechist constantly. The Christological heart of the Creed articulates who he is, and what he comes to do. He is the one the Spirit in the church leads us to. Who is he? He is the Son of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God. What did he do? He came down from heaven, to be with us, and to heal us by his dying and rising. This is the central point of the Good News: God came Himself to save us, to be with us, to accompany us. He did not send an angel from the front office to save his people. No, he leapt down from heaven to rescue and enrich us. This is what love does. These words are empty of sense when we teach them, unless we link the words to the deed. He did this. And he continues to do this. He comes to us, he rescues us. He dies and he rises. In this we know how much God has loved us.



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Faith in Christ is something we have access to by the grace of the Spirit who draws us; and it is something that leads us forward and upward toward the mystery of the love of the Eternal Father. The Father is the one who sent the Son to us, and through the Son, in the Spirit, we have access to the heart of the Father who made us in love, and for love. *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father,”* Jesus solemnly told us. When the work of the Spirit takes deep root in us, we behold the dimensions of the Trinitarian mystery of the Father’s love manifested in Christ Jesus encountered in the light of the Spirit.

THE FAITH LIVED FORWARDS

Sometimes we are in personal circumstances that inhibit our access to the air we breathe. Go for a stroll in a heavily polluted city and you may notice that your walking and talking are a bit more labored. Or maybe you won’t notice; maybe you live in such a city, and you simply have adapted unconsciously to the extra effort it takes to walk down the street to buy a cup of coffee. But the extra exertion is real nonetheless, and it impacts the vigor of all the activities that flow from life. The Year of Faith can be a time to refresh our sense of what is most basic to our lives as Catholics. Maybe if we learn to appreciate the gift of faith as a kind of breathing, our walking and talking the life of faith will be less labored, more joyful. Let us all pray that this will be so.

I want to conclude these brief reflections with a word of encouragement to our catechists. What you do is so very important to the life of the church, especially for the young people within it. You teach them hope and to live in a for-

ward-looking future that is sustained by love. This can make all the difference in the world. Teach a young person (or an adult) that God loves them and the proof of it is in Christ crucified and risen, and you teach them that in this life, truth and love win out against the deceptions and hatreds that so often seem to engulf daily life. Teach a young person (or an adult) that the Mass is the enduring sacrifice of love that is made present to us here and now, and teach them that Christ is truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist, and you give them the gift that can sustain them through life: you arm them with faith in the presence of the merciful love of God in their lives. This is the source of hope that does not give way to despair.

I live in constant admiration of the thousands of catechists at work in my diocese, and throughout the church. Most of you are volunteers, and give the great gift of your time and energy to teach the faith to young and old alike. I sometimes fear, though, that catechists do not fully appreciate the impact you have on the lives you touch. I fear that you become discouraged. May this Year of Faith renew your sense of purpose. I remember more the faith of the women and men who taught me my earliest catechism classes than I remember what it was exactly they taught me. Maybe that says something about me, but I think many would say the same thing. They were believers, and their commitment taught me more than they knew at the time. May the hope and charity that flow from the gift of faith ever live in your hearts, and touch the lives of those whom you serve. Amen. ■

Bishop Daniel E. Flores is the bishop of Brownsville, Texas.

The Little Way of the New Evangelization

Stephen Bullivant



Blessed John Paul II's vision of — and invitation to — an evangelization that is “new in its ardor, methods, and expression”¹ has thankfully become well-known. Much writing has already been devoted to the new methods and expression, and we can undoubtedly look forward to a great deal

more. Rather less thought has been given to the new *ardor*. With so much attention being given to the new evangelization from parish teams right up to the Synod of Bishops, a newness of ardor may be taken for granted. But what if the new methods and expression fail to bear the prayed-for fruit; or, fail to bear it quickly enough for those currently so impassioned? After ten years, or 50, or 100, might not this enthusiasm give way to disillusion and despair? And if this first blush of love begins to fade — which, as any wise ex-teenager can tell us, it often does — what then for the new evangelization?

I want to do two things in this article. The first is to emphasize, albeit very cursorily, that the scale and complexity of the task ahead means that, *even if successful*, we are embarking on a centuries-long endeavor. The second is to argue that, given this fact, we need to approach it in the right frame of mind, fortified with a spirituality of patience and perseverance. If, as St. Thérèse explicitly taught the church, echoing a great many other saints before and after, our own path to *becoming* Christians worthy of the name must be a “little way,” then so too must our efforts be at “re-christening” the west’s secularized and/or rapidly secularizing societies and cultures.

“AMIDST TH’ENCIRCLING GLOOM”

Arguably, the primary challenge of the new evangelization — and the root cause of why it is needed in the first place — is keeping those we already have.² In theory, this is a simple task; in practice, it has proven much harder. In Britain, for example, of those brought up as Catholics — 13.6 percent of the population; just under 8.5 million people in total — only 59.7 percent still identify as such (and less than one in four attends church once a week or more). Recent figures from the US suggest that Catholic retention here is nearer to 70

percent, though there are also reasons to think this might be declining.³ Addressing, and ultimately reversing, this will be a huge job in itself, especially since at present we’re not entirely sure what *precisely* it is that needs addressing. (Catechesis? Sacramental preparation? Youth ministry? Parish community life? Liturgical music? Some, all, or none of the above?) And though perhaps the largest and most basic, this is scarcely the only issue at hand.

The fact remains that, since at least the 1960s — in different ways, and at different speeds — vast swathes of the western world have witnessed unprecedented religious change and (for the most part) decline. We have simultaneously witnessed a series of social and cultural revolutions, most recently the technological and media revolution driven by the Internet. That alone has profoundly changed the way people think and act, possibly forever, and whatever potential it holds for evangelization, and these are many and exciting; it holds vastly more perhaps for halting or disrupting it. (For example, for every person the Internet has helped to come to Christ and his church, how many more has it introduced to pornography or gambling addictions?) There are questions here that we have scarcely begun to formulate, let alone attempt to answer. What is clear, though, is that it is not simply new methods that are required here, but *continually renewed* ones, as the social worlds and cultures we inhabit, and where we are trying to bring (and keep!) the gospel, persist in shifting. Evidently, this is not a task that can be accomplished once, however ardently, and remain so forever.

Nor can we forget a fact which, in our new found ardor for the church and the desire to bring our joy to others, we might sometimes like to do so. While lovers can be blind to their loved one’s imperfections, those around them are not. Let us be frank here: the sexual abuse crisis, in all its dimensions, situates the new evangelization against a very dark backdrop indeed. This is a context which, on the one hand, makes a new evangelization all the more needed, while on the other,

1 *Discourse to the XIX Assembly of C.E.L.A.M.* (9 March 1983).

2 See Stephen Bullivant, “Teachers and Witnesses: Thinking about the New Evangelization”, *Catechetical Leader* 22/4 (October 2011), 4-8.

3 British data taken from the 2010 British Social Attitudes Survey, available online (registration required) here: <http://nesstar.esds.ac.uk/webview/>. For the US estimates, see the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate’s illuminating 2008 report “The Influence of Religious Switching and Secularization on the Estimated Size of the U.S. Adult Catholic Population”, downloadable here: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/FRStats/Winter2008.pdf>. My fears of decline are based primarily on the rapidly growing numbers of religious nones in the USA (see my previous *CL* article for details).

severely limits — and understandably so — our abilities to make the Good News heard and taken seriously. Almost 50 years ago, Vatican II spoke of how “believers can have no small part in the rise of atheism, since [...] through defects in their own religious, moral, or social lives, they may be said rather more to conceal than reveal the true countenance of God and of religion” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 19). Even among Catholics themselves, the individual and collective failings of those within the church are a true cause for scandal, at times, to truly horrifying degrees. Again, we have hardly begun to face up to the ramifications for this with regard to mission. Suffice it to say that the trauma, anger, disappointment, and loss of trust, will not soon be overcome, irrespective of the newness of our ardor, methods, or expression.

“ALONG THE NARROW RUGGED PATH”

Lest the above paragraphs seem overly pessimistic, I should perhaps make plain my own enthusiasm for the new evangelization, the ardor, indeed, of a recent convert. Having been newly evangelized myself, I am the grateful and joyful recipient of the gift of faith, and of entry into the church four years ago. Far be it from me, then, to dampen anyone’s enthusiasm. Yet if we desire to help others “to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2.4), we must begin by being truthful ourselves. And the truth is that the path on which we are embarking will be slow and gradual, sometimes painful, and marked by long periods of (real or imagined) failure or futility. Furthermore, while in no way diminishing the importance of what this generation can achieve, the likelihood of our seeing much to show for it is slim.

This realization need not, however, discourage us. For the flipside of it is that the successes of the new evangelization will necessarily be built up of small, *seemingly* insignificant actions and lives, guided by the Holy Spirit. And, as recent research has suggested, the same was largely true of the successes of the first evangelization wrought by the early church. While we tend to think of the initial Christianization of the Roman world to have been accomplished near-miraculously swiftly, even this occurred over the course of centuries (and within a total population somewhat less than today’s Midwest). Furthermore, we all remember its great evangelizing and miracle-working saints — Paul, Denis, Augustine of Canterbury, the delightfully and rightly so named Gregory the Wonderworker. Recent research suggests, however, that the real ‘engine room’ of the first evangelization lay instead, in the slow and simple passing on of the faith from seemingly ‘ordinary’ believer to ‘ordinary’ believer, and especially from parent to child.⁴ In full agreement with Pope Benedict then, we have much to learn from the earliest and ultimately successful, albeit gradually, evangelizers:

Proclaiming Jesus Christ the only Saviour of the World today is more complex than in the past; but

⁴ See especially Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

our task remains identical to that at the dawn of our history. The mission has not changed, just as the enthusiasm and courage that moved the Apostles and first disciples must not change. The Holy Spirit which prompted them to open the doors and made evangelizers of them (cf. Acts 2: 1-4) is the same Spirit which today moves the church to a renewed proclamation of hope for the people of our time.⁵

Based on the above reflections, it might perhaps be helpful to sketch out some resources, drawing on both Scripture and tradition, for what a spirituality of the new evangelization might look like.

“LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT”

Blessed John Henry Newman, phrases from whose most famous hymn I’ve stolen for my subheadings, lays out the basis for this in a sermon preached in September, 1830 (fifteen years before becoming a Catholic), and titled “Jeremiah, a Lesson for the Disappointed.”⁶ He states that the prophet’s “ministry may be summed up in three words, good hope, labor, disappointment,” and draws from this a universal lesson about the nature of human undertakings. This is especially true, though hardest to accept, when, like Jeremiah, one is doing God’s work, given the enthusiasm and expectation with which one begins. According to Newman,

To expect great effects from our exertions for religious objects is natural indeed, and innocent, but it arises from inexperience of the kind of work we have to do, — to change the heart and will of man. It is a far nobler frame of mind, to labor, not with the hope of seeing the fruit of our labor, but for conscience’s sake, as a matter of duty; and again, in faith, trusting good *will* be done, though we see it not.⁷

Newman makes a point of commending Jeremiah’s ‘resignation’ to his lot, though this should not be misunderstood. His point is not that we should learn to live with our ultimate failure. On the contrary, our ability to persevere is premised on our trust and confidence that our labors are *not* in vain, even though we might see few of their fruits for ourselves.

Look through the Bible, and you will find God’s servants, even though they began with success, end with disappointment; not that God’s purposes or instruments fail, but that the time for reaping what we have sown is hereafter, not here; that here there is no great visible fruit in any one man’s lifetime.

⁵ “Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization,” 30 May 2011. Text available here: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110530_nuova-evangelizzazione_en.html

⁶ The sermon can be found in volume 8 of his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. It can be read online at: <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume8/sermon9.html>

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To transpose this into our own terminology, it must be said that this too requires a kind of ardor — one that may feel very different now than when it was first “new,” but is no less real or ardent for all that.

Newman’s appeal to Scripture is helpful in other ways too. Three of Christ’s parables spring immediately to mind. First, that of the Patient Farmer (Mk 4.26-9), Jesus emphasizes the slow and hidden (“he would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how”), but mysteriously inevitable growth of the Kingdom of God (“the earth produces of itself”). While this parable is unique to Mark, an echo of it can also be found in James’ advice: “Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient” (5.7-8). Secondly, the more-famous parable of the Sower (Mt 13.1-9) offers what, on the surface, appears to be an inefficient, wasteful, and aimless approach to evangelization — certainly, no *real* sower would be so indiscriminate in his spreading of seed. No doubt there is a lesson here for the “strategists” of the new evangelization. Note also the relevance of our Lord’s comment on seeds sown on rocky ground (13.20-1) for the purpose. It is one thing to hear the call with joy, and to spring up enthusiastically, but with no adequate depth of soil, such initial ardor soon dissipates. And thirdly, while Luke’s parable of the Dishonest Manager in itself is not of direct relevance here, there comes a phrase that undoubtedly

is: “Whoever is faithful in the little things, will be faithful in the greater things as well” (16.10).

“ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME”

This article speaks of the perceived need for us to develop and cultivate “a little way of the new evangelization.” So far, my emphasis has been on patience and perseverance, trusting (in Newman’s phrase) “that the time for reaping what we have sown is hereafter.” This is certainly important, but applies equally to great undertakings as it does to little ones. Arguably, however, it is *specifically* in the “little things,” in the everyday living out of the implications of our Catholicism — prayer, devotions, works of mercy, communicating the faith to the next generation, and so on — that the major part of the new evangelization will rest.

Referring to the above quotation from Luke’s gospel, St. Josemaría Escrivá comments in *The Way*: “Because you have been *in pauca fidelis*, faithful in small things, come and join in your master’s happiness. The words are Christ’s. *In pauca fidelis!*... Now will you neglect little things, if heaven itself is promised to those who mind them?” (819)⁸

In fact, throughout *The Way* there is a sustained catechesis on perseverance with the little things. For example, “Great souls pay much attention to little things” (818); “You have mistaken the way if you despise little things” (816); “To begin is easy, to

⁸ Quotations (cited according to ‘saying number’) taken from: Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* (Dublin: Four Courts [1939] 1985).

persevere is sanctity” (983). And while Escrivá does not direct these counsels to mission specifically, in seeking out spiritual direction with which to imbue our practice of the new evangelization, there is undoubtedly much wisdom here.

Just as the great works of a happy marriage or raising a child are built up out of countless unnoticed and uncommented upon acts of littleness — both cases where great ardor becomes realized and expressed in patient, daily practice — so too must the new evangelization be in large part. “Have you ever stopped to consider the enormous sum that many ‘littles’ can come to?” (827) Or, in one of Escrivá’s more elaborate examples:

Have you seen how that imposing building was built? One brick upon another. Thousands. But, one by one. And bags of cement, one by one. And blocks of stone, each of them insignificant compared with the massive whole. And beams of steel. And men working, the same hours, day after day... Have you seen how that imposing building was built?... By dint of little things! (823)

“THE GARISH DAY”

The founder of Opus Dei is not, of course, the only 20th century saint (canonized or not) to have made Thérèse’s basic insights his own. For example, the entire life of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta — “I haven’t called myself after the big Teresa [of Avila], but after the little one, Teresa of Lisieux”⁹ — exemplifies the notion of great things being accomplished through fidelity to little ones; indeed, in her case, to “the least ones” (cf. Mt. 25). Hence, as she once said, referring to the Missionaries of Charity, “We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if that drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.

9 Mother Teresa, *A Gift for God*, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge (London: Fount, 1975), p. 84.

I do not agree with the big way of doing things.”¹⁰ However, these ideas find perhaps their most perfect expression in the writings of the servant of God Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement. It is to these, finally and briefly, I would like now to turn.

“By little and by little” was a favoured phrase of Dorothy Day’s.¹¹ Her own conversion, detailed in the 1952 autobiography *The Long Loneliness*, was itself the product of a gradual, cumulative process. It was precisely this approach that she instilled in the mission of the Catholic Worker: “We do the minute things that come to hand, we pray our prayers, and beg also for an increase of faith — and God will do the rest.”¹² Significantly, it was also one that she applied to her own spiritual life, as is abundantly

clear from her diaries.¹³ Her life, viewed as a totality, radiates as a “great” thing, indeed as America’s greatest gift (so far) to the universal church. Yet, from her own day-to-day perspective, it often felt like an endless succession of failings and disappointments. As she remarked once in 1948, “I can never give up enough. I have always to struggle against self. I am not disillusioned with myself either. I know my talents and abilities as well as failures. But I have done woefully little.” Nevertheless, she also comments, “I cannot say that I have been disillusioned,” and adds “Newman says the tragedy is never to have begun.”¹⁴

It might seem that Day’s words here have little bearing on the new evangelization. After all, she is not referring to mission here, but to her own inner-life. In a sense, this is precisely my

*Arguably, the primary challenge
of the new evangelization ...
is keeping those
we already have.*

10 Ibid. p. 48.

11 For example, it forms an apt subtitle to the excellent *Selected Writings: By Little and By Little*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

12 Dorothy Day, “Vocation to Prison,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1957. Available online: <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/daytext.cfm?TextID=726>

13 Dorothy Day, *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Marquette, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008).

14 <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/daytext.cfm?TextID=482>

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point. I am arguing for our need of a spirituality of the new evangelization, as a means to keep the flame of our collective “new ardor” burning bright over the long years, decades, and centuries to come. In Scripture, and in the spiritual writings of the saints, we *already* have the resources to do this — patience, perseverance, not neglecting the little things from which big things are grown. These are already familiar themes, and we should do well to reclaim them for use here too. (We should also not neglect the more obvious and direct bearings which Day and Mother Teresa have for the new evangelization either. Not only are the works of mercy themselves crucial to the task ahead — even if this is not the reason why we should perform them — but so too are the promotion of such exemplary figures as “living ‘translations’ of the gospel”¹⁵).

‘LEAD THOU ME ON!’

This article has tentatively attempted to both celebrate the new ardor for evangelization — evident enough, happily, among some of the young Catholics I have the pleasure to teach and know — and suggest ways in which it might be nurtured and preserved, in “depth of soil,” throughout the long and difficult

¹⁵ Taken from an address by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Mennini, to the Bishops of England and Wales in April 2012. Text available here: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2012/04/27/nuncio-urges-bishops-to-be-outspoken-in-their-defence-of-church-teaching/>

journey on which we are embarking. Mercifully, this journey is one guided and led by a “kindly Light.” It is fitting, therefore, that the last words here be given over to Newman once more describing precisely the kind of “little things” that are so necessary to the new evangelization. In *Jeremiah, a Lesson for the Disappointed*, he writes,

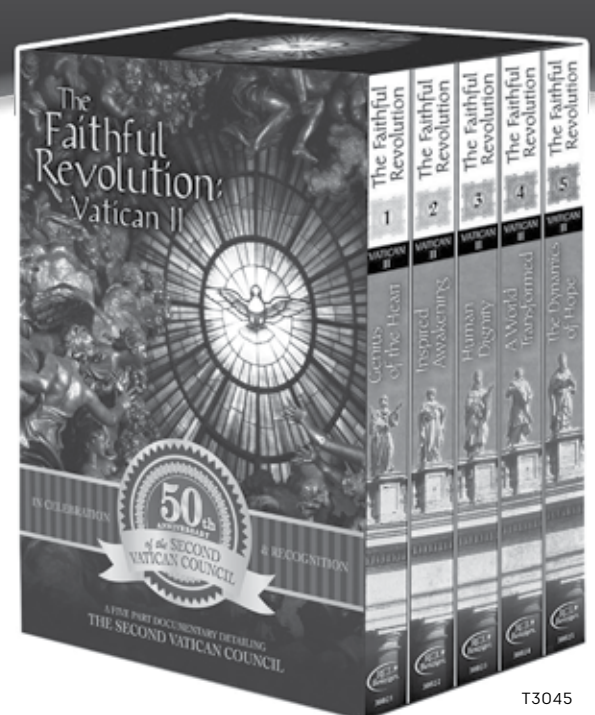
Give not over your attempts to serve God, though you see nothing come of them. Watch and pray, and obey your conscience, though you cannot perceive your own progress in holiness. Go on, and you cannot but go forward; believe it, though you do not see it. Do the duties of your calling, though they are distasteful to you. Educate your children carefully in the good way, though you cannot tell how far God’s grace has touched their hearts. Let your light shine before men, and praise God by a consistent life, even though others do not seem to glorify their Father on account of it, or to be benefited by your example. |

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T3045

The Year of Faith and the New Evangelization

Ralph Martin



What's the relationship between the Year of Faith and the new evangelization? First, let's look at what faith is and why Pope Benedict XVI is directing our attention to it this year. Then, let's consider what the new evangelization is and how the two relate.

There are several dimensions to "faith." First of all, faith is a firm conviction, a knowledge, of things that are unseen to the biological eyes but no less real than the things we do see. The knowledge given by faith is infused into us in the sacrament of baptism and grows as we mature through contact with God's word in the multiple ways that evangelization and catechesis are carried out in the life of the church. For the adult, "faith comes by hearing" the word of God.

One important fruit of the Year of Faith would be a recovery of our confidence in the reliability and truthfulness of the word of God as it comes to us in Scripture, tradition, and the teaching of the church as articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Sometimes we forget the very high view of the authority and reliability of sacred Scripture that we hold as Catholics. As Vatican II states in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*:

Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures (11).

Recovering our confidence in the truth of our faith is an important foundation for a renewed life of holiness in the church and a renewed impetus to evangelization.

Another dimension of faith is trust in and confidence in the person of Christ, believing he is who he says he is. Flowing from this is a relationship of surrender and obedience, trusting his word, trusting the guidance of his Spirit, trusting him — his goodness, his love, his power, his wisdom, his divine providence, his promises.

Obviously, unless we have a strong confidence in the truth of our faith and in the person who is at the center of our faith, our desire to tell others about Christ will not be strong. This is the link between faith and evangelization.

Since there is so much talk in the church today about evangelization and about the "new evangelization," it would be worthwhile to clarify these terms.

Evangelization, as understood in the Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents, sometimes has a very broad meaning, which includes all the implications of Christian conversion for the transformation of culture and the embodiment of Christian values in political and economic life. At the same time, the core meaning of evangelization is always clearly identified in the documents as conversion to Christ.

Starting with the documents of Vatican II, and continuing with the subsequent pontifical documents on evangelization, the contemporary magisterial documents have been remarkably consistent in insisting on the priority of direct proclamation with a view toward conversion.

In *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, Pope Paul VI accentuated this point when he said, "There can be no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God are not proclaimed" (EN, 22).

John Paul II then continued this emphasis on the priority of direct proclamation in the document explicitly devoted to the mission of lay people, *Christifidelis Laici* (The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People): "The 'good news' is directed to stirring a person to a conversion of heart and life and a clinging to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to disposing a person to receive baptism and the Eucharist and to strengthen a person in the prospect and realization of new life according to the Spirit" (CL, 33).

And in a particularly challenging statement: "The proclamation of the word of God has *Christian conversion* (in original) as its aim: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his gospel through faith . . . Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple" (46).

Evangelization then, in its core, is about inviting people to faith in Jesus Christ and membership in his body, the church.

What then is the "new evangelization?"

In 1983, Pope John Paul II began to frequently refer to a "new evangelization." He made it clear that he wasn't calling for a new gospel, but a new effort, characterized by new



“ardor, methods, and expression,”¹ and directed in a new way, not only to those who had never heard the gospel before, the traditional “mission territories,” but now also to the lukewarm and de-Christianized traditionally Christian Western nations.

He distinguished “primary evangelization” directed towards those unfamiliar with the gospel, “pastoral care” directed towards those who were living as believers, and “new evangelization or re-evangelization” directed towards those from traditionally Christian culture or backgrounds “where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel” (RM, 33).

THE URGENCY OF A NEW EVANGELIZATION

As John Paul II published his “vision or mission statement” for the Catholic Church as it entered the new millennium, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Beginning of a New Millennium), he cited the collapse of Christian society as a primary reason for the need for a new evangelization.

To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be ‘servants of the word’ in the work of evangelization: this is surely a priority for the church at the dawn of the new millennium. Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a ‘Christian society’ which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on gospel values, is now gone. Today, we must courageously face a situation which is becoming increasingly diversified and demanding, in the context of ‘globalization’ and of the consequent new and uncertain mingling of peoples and cultures. Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the new evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the

impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor 9:16) (NMI, 40).

The collapse of Christian society is being experienced in the Catholic Church as a “wake-up call” to the need for a renewal of fervent faith, both for holiness and for evangelization, rooted in the continuing reality of Pentecost.

To sum up then: What’s “new” about the “new evangelization?”

The new evangelization is new in to whom it is addressed: baptized Catholics who are not living a life of faith in the Son of God. It is also new as regards the cultural situation to which it must address itself: a post-Christian society which resembles more closely the circumstances the early church had to face, a minority living in the midst of an aggressive pagan culture, than the relatively supportive society we’ve known until recently.

It is also new in who is expected to carry it out: all Catholic lay people!

We’re used to thinking of mission or evangelization as something that only the “professionals” in the church do, and perhaps even only in “foreign countries” where the gospel has not been preached. One of the main emphases of Vatican II and subsequent post-Conciliar documents is the essential role of the laity in carrying out the mission of the church.

The role of the “professionals” is not to carry out the mission of the church all by themselves but to activate baptized Catholics into lives of holiness and mission.

There has been a tendency, however, in Post-Vatican II Catholicism to drift into an understanding of this call to lay mission that diverges significantly from what the documents

1. John Paul II, “The Task of the Latin American Bishop,” *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-62.

actually say. On the one hand, there has been a tendency to interpret the call to apostolate as a call to “power sharing” and to assign roles to lay people within the church that aren’t really evangelistic. A lot of the focus has been, and continues to be, on lay people becoming “active” within the church, i.e. doing readings at Mass, becoming “extraordinary” ministers of the Eucharist, joining parish councils, serving on committees, etc. In reaction to this, there has been a more recent corrective in an attempt to keep the roles of priests and laity distinct that points out that the specific nature of the lay apostolate (“apostolate” is a term normally used in these documents in a sense equivalent to “mission”) is “secular” and should focus on the influence on culture and politics through promoting Christian values. This emphasis on the secular quality of lay mission is usually silent about the responsibility to directly speak to people about Christ, with a view towards conversion.

The actual documents, however, could not be clearer, and more balanced on these points.

The *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* identifies three fields of lay participation in the mission of the church. 1. The mission of evangelization and sanctification. 2. The mission of renewing the temporal order. 3. The mission of mercy and charity. And while this document, and others, identifies the lay person’s unique presence in the secular order as irreplaceable, it goes on to make some remarkable statements about the priority of direct evangelization precisely in the secular environments which laypersons inhabit.

The church’s mission is concerned with the salvation of men; and men win salvation through the grace of Christ and faith in him. The apostolate of the church therefore, and of each of its members, aims primarily at announcing to the world by word and action the message of Christ and communicating to it the grace of Christ... Laymen have countless opportunities

for exercising the apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very witness of a Christian life, and good works done in a supernatural spirit, are effective in drawing men to the faith and to God... This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them towards the faith, or to the faithful to instruct them, strengthen them, and incite them to a more fervent life...(AA, 6).

The documents make clear that even if a layperson’s primary field of mission is in the political, economic, or social sphere or in doing works of charity, he or she continues to have an obligation to directly proclaim Christ by word, with a view towards leading others to conversion or deeper faith.

And the “especially urgent invitation” that the Council has issued to the lay faithful is finding a response. Often, “repressed and buried” Christian powers are coming to life (CL, 2, 23). “The commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization is changing ecclesial life... Above all, there is a new awareness that *missionary activity is a matter for all Christians* (in original), for all dioceses and parishes, church institutions and associations” (RM, 2).

Let’s pray that the Year of Faith becomes a time of grace that draws many baptized Catholics into a more committed relationship to Jesus and leads them to a more wholehearted commitment to participate with Jesus in his ongoing mission of “seeking and saving those who are lost.” |

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CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

CATECHETICAL LEADERS, YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW: Facts, Figures, and Questions

Tom and Rita Walters



PART I

In 1978, the United States Catholic Conference published *A National Inventory of Parish Catechetical Programs*. This inventory, under the direction of Fr.

Eugene Hemrick, was a first of its kind to examine catechetical personnel and structures in parishes in the aftermath of Vatican Council II. Up until this study, there had been no systematic research on what was then generally referred to as CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) — that is, the religious education of the “publics” that took place in parish settings and not in the Catholic school. There were three areas of focus in his study: (1) the background of the persons responsible for these evolving programs, usually called coordinators or directors of religious education; (2) the range and types of programmatic ministries they were involved with and the impact of their catechetical efforts; and (3) the various support systems that were in place to serve the needs of these catechetical leaders.

Inspired by this *National Inventory*, Tom was motivated to conduct a more specific follow-up study. In 1981, with the support of the National Conference of Diocesan Directors (NCDD), the forerunner of NCCL, and the Religious Education Office of the Archdiocese of Detroit under the direction of Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, we conducted a survey of individuals who were judged by their diocesan directors of religious education to be “professional” directors, i.e., persons who were employed full-time, salaried, and both academically and experientially trained for their position. This resulted in the publication of the *National Profile of Professional Religious Education Coordinators/Directors* in 1983.

In 2011, we decided that after 30 years it would be interesting to assess how things have or have not changed since 1981.

Survey Design and Process

In spring 2011, we contacted the leadership of NCCL and the National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors

(NPCD) asking them to invite their respective members to participate in an online survey based on the questionnaire used in 1981. Both organizations agreed to do so. They also generously provided input into the redesign and updating of the survey itself. In addition to contacting NCCL and NPCD, we sent an e-mail invitation to all diocesan directors of religious education for whom we had e-mail addresses asking that they invite and encourage their parish catechetical leaders to go online and complete the survey. Seventy-four dioceses accepted the invitation. Likewise, a note posted on dre-talk@yahoo.com, an online group of over 400 members sponsored by NPCD for catechetical leaders, directed members to the survey website and invited them to complete it.

As in 1981, the purpose of the 2011 survey was to profile individuals who currently serve in parishes as the person responsible for formal catechetical programming. Unlike the 1981 survey, the only criteria for participation were current employment as a parish catechetical leader and the willingness to complete the online survey. In 1981, diocesan directors were directed to choose three DREs who (to the degree possible) demographically represented their diocesan parishes and met the following qualifications:

A person with a master’s degree in theology, religious education, or an approved equivalency, and at least three years of administration or teaching experience who has demonstrated skills in organization and is a salaried, full-time member of a parish staff. (Walters, 3).

As a result, the current study is not an exact replication of the 1981 survey, nor does it provide a scientific sampling of all parish catechetical leaders. However, due to the large number of individuals who chose to participate, it does provide a snapshot of the current state of catechetical leadership and parish catechetical practice in the US. Two thousand eight hundred thirty (2,830) catechetical leaders from 74 dioceses participated; this large of a sample allows us to draw some general conclusions regarding the current state of the ministry and to make some selected comparisons with the 1981 study.

Demographics

The following tables provide information on the dioceses that

participated in the 2011 survey and a comparison of the types of parishes represented in the 1981 and 2011 surveys.

Dioceses with Representative Catechetical Leaders in 2011 Survey*

Albany, NY	Greensburg, PA	Owensboro, KY	Santa Fe, NM
Alexandria, LA	Indianapolis, IN	Palm Beach, FL	Santa Rosa, CA
Beaumont, TX	Jefferson City, MO	Pensacola-Tallahassee, FL	Savannah, GA
Boston, MA	Kalamazoo, MI	Phoenix, AZ	Seattle, WA
Camden, NJ	Lafayette, LA	Pittsburgh, PA	Springfield, MA
Charlotte, NC	Lafayette in Indiana	Portland, OR	Springfield-
Cheyenne, WY	Lansing, MI	Pueblo, CO	Cape Girardeau, MO
Chicago, IL	Las Cruces, NM	Reno, NV	Springfield, IL
Cincinnati, OH	Los Angeles, CA	Rochester, NY	Syracuse, NY
Cleveland, OH	Madison, WI	Rockville Centre, NY	Toledo, OH
Dallas, TX	Manchester, NH	Saginaw, MI	Trenton, NJ
Denver, CO	Marquette, MI	St. Augustine, FL	Tulsa, OK
Erie, PA	Metuchen, NJ	St. Louis, MO	Tyler, TX
Evansville, IN	Miami, FL	St. Petersburg, FL	Victoria, TX
Fairbanks, AK	Milwaukee, WI	San Angelo, TX	Wichita, KS
Galveston-Houston, TX	Newark, NJ	San Bernardino, CA	Wilmington, DE
Grand Island, NE	New Orleans, LA	San Diego, CA	Worcester, MA
Grand Rapids, MI	New York, NY	San Francisco, CA	Youngstown, OH
Great Falls-Billings, MT	Orange, CA	San Jose, CA	

*The number of catechetical leaders from any one diocese ranged from one to 176.

As the following table illustrates, with the exception of a slight decrease in percentage from major cities where the population is between one million and 50,000 and an increase in the percentage of responses from small town/rural cities in which the population is 10,000 or less, the demographic is quite similar to what we had in our 1981 profile.

Parishes Represented

	1981	2011
High Major City (population over 1,000,000)	7%	9%
Major City (population 50,000-1,000,000)	20%	13%
Suburb (functionally bound to a city)	28%	25%
Small City (population 19,000-50,000)	26%	24%
Small Town/Rural (population 10,000 or less)	20%	29%

Now (2011) and Then (1981)

There are three comparison groups that appear in many of the following charts: (1) the 1981 responses, (2) the 2011 responses of those who most reflect the 1981 sample, whom we have

labeled MA+3, and the majority of 2011 responses labeled MAJ which excludes the MA+3s. The MA+3 data represents the responses of those who met the following criteria: have master's degree in theology, religious education or an approved equivalent, have at least three years of experience in the catechetical ministry, and are a salaried, full-time member of a parish staff.

Gender

The proportion of women to men in parish catechetical leadership has remained quite constant over the years. The 1981 study shows women at 83 percent and men at 17 percent. However, among the majority of the catechetical leaders in the 2011 survey, the percentage of women grew to 88 percent and the number of men declined to 12 percent. The percentages for the respondents who were comparable to the 1981 sample were almost identical (84 percent and 16 percent), reflecting a slight increase among women.

	MA+3	MAJ
Women	84%	88%
Men	16%	12%

Marital Status

There has been an increase in the percentage of lay catechetical leaders who are married. Just over three-fourths (76 percent) of lay respondents in 2011 were married; 13 percent were single and 11 percent were divorced, separated, or widowed.

In 1981, 66 percent were married, 27 percent were single, and the remaining 7 percent were divorced, separated, or widowed.

	1981	2011
Married	66%	76%
Single	27%	13%
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	7%	11%

Ecclesial Status

The most glaring difference in ecclesial status since 1981 is the dramatic increase in the percentage of laity and the decrease in the percentage of religious sisters. Ninety percent of catechetical leaders in 2011 were laypersons. Permanent deacon was not an option in the 1981 survey, but in the recent study, 2 percent of the respondents indicated that they fell into this category. Priests, brothers, and seminarians continue to be the least represented groups among catechetical leaders.

	MA+3	MAJ
Laity	79%	94%
Sisters	18%	4%
Brothers	<1%	0%
Seminarians	0%	<1%
Permanent Deacons	2%	2%
Priests	1%	4%

Age

In 2011, 34 percent of the catechetical leaders were over the age of 60, while 11 percent were under the age of 40. This is very different from the 1981 profile when only 19 percent of professionals were over the age of 50; in 2011, 66 percent of parish catechetical leaders were over 50 years old. The profession is definitely graying as is illustrated in the following chart.

At the same time, there is a “changing of the guard” among the catechetical leadership. As would be expected, members of the “silent generation” (born prior to 1943) are fading away with only 8 percent of parish catechetical leaders being from this cohort. The Boomers still predominate representing 58 percent of the respondents in the current survey. Generation X and the Millennials are beginning to take their place in the ministry with just over one-third being from one of these two generations.

	1981	2011
51+ years	19%	66%
41-50 years	35%	22%
31-40 years	39%	8%
30 years or under	7%	5%

Generational Representation in 2011 Survey

	Number	Percentage
Silent (Prior to 1943)	212	8%
Boomer (1943-1960)	1,614	58%
Generation X (1960-1982)	864	31%
Millennials (1983+)	99	4%

Academic Credentials

Forty-three percent of the catechetical leaders in 2011 had a master or doctoral degree, while 27 percent had less than a bachelor degree. Because a master degree was a requirement for inclusion in the 1981 survey, no comparisons can be made between the two studies. However, it is difficult to make a case for the profession of catechetical leader when more than one-fourth of those who serve in the ministry have less than a bachelor’s degree. It is safe to say that the “position” of catechetical leader is a reality in most parishes. The “profession,” on the other hand, is far from a reality.

Less than Associate Degree	Associate Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Master Degree	Doctoral Degree
17%	10%	30%	41%	2%

Manner of Employment

Fifty-eight percent of catechetical leaders in 2011 were employed full-time (paid based on working 40 or more hours per week). Seven percent served more than one parish; of those who did, 70 percent served two parishes and 14 percent served three parishes.

Written Contract

In 2011, 69 percent of all catechetical leaders did not have a written contract. Of those who did, 58 percent indicated that the contract extended one year; for 40 percent the contract did not indicate the number of years it extends. Twenty-nine percent of part-time leaders had a written contract; of those, 40 percent extended one year and for 57 percent, the contract did not specify a length of employment.

	1981	2011 Part-time
Written contract	73%	29%
Extends for one year	86%	40%
No time specified		57%

Programming Responsibilities

Over 80 percent of parish catechetical leaders in 2011 were responsible for grades one through six, with 78 percent responsible for grades seven and eight as well. This is slightly lower than in 1981, when more than 90 percent of the DREs were responsible for grades one through eight,

Diocesan Support

Eighty-eight percent of the catechetical leaders in 2011 reported receiving “total” to “adequate” support from their diocesan office. This is down a bit from the 1981 survey but overall, catechetical leaders believe they are getting the type of diocesan office support they need to minister effectively.

	1981	MAJ
Adequate Support	41%	40%
Total Support	50%	49%

PART II SELECTED ISSUES

The publication of the 1981 survey results concluded with a series of observations and resultant questions for the future of the religious education/catechetical ministry. Here we review some of those observations and questions in light of what we have learned through our current survey in hope that some conversation will result as we move forward. For each issue we present the 1981 statement in bold, our 1981 comments indented and in italics, and then our current observations.

Sixty-two percent of the professionals choose the title “Director of Religious Education” (DRE).

In as much as there is a concern among professionals regarding the profession’s lack of identity and prestige within individual parishes and in the church in general, would it not be wise to settle on one title? Would it not be helpful for all diocesan and national offices to use a standardized title?

Our recent survey shows that just the opposite of this has happened. Among the MA+3 respondents, 57 percent have the title DRE and 22 percent have the title DFF (Director of Faith Formation), a designation not in use at all in 1981. This means we have not only not settled on a standardized title, but we have added a new one. Among the majority, one-third (34 percent) have the title of DRE and another third (32 percent) have the title of CRE. This leaves one-third with a wide variety of titles. We still wonder what this means for the future of the profession/ministry. It still seems that some consistency in naming is important to professional identity.

	1981	MA+3	MAJ
DRE	62%	57%	34%
CRE	16%	2%	32%
DFF		22%	8%
Other	22%	19%	26%

Women outnumber men 83 percent to 17 percent in the profession.

Is this percentage breakdown acceptable? Is this a trend which should be continued or should steps be taken to insure that the profession attracts both genders equally?

Acceptable or not, this trend has continued, particularly among the majority of catechetical leaders. Among the MA+3s, the percentage of women is now 84 percent. However, among the larger group of those serving in this ministry, the percentage is much higher at 88 percent. Is it problematic that we appear to be losing men among the ranks of parish catechetical leaders? Should strategic steps be taken both nationally and on the diocesan level to insure the continuing involvement of men in the ministry?

A good working relationship with the pastor is essential to successful religious education or catechetical programming.

This being the case, what steps are being taken on the diocesan level to insure that strong and trusting relationships are developed between pastors and directors or coordinators? What type of training is provided to priests and candidates to the priesthood to assist them in their task of providing a religious education or a catechetical environment in the parish setting?

These very questions led Tom to move from the Religious Education Office of the Archdiocese of Detroit to Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. A good working relationship with the pastor is listed as one of the three most essential elements for success in administering religious education programs for 88 percent of both the MA+3s and the majority (MAJ) of catechetical leaders. His sense, working in the seminary community as both a professor and academic dean, is that not a whole lot has changed regarding the place of catechetics in most seminary curricula. It is not there which is too bad.

In addition, many of the seminarians (and younger lay students as well) are quite critical of their religious education and thus tend to take a dim view of the catechesis they received, particularly with regard to their lack of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic tradition. Their experiences strongly influence their catechetical decision-making. The success of parish catechetical efforts, as the survey results consistently indicate, are highly dependent on the pastor, and the next



generation of pastors, as well as lay catechetical leaders, will no doubt place greater emphasis on cognitive outcomes.

The seminary and catechetical communities need to work more closely together in designing strategies that are faithful to the catechetical vision put forth in church documents, respectful of the learners, and adequately address the needs of today's diverse Catholic community.

Thirty-six percent of the professional coordinators/DREs find the prevalent structure for educating non-parochial school students (K-12) “basically ineffective” or “totally ineffective.”

If more than one-third of the professionals believe that the structure used to educate non-parochial school students is basically ineffective, should steps not be taken on the diocesan and the national levels to experiment with alternative structures? Should religious educators not be more systematic in their creative approaches to structuring programs and in sharing the results of their endeavors?

In 2011, catechetical leaders were a bit more optimistic regarding the effectiveness of the K-12, one-hour, once a week, 30 times a year structure. Unlike 1981 when 36 percent of the DREs judged it to be “basically” to “totally” ineffective, only 29 percent of the MA+3s and 25 percent of the majority (MAJ) take such a dim view. The problem is we are still working with a structure that more than one-fourth of catechetical leaders find “basically” to “totally” ineffective. Would it be helpful if we made a concerted effort on the national and diocesan levels to take a serious look at this structure and come up with some realistic outcomes to be expected from involvement in the one-hour, once-a-week, 30 times a year structure and publicly promote them? Currently, in our judgment, as catechetical leaders we tend to hold out unrealistic expectations (particularly on the cognitive level).

Percentage of Catechetical Leaders Judging the Prevalent K-12 Structure To Be “Basically Ineffective” or “Totally Ineffective”

	1981	MA+3	MAJ
Basically ineffective	36%	28%	23%
Total ineffective	1%	1%	1%
Total	37%	29%	24%

Since 1981, there has been a great of exploration of alternatives to the one hour, once-a-week K-12 model. We would highlight the work of Judith Dunlap, whom many of you may know, who devoted a great deal of time and effort attempting to develop new and creative alternatives. In our survey, 43 percent of the MA+3s and 29 percent of the majority indicated that they employed some type of alternative model for their

parish catechetical/religious education programs. The following were frequently mentioned alternative models: Whole Community Catechesis, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, EDGE, home study, family-based programs, intergenerational, and lectionary-based programs. However, none of these alternatives have overtaken the prevalent structure.

Parish religious education or catechetical programs are perceived as being ineffective in influencing senior high students and young adults.

Is there a need for a more concerted effort to influence senior high students and young adults? Have these two age levels been written off by most parishes and professionals as unreachable? What does the parish offer to these two groupings by way of religious formation?

Across the board, respondents to the 2011 survey perceived their programs to be more successful than did the catechetical leaders of 1981. However, just as in 1981, 2011 catechetical leaders perceived themselves to be less successful with senior high and young adult groups than with elementary and junior high students and even adults. They perceived themselves as least successful in influencing religious behaviors, and not much more optimistic in their assessment of their efforts to impact young people's understandings of the Catholic tradition.

Percentage of Catechetical Leaders Who Perceive Their Efforts on the Senior High School Level to Be “Successful” or “Very Successful”

	1981	MA+3	MAJ
Attitudes	54%	71%	71%
Understandings	42%	66%	66%
Behaviors	36%	50%	53%

Percentage of Catechetical Leaders Who Perceive Their Efforts with Young Adults to Be “Successful” or “Very Successful”

	1981	MA+3	MAJ
Attitudes	55%	66%	63%
Understandings	40%	49%	50%
Behaviors	41%	49%	54%

This is problematic in an age of Catholic illiteracy when considering that it is in adolescence that young people's cognitive abilities are such that they can actually engage religious questions and find themselves in the midst of making life decisions. This is also the age at which they may be entering college or have already entered the college classroom, class-

rooms where, as James Heft notes, there is a common and problematic assumption "... among faculty ... that strong particular religious identities are dangerous, since such identities make it easier for 'true' believers to be intolerant and narrow in their views"(155). How can we expect our young people to maintain their faith in this context, if they are not grounded in a solid understanding of the Catholic tradition and able to express this understanding? Of all the age groups, senior high and young adults strike me as the groups most in need of effective catechetical programs. The popular culture, in which most of our adolescents are immersed, does not support or promote their formation as Catholics or as Christians.

Married men make the highest salaries and married women the lowest.

Is this sexism on the church's part? Do married men demand higher salaries than married women and thus receive them? Do parishes tend to pay higher salaries to primary bread winners? Are married women whose salaries are a second income to their families keeping salaries low for all professionals because they are willing to work for lower wages?

As the following table illustrates, in 2011 the median salary for MA+3 men and women for whom their salaries were the primary family income favors men by 3 percent or \$1,178. The difference in median salaries is more dramatic among the Majority. Here the difference is \$3,913 or 11 percent — a sizeable difference. The percentage difference between the MA+3 and the Majority might be explained by the fact that the MA+3 were more than likely hired based on credentials (degree and experience).

2011 Median Salaries for Primary Family Income

	Lay Women	Lay Men
MA+3	\$42,115	\$43,293
MAJ (Full-time)	\$34,610	\$38,523
	Difference in Dollars	Percentage Difference
MA+3	\$1,178	2.8%
MAJ (Full-time)	\$3,913	11%

The following chart provides the median salaries for full-time married and single catechetical leaders. Among full-timers: Married MA+3 men made the most (\$43,501), single MA+3 women (\$42,391) followed them closely. Single, full-time MAJ women made the least (\$32,408). The determiner of salary in 2011 appeared not to be gender as much as professional credentials.

2011 Median Salaries for Full-time Lay Women and Men

	Lay Women	Lay Men
Married MA+3	\$41,789	\$43,501
Married Full-time MAJ	\$32,408	\$37,882
Single* MA+3	\$42,391	\$40,877
Single Full-time MAJ	\$34,750	\$34,879
	Difference in Dollars	Percentage Difference
Married MA+3	\$1,712	4.1%
Married Full-time	\$5,475	16.9%
Single* MA+3	\$1,514	3.7%
Single Full-time	\$129	0.4%

*Includes single, widowed, divorced, and separated.

Among married part-timers, women had the higher salaries: married women (\$13,662), married men (\$11,669). Among single part-time catechetical leaders, single men received a slightly higher salary (\$12,000) than single women (\$11,909). It should be noted that there were only 12 single, part-time majority men in the survey.

2011 Median Salaries for Part-time Lay Women and Men

	Lay Women	Lay Men
Married Part-time MAJ	\$13,662	\$11,669
Single Part-time MAJ	\$11,909	\$12,000
	Difference in Dollars	Percentage Difference
Married Part-time MAJ	+\$1,993	+17.1%
Single Part-time MAJ	-\$91	-0.8%

In 1981, women DREs were underpaid dramatically in relation to their male counterparts, particularly the married women. This has changed. In 2011, the median salary of married MA+3 women was only \$1,712 less than that of married men, and single women received a higher median income than single men by \$1,514. It seems fair to say that the large 1981 gender gap was not evident in 2011. Apparently, parishes are now paying for the position, irrespective of the gender of the person being hired.

Median 1981 Salary (Converted to 2011 Dollars) Compared to MA+3 Median 2011 Salary

1981 (converted to 2011 dollars)	
Married Women	\$27,497
Married Men	\$41,333
Single Women	\$34,335
Single Men	\$35,211
2011	
Married Women	\$41,789
Married Men	\$43,501
Single Women	\$42,391
Single Men	\$40,877

Lay professional coordinators/DREs indicate a high degree of dissatisfaction with their salaries.

Can parishes support higher wages for professional coordinators/DREs? To date is there any evidence to show that having a professional coordinator or director as opposed to a well-intentioned, competent volunteer makes any difference in the program's effectiveness? Is this difference dramatic enough to justify higher salaries? What is the acceptable lifestyle the church feels it should support through wages? What are the criteria on which a parish decides that a salary is too much?

In the 1981 study, 49 percent of the lay respondents indicated that they were “more than satisfied” (5%) or “satisfied” (44%) with their salary. Satisfaction has increased since then. In 2011, 57 percent of the MA+3s and 60 percent of the MAJs indicated that they were “more than satisfied” or “satisfied” with their salary. This being said, there was still a high percentage of catechetical leaders who express some degree of dissatisfaction.

Lay Salary Satisfaction Comparisons

	Satisfied	More than Satisfied	Total
1981	44%	5%	49%
MA+3	49%	7%	57%
MAJ	49%	11%	60%

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

We are in the midst of a generational changing of the guard in catechetical leadership. Today, the initiating Catholic community in the United States is not stable. The values and practices

the Catholic community now models are diverse and at times, contradictory. As Chester Gillis wrote in 1999, “The Catholic Church in America, indeed all over the world, has changed more in the past 35 years than it had in the past three and a half centuries” (26). These changes, in turn, have had a direct impact on each generation of catechetical leaders and on how they practice the ministry.

We want to leave you with the following three questions:

- ❖ *Do we need to take more ownership of the prevalent K-12 structure, and bring more realism to our expectations of what it can and cannot accomplish?*
- ❖ *Do we need to put more focus on the cognitive dimension in our catechetical programming by placing more focus on adolescent and young adult programming?*
- ❖ *Is it time to revisit the issue of professionalism and catechetical leadership locally on the diocesan level and nationally?*

These are but a few of our facts, figures, and questions. We would invite you to take some time to visit our website where more of the findings from the 2011 survey are available. Review the findings and share your observations, recommendations, and questions. We will be collating the submissions and making them available on the website in an effort to raise awareness of the parish catechetical leader and to move the catechetical ministry forward in the coming years. The website address is <http://www.saintmeinrad.edu/professors/walters>. A link is available where you may enter your comments. We hope to hear from you.

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Tom and Rita Walters have been actively engaged in serving the catechetical ministry since the early 1970s. Their research has focused on profiling catechetical leadership and programming on both the parish and diocesan levels. For many years, Tom, a former NCCL president, served as academic dean of Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology; he is now the full-time Professor of Religious Education. After a career in grant writing, Rita has retired but continues to volunteer her services and assist Tom in his research.

Bloggers Beware



Blogging is a powerful force within our culture, and not just among the avant-garde or youth. Prior to the November 2012 USCCB meeting in Baltimore, some bishops attended a pre-conference on social media. Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City, chairman of the USCCB

Committee on Communications, reminded the attendees that there are many opportunities for the church to engage with those who live on the “digital continent.” The participants received a letter from Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, which described the online mission field as ripe for receiving the gospel. “In this context, the role of the laity becomes ever more central,” he said, noting that the “voices of the many Catholics who are present in blogs, social networks, and other digital forums are reaching people who might not otherwise encounter the message of Jesus.” Blogs come in all shapes and sizes, and are not limited to the wordy missives of would-be journalists. There are art blogs, photo blogs, video blogs (vlogs,) music blogs, and audio blogs (podcasts.) The good news is that anyone can create a blog— even you and me. The bad news is anyone can create a blog. To date there are some 2,600 blogs identified as “Catholic.” Where do we begin to sift through the morass?

Some of the bishops at the meeting expressed a hesitancy to jump into the online social media world, noting that it could take a lot of time and that there can be a lack of civility in many online discussions and comments. Their concern is not unfounded. This new-age media is not for the timid, for a blog can be an insidious and vindictive way of airing one’s opinion without the usual constraints of truthfulness, or the burden of proof. When a Catholic-attack blog reared its ugly head in the New England region, it hid behind the veil of anonymity. This blog claims to present the views of concerned Catholics that have serious disagreements with the way the church is being run. The bloggers, since they refuse to reveal their identity, can say just about anything, and have launched various accusations at church leadership, selecting from a garden variety of evils including heresy, simony, and Marxist-leaning social agenda. To make matters worse, the blogger had someone working on the inside of the diocese feeding them with information and confidential material. It is no wonder that the bishops are a little hesitant to fly into the blogosphere.

If bishops and laity are to approach the online world as missionaries, we are going to need some quality control standards

Claire M. McManus

for working with blogs. People in the know from the world of business offer some insight for establishing credibility and trust when engaging in this form of social media. The website socialmediatoday.com offers guidance to businesses that are venturing into blogging as a way to promote their services. Some of their advice can be adapted to the world of theology and catechetics so that we can become better bloggers and blog consumers.

- ❖ Establish authority. In other words, make sure the blogger knows theology and is in a position to represent the church’s teachings. While piety and faithfulness are important fruits of the Holy Spirit, they are not enough to make a person’s blog a trusted resource.
- ❖ Provide proof of who you are. Anonymous blogs are anathema. If you are going to trust a blog then you should be able to find links to the blogger’s work as well as references or testimonials from others.
- ❖ Avoid negativity. A blog that is all about complaining is not going to contribute to your personal growth or make your catechetical program any better.
- ❖ Quality content is more important than the quantity of posts. Two million blog posts are published every 24 hours so don’t think that a daily post will enhance the richness of the content.
- ❖ Give your blog a clever name if you want to draw attention to your site.

Applying the above listed criteria to some of the 2,600 Catholic blogs that are clogging up the blogosphere may be a useful exercise. It is a Herculean task to sift through so many blogs looking for those that will benefit our catechetical programs. Even those sites that attempt to curate blogs are subject to their own bias and agenda. It is interesting to note that a handful of bloggers were invited to dialogue with the bishops at the pre-conference on social media last November. Among those present were Rocco Palmo, *Whispers in the Loggia*, Terry Mattingly, *Get Religion*, and Mary DeTurris Pout, *Not Strictly Spiritual*. These blogs meet most of the criteria for good blogging practice and may be a good place to begin our catalog. What we need is to find a way to filter out the useless blogs so that this powerful media can flow undiluted onto the digital continent. ■

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

Fearing the Stigmata: Humorously Holy Stories of a Young Catholic's Search for a Culturally Relevant Faith

By Matt Weber | Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2012 | Reviewed by Pam Fischer



In *Fearing the Stigmata*, Matt Weber, a Harvard graduate, a producer for Catholic TV, and a frequent contributor to the *Huffington Post*, shares stories that will tickle your funny bone.

The introduction for the book is one of the most humorous segments of the book; the author shares a personal story from his fourth grade at a Catholic school. This story is worth the price of the book. In *Fearing the Stigmata* Weber shares his adventures of how he has tried to be a good Catholic all his life and how this journey of being holy is often filled with laughter.

Most of us struggle with living our faith “publicly,” meaning people don’t always understand why we as Catholics want to pray in front of statues, pray before our meals (even in a restaurant), or simply wear a symbol of our faith, such as a crucifix necklace. Weber shows us through his stories that we all struggle with this, and he shares examples of how he has been able to enrich his life by sharing these “public” signs of our faith. One of the ways in which he does this is through his story in Chapter 5. He starts watching the CatholicTV television channel on many late nights while attending Harvard and notices that the programming is for basically two age groups: old and young. There was really nothing that was for *himself*. He struggled with why his age group was missing and was reminded of a quote by Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world” (18). So...Weber sent an email to the president and the general manager explaining his dilemma. A few days later he was contacted by the president, Fr. Robert Reed, and a meeting was set up. Not wanting to share a typical pitch, Weber decided to come bearing gifts. He showed up to the meeting with a video reflection about living his faith publicly. Jay Fadden, the general manager, and Fr. Reed agreed that this was worth airing, and ran it the next day. Thus began Matt Weber’s CatholicTV career.

I truly find Chapter 7 to be the most humorous. Weber shares the story of his first time playing his harmonica as part of the church choir. He realized that he wasn’t playing for Jesus but with Jesus. (Please read this chapter. Again, it is worth the price of the book.)

In Chapter 29, Weber shares that story of oversleeping and missing Mass. Many young people his age would more than

likely roll over and continue sleeping. Not Weber, he proceeds to go online and looks for church times in the area, because his beloved football team will be playing when another Mass is scheduled at his church. He finds a church that is a short bike ride away with a time that will fit into his schedule. I forgot to mention that this is a Brazilian Catholic church and Mass is celebrated in Portuguese. Upon entering the church,

Weber is met with many of the same visual symbols that are in most Catholic churches, however, he feels lost until he sees the smiles of everyone in the church. He shares that there was singing and clapping and that the sign of peace lasted for two minutes (this does not happen in most churches).

He did not understand many words celebrated at that Mass, but he shares that it was one of the most powerful Masses he has ever attended. He suggested that we should remember that God has many church build-

He did not understand many words celebrated at that Mass, but he shares that it was one of the most powerful Masses he has ever attended.

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ings and many languages that share his Word, but our faith is universal.

Another reason to pick up this book is to hear the story of the author's intense relationship with Cheez Balls — and not just ordinary Cheez Balls, but Planters Cheez Balls. He compares his journey of searching for these Planters Cheez Balls (they are no longer made) with the character of "Don Quixote." Remember that Quixote encouraged others to "dream the impossible dream." Weber places this story towards the end of the book and it is a good place for it, because I believe as readers we are at the point in the book where we truly begin to think how we ourselves can try to live our faith more publicly.

As an avid collector of rosaries, Chapter 31 touched my heart. Weber is riding his bike home from the Harvard campus and the wind chill was negative five degrees when he sees a small, brightly colored object in the middle of the

road. He continues his journey a little bit further down the road and is drawn to turn around and go pick it up. When he gets there he realizes it is a rosary (red plastic beads). He proceeds to pick them up and decides to drop them off by a Catholic church that he rides by everyday on his way home.

He pedals home forgetting to drop them off and they are still hanging there today. He uses that as a reminder that it was worth saving. Are we not all worth saving?

Fearing the Stigmata: Humorously Holy Stories of a Young Catholic's Search for a Culturally Relevant Faith is for anyone

who needs to be reminded that funny things happen while we live out our faith publicly and not so publicly. ■

Pam Fischer is a director of religious education at St. Thomas the Apostle in the Diocese of Green Bay. She has been married to Larry for 20 years and they have one adult son. Contact her at faith1@lakefield.net.

Another reason to pick up this book is to hear the story of the author's intense relationship with Cheez Balls

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Ten Ways to Help Promote Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Harry J. Dudley



The following best practices can help to promote Certification for Lay Ecclesial Ministers:

1. Learn about the subcommittee's work. Bishop Quinn (Winona, MN), chair of the new subcommittee, emphasizes: "We want to promote, better understand, and extend

best practices of this new development in the church. Rather than limit, we want to expand and discern this work of the Holy Spirit." For more information go to usccb.org/certification.

2. Understand and study, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. This USCCB document (2005) offers the framework and major categories for formation.

Lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire appropriate formation which is required to fulfill their function properly and to carry it out conscientiously, zealously, and diligently (Code of Canon Law, 231 #1; Co-Workers, 33).

3. Determine what roles you wish to certify. Consider how you will surface, walk with and help candidates to complete the process. The collaborative efforts of the Alliance for the Certification of Lay Ecclesial Ministers (ACLEM or simply "The Alliance") are a valuable resource and will help to simplify things for you. See their website at lemcertification.org.

4. Promote awareness of the benefits of Certification.

Key benefits:

- ❖ Providing a common language for dialogue and collaboration;
- ❖ Recognizing and affirming those already in ministry;
- ❖ Giving directions to the future of Lay Ecclesial Ministry in the church; and

- ❖ Promoting faithful and competent Lay Ecclesial Ministers who are accountable to standards and to the diocese or organization that certify them.

Diocesan staff learn that the assessment process:

- ❖ Increases response to the continuing education and formation needs of candidates, and
- ❖ Helps to develop a pool of qualified candidates for parishes seeking new staff.

5. Partner with academic institutions. Look at what nearby colleges, universities, and lay formation programs within seminaries can offer you. Talk about how standards provide a basis for demonstrating how their

programs of study may assist candidates. Ask for help with accessing funding for participants. Remember, if you don't have them within your diocese, there are online programs that are willing to partner. The University of Dayton's Virtual Community for Faith Formation is one example, but there are also others.

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6. Surface and support mentors for candidates. When possible, do this jointly with the professional organizations, as their members are equally committed to promote excellence in the ministry. Mentors can guide candidates as apprentices. Recently certified institutional ministers have shared how important mentors are for them. I've often heard: "My mentor nurtured and fostered my sense of discipleship." Mentors also benefit from the experiences of reciprocity and mutual support. Some have shared how the candidate "re-ignited my earlier enthusiasm."

Mentoring, formal or informal, can be especially helpful. An experienced church minister introduces the prospective lay minister into the ministerial workplace. A mentor passes on more than skills; he or she presents an understanding of the particular culture in which the ministry will take place, including the challenges and the opportunities. The mentor helps the prospective minister to develop realistic expectations about ministry, including the limits of what can

be accomplished. This can prevent the burnout that results when actual experience fails to meet expectations. By sharing their own stories of progress and accomplishments, sacrifices and frustrations, mentors prepare new ministers to make an informed commitment to ministry (*Co-workers*, 29-30).

7. **Recognize certified candidates.** Do this publically at the diocesan level. This emphasizes the relationship of all ministries to the bishop. Institutional ministry roles often require endorsement by the diocesan bishop as the final step in the process. “Most importantly, the authorization process can provide occasions for the bishop to demonstrate his support for the lay ecclesial ministers of his diocese and do model collaboration with them as his lay co-workers” (*Co-workers*, 60). Be sure to also encourage pastors to recognize newly certified leaders and to emphasize the benefits to the parish.
8. **Tell your candidates’ stories.** Use your diocesan newspaper, website, and social media often. We have found that certified campus ministers love to tell their story of how the process made them more excellent at what they do. The process helps cultivate good habits of relating their spiritual lives to their work. Others may be inspired to follow!
9. **Remind candidates that the certification portfolio documents their credibility and becomes part of their resume.** They will have opportunities to reflect on their ministries, engage in self-analysis, and benefit from

assessment by their peers. “Throughout the discernment process a person needs to ask: What talents, virtues, and limits do I possess that indicate my ability to serve God’s people through a commitment to lay ecclesial ministry? Lay persons with a call to lay ecclesial ministry possess certain dispositions, which are further developed during the formal preparation process” (*Co-Workers*, 30).

Whether they are being initially certified or renewing certification, the ongoing assessment and formation reinforces their need for life-long intellectual learning and spiritual formation.

10. **Use positive language.** This is an opportunity for growth in excellence, not a burden. Certification benefits all in ministry, whether one is new or has been in the

ministry for many years. It’s not “one more hoop to jump through” or another thing you “have to do.” Those who have learned firsthand about the benefits will help you find the language and be your best promoters! █

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director of religious education in four dioceses for over 24 years; served the NCCL Representative Council and Board of Directors, and has been a catechist of all ages for many years.

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NEW USCCB SUBCOMMITTEE

As of January 2012, there is a new Subcommittee of the Committee on Catholic Education at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service assists the bishops in reviewing and approving certification standards and procedures to be used on a voluntary basis by dioceses and national organizations and offers consultative services aimed at improving the quality of lay ministry formation programs sponsored by arch/dioceses and academic institutions. It replaces the former USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation. The accrediting function for programs no longer continues.

The Committees on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (LMFLY), Evangelization and Catechesis (EC), Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV), Cultural Diversity in the Church (CD), and Catholic Education (CE), all have elected representatives who serve on the subcommittee to strengthen the collaborative efforts. This broad representation highlights the importance of this work to the bishops of the United States. █

Help Parents Be Their Best Selves

Leisa Anslinger



Lent is a good time to reflect on the ways in which we are or are not engaging parents to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Do parents embrace the call to ongoing conversion in Christ and live their faith deeply within their families, teaching their children by example?

How do we, as pastoral leaders, provide the guidance, support, and care that parents need in order to accept Christ's call to love and serve with open hearts and hands?

PEOPLE HAVE A NEED TO GIVE

We have been walking through the research on engagement in this column through the perspective of engaging parents, understanding that when we engage parents, we touch families, and by extension, the parish, community, and world. We have already explored the first question people ask when they come to a parish for the first time, or when they are ready to become more deeply connected to the parish: "What do I get?" The second question, "What do I give?" gets at the heart of the engagement process and of discipleship¹. People have a need to give, and Lent is an opportune time to immerse parents and children in Jesus' self-giving way.

The studies on engagement help us to understand that it isn't enough to offer the occasional service opportunity, nor to hook parents in by way of their children. Rather, the research helps us understand that helping people discover and offer their talents is one of the primary keys to the process of building strong communities through the relationships of the members. Additionally, once people recognize their God-given talents, they need opportunities to offer their talents with meaning.

PEOPLE NEED TO BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

Read studies on the spiritual needs that people experience in their lives, and we will see a deeper connection: people seek meaning and purpose; they need to be part of something bigger than themselves; they need to belong to a "beloved community." Create an environment within the faith community in which everyone has the opportunity to give of his

or her best self and you will reach people in the reality of their lives. Meet spiritual needs and you will engage people in faith and all that matters. Parents embrace the call to follow Jesus with their lives and they teach their children to do the same.

I visited a parish recently where leaders are discerning the shape of faith formation for their future. For the first time, young parents were invited to come with their children for a simple pizza dinner, with activities for the children while the parents met with me. Our format was familiar to many of you: prayer, a common brief catechesis that included the children, and a brief presentation to the parents about the benefits of regular participation in Mass and in the parish community. The parents were then invited to talk together about their faith practices at home. The parents were encouraged to talk about what they are already doing as well as to share their hopes, dreams and wonders. Index cards were placed on the table, with the suggestion that each idea they heard shared by

one of their group members be recorded for later incorporation at home. The conversation "glowed." Parents talked with others whose children were of different ages. They learned from each other, shared their joys and fears, and thanked the parish staff for bringing them together. When it was time to go home, we knew something truly special was taking place

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because no one left!*

because no one left! Parents exchanged phone numbers and email addresses, and asked the staff if they could help to bring about future gatherings of this nature.

Engaging catechesis reaches people's hearts as well as their heads, and it ignites a desire to give of oneself as Christ has commanded us. Talk with parents and others in your community about how they might answer the question, "What do I give?" Ask them what they would like to do, and find ways for them to do it. Providing the opportunity for parents to offer their best selves within the parish creates a special connection between faith and life, between the life of the parish and life at home, between the church and the domestic church. ■

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

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

@Pontifex

Benedict XVI 's first tweet to @Pontifex was on December 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A week before Benedict XVI wrote his first tweet, he had over 500,000 English language followers! In early January, he had over 1,287,000. Now that is some success.

The Holy See Press Office released the following introduction:

The Pope's presence on Twitter is a concrete expression of his conviction that the church must be present in the digital arena. This initiative is best understood in the context of his reflections on the importance of the cultural space that has been brought into being by the new technologies.

I have researched the Internet and social media sites for ideas and links for catechists, catechetical leaders, and adults; a sampling follows.

Patheos is committed to hosting conversations on faith through various faith channels (Muslim, Jewish, Progressive Christianity, Catholic, etc.), a religion library, and more.

Bishop Christopher Coyne served as apostolic administrator for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis in 2012. He was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Indianapolis in 2011.

Through Facebook, Bishop Coyne shares passages and reflections on the lectionary readings. He brings to our attention quotes from writers and popular figures. He comments on the events in both the church and our culture; he is a delight as a real gentleness and pastoral dimensions are reflected in all his posts.

Fr. James Martin, SJ, author of *My Life With the Saints*, *The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything*, and *Between Heaven and Mirth*, maintains a very active Facebook page.

Martin covers a wide variety of topics including: the Catholic Church, humor,

saints, Catholic life and practice, culture, and Jesuit life and ministry. In the 1950s, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen was seen on television, and from the 1960s to 2000s, Fr. Andrew Greeley was actively writing articles and books on sociology, religion, church politics, and spirituality. Today, Fr. James Martin is visible in the media, with occasional television appearances as well his writing of articles, books, and his posts on Facebook.

Pinterest

A couple months ago, to further the ministry of our blogs, eCatechist.com and faithAlivebooks.com, I created a "Dan Pierson" Pinterest account. My boards include: Catechist, Children's Books, Books Worth Reading, Ideas, People, Saints FAQ's, Vatican II, Year of Faith, Websites and Blogs.

Here are some other Pinterest accounts you should know about:

- ❖ Busted Halo
- ❖ Catholic News Agency
- ❖ Catholic Spirit Newspaper
- ❖ Joyce Donahue
- ❖ Loyola Press
- ❖ Liturgical Press
- ❖ Our Sunday Visitor
- ❖ Rose Pacatte
- ❖ TeamRCIA

Webinars

More and more dioceses, organizations, and publishers are producing webinars. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, a webinar is "a live online educational presentation during which participating viewers can submit questions and comments." The word was first used in 1998.

Once a webinar is completed, the sponsoring organization adds it to its library, so that it can then be viewed through its YouTube channel.

Ave Maria Press and **Loyola Press** are two publishers that have a growing library of webinars on topics of

special interest for catechists and catechetical leaders.

GEMS

Each month Sr. Janet Schaeffler publishes **GEMS** (Great Endeavors Mined and Shared). GEMS is an adult faith formation newsletter that includes the best practices in adult faith formation throughout the world.

Its focus is **practical** because it highlights what is actually happening, as well as, the vision of what is hoped for by those who are immersed in the real world of adult faith formation.

The newsletter explores:

- ❖ themes pertinent to adult faith formation (hospitality, publicity, content, technology, etc.)
- ❖ on-going research; advice from experts and practitioners; resources
- ❖ actual adult formation best practices that are working

Past issues are archived: www.janetschaeffler.com.

To receive each issue by email as it is published, e-mail Janet Schaeffler, OP: jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org.

Sr. Janet has written many books and articles on adult faith formation, catechesis, and spirituality. Recently, she has written two eBooks, which are available in PDF, and may be downloaded to your computer from www.eCatechist.com.

40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation

What We Believe: Praying and Living the Apostles' Creed — An Introduction I

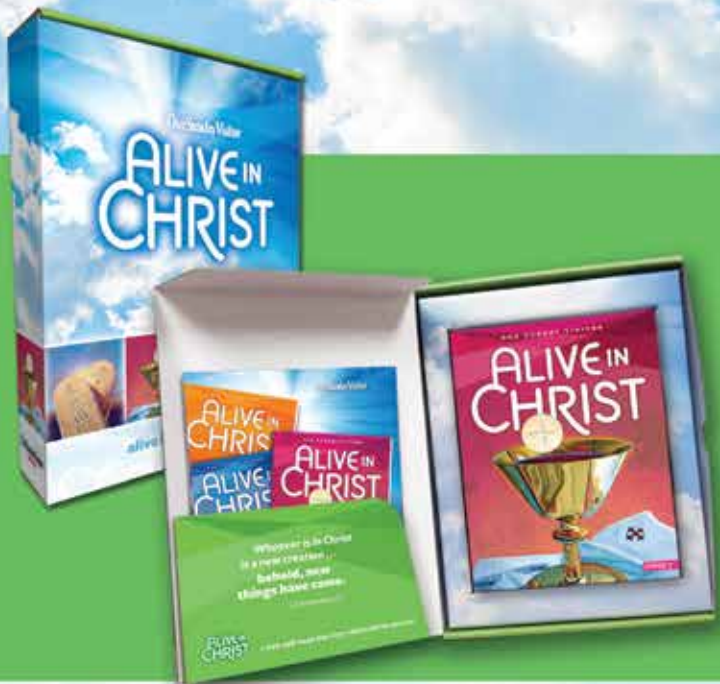
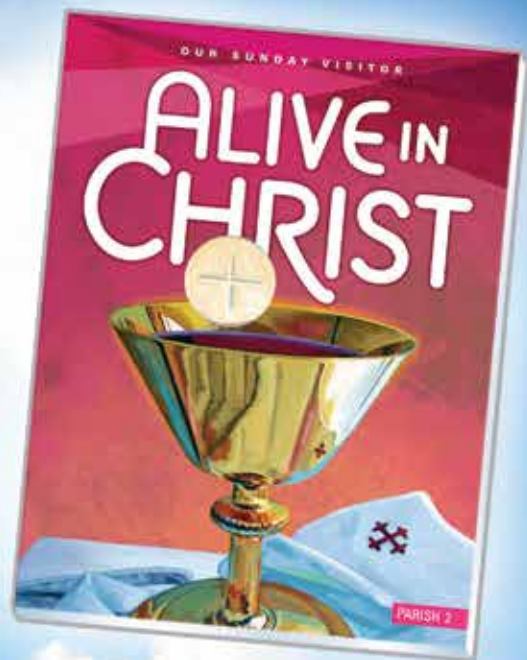
Dan Pierson served as director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for 17 years and is the founder of faithAlivebooks.com and eCatechist.com. He is co-author with Susan Stark of What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist (Pflaum Publishing). Please send suggestions and recommendations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

Our Sunday Visitor

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