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CATECHETICAL
LEADER



- NEW - EVANGELIZATION

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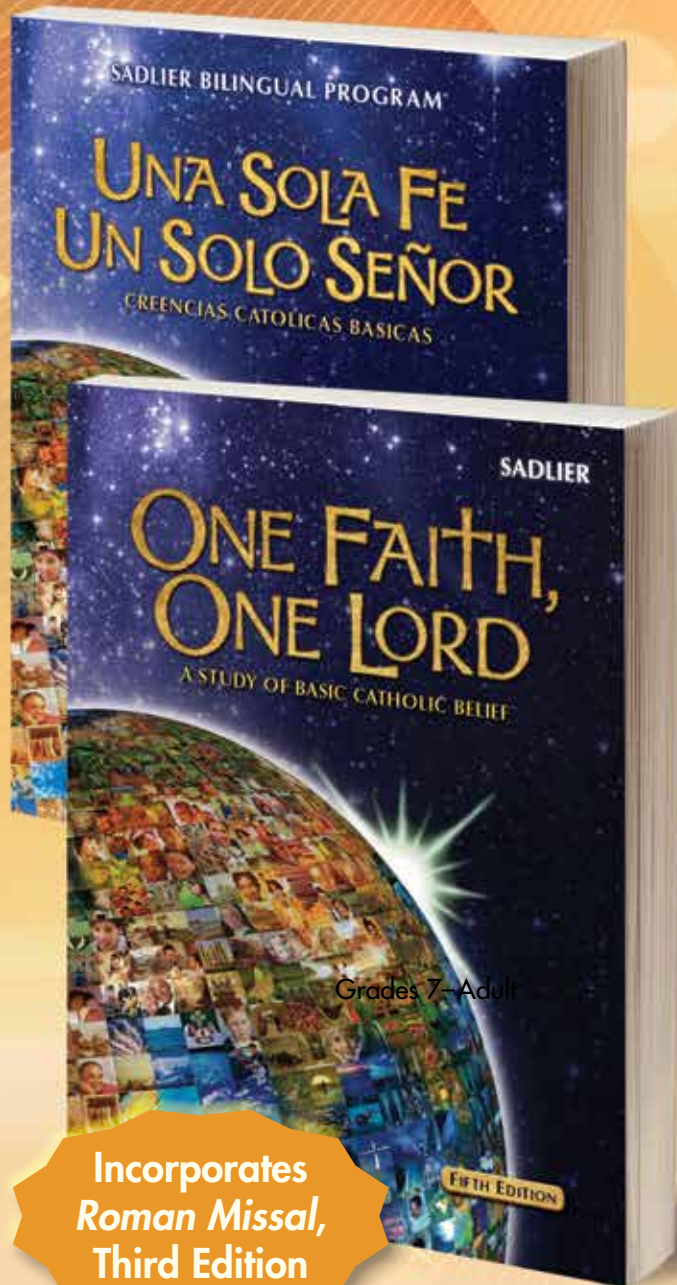
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PEOPLE OF THE STORY

Bill Miller



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



Colleagues in Christ:

It is a blessing and an honor to be able to write this letter to each of you. Oftentimes, I like to share stories about the experiences that have helped to shape me as a person of faith. I believe that, as Catholic Christians, we are “people of the story.” The story that we are commissioned to proclaim is the good news of Jesus Christ, as found in Sacred Scripture and further embodied in the continuing life of the church. Moreover, each one of us has our own “sacred story,” the story of our life, and each one of our stories is connected to the great (the ultimate) sacred story.

The following story took place almost 15 years ago, but it is still vivid in my mind and heart today.

As was my custom, on my way to the office each morning I would stop at a local fast-food restaurant that brewed particularly good coffee, in order to “jump start” my day. Although the restaurant had a drive-through window, I usually parked my car and went inside. This gave me the opportunity to greet the wonderful woman who worked the counter on weekday mornings. Over the course of time, though we rarely shared more than a brief greeting, I felt I had come to know her. She was a rather tall African-American lady with a smile as wide as the sky, which she presented to everyone who approached her. I learned, from my relatively brief conversations with her, that she was a Christian. Although that fact didn’t surprise me, I must admit I was amazed at how seamlessly she connected her faith in God with her unmitigated enthusiasm for life. She was one of the most obvious and effective “evangelizers” I had ever met. Over the months, I came to admire the way she effortlessly but powerfully witnessed the goodness of God to everyone she met.

One dark mid-winter morning, I walked through the door of the restaurant at 7:30 to find a line of eight people ahead of me at the counter. There was my friendly waitress trying to diffuse the anger of a man who was

obviously very unhappy about the time it was taking to fill his order. As I listened to the conversation, I learned that two of the cooks and a counter attendant had called-in sick with no one available to replace them. The remaining cook and my friend at the counter were tasked with “running the whole show” so to speak. Of course, this meant that orders would not be filled as promptly or efficiently as usual. No apology or excuse would assuage the anger of the man at the counter, as he began to curse and demean the workers, the restaurant, and the world in general. In his anger, he had become obnoxious and was determined to take his rage out verbally on my kind friend. All during his tirade, she never flinched and never cowered. Perhaps more remarkably, she never attacked him, never berated him, or dismissed him.

When he received his order, he started for the door, muttering obnoxiously as he left the building. The next person in line stepped up to the counter. This customer was almost apologetic as she sought to reassure my friend behind the counter. At once my friend looked her right in the eye and said in a voice loud enough for all of us to hear: “It’s ok, I’m alright. That man didn’t give me my joy; I’m not going to let him take it away.” And then she smiled.

My friend behind the counter has long since moved on. In truth, I am not sure I ever even learned her name. However, her unabashed joy, so obviously connected to the love she felt for God made an impression on me... for life. My life was changed that day. My story was connected, in a moment, in a very special way, to the story of God’s love for us all. I will never forget her...or her message to me.

We are people of the story...and people whose stories connect us to each other and to our God. Oh how God loves a good story, and everyone involved in it! ■

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GIFT OF A FLAT TIRE

Leland Nagel



Greetings,

I was driving down the highway when my tire went flat. I pulled over, put on the mini-spare that most cars offer, headed to the next exit, and looked for a tire shop. It was a Saturday. I stopped twice and asked if there was a place I could buy a few tires. Both suggestions turned out to be places that didn't provide the service I needed. I headed farther down the road and that's when I spotted a tire store. They could take care of me right away.

After chatting and learning what I did for a living, the tire guy said he was Catholic. He had served on the parish council—and he had a few thoughts that he willingly shared in a humorous manner. He recounted how the other evening, he, his wife, and the confirmation teacher were trying to help his daughter complete her “CCD” homework. They weren't feeling very successful in making connections. It turns out the parish “got a great deal” two years ago and purchased religion books from one company and workbooks from another company.

When he had initially called the parish office to explain the problem, he was told to “look it up on the Internet.” He reminded this parish leader that there is no Internet service in the remote area where his family lives; they can't even get cell phone coverage. He continued by saying the parish had promised they would get books and workbooks from the same company this fall. He quickly added that for all the frustration it caused it would be hard to call this purchase *a good deal*.

He continued, covering a variety of topics. His take on church language reminded me how often we use terms that don't translate well into everyday language. My favorite was his comment, “Who the heck came up with the term *extraordinary ministers*? If you can't come up with anything better than that, then don't call them anything.”

This man is willing to *put his money where his mouth is*. The current pastor loves incense. My *tire man* began to notice that people worshipped at another parish when they knew incense would be used. In fact, this parish had two Masses on Easter

Sunday: one at 7:30 a.m. (no incense) and one at 9:00 a.m. (with incense). The earlier Mass was packed and the latter minimally attended. So he asked a few priests he knew if there was such a thing as hypoallergenic incense and then offered to buy it for the parish. His offer was declined.

This coming Monday he was headed back to the parish office. The previous week he was asked to light the candles at Mass, something he hadn't been asked to do since he was an altar server. They handed him a candle lighter that was mostly straight. His memory was of a candle lighter that was bent or hooked at the end. Despite being a lean six feet tall, lighting the candles proved to be difficult. After Mass he told Father he would be over to the office on Monday morning, and asked him to have the church supply catalog out. He would buy a new candle lighter, one more suitable and appropriate for the tall candles used in their church. And then he added, “I asked Father if he got a good deal on that straight candle lighter, too?” I'm guessing it probably didn't endear him to the pastor.

*I am suggesting that
we need to be careful not
to turn away women and men
who want to help us be better.*

This man is an engaged parishioner. He feels like he belongs; he feels like he has a place. This is his church community and he is willing to speak up and put up. How many of us would be glad to have someone who cared that much and who was

invested in his parish, willing to serve on the faith formation committee? I am not so naïve to realize I am only getting his side of the story but I am saddened that several times he commented “they don't like me much there” as he talked about what he had said or tried to do. It was all said in fun but with a twinge of truth. I am suggesting that we need to be careful not to turn away women and men who want to help us be better. Let's keep the eyes and ears of our hearts open.

Most parish programs of faith formation are tied to the traditional school model and so most of them are now starting a new year. I wonder what commitment your parish has made to the faith formation of children and youth, let alone the adults. What do we offer that increases the likelihood for success; what causes frustration? Who has complained but also offered a suggestion for change? Sometimes getting a good deal is anything but that; and sometimes getting a flat tire can be a great deal...a real gift. ■

The Two-Millennium-Old New Evangelization

Joanie McKeown



What's "new" about the "new evangelization?" A lot! Yet, in some respects, there's nothing new at all.

Evangelization is the sharing of the gospel message with those who have never heard it. The new evangelization adds another dimension.

It is a re-sharing of the gospel message in ways that help those who have already heard and accepted it deepen their relationship with God through the Catholic Church so that their faith truly becomes an integral part of who they are, how they live, and the decisions they make.

While the phrase "new evangelization" is relatively new, the concept is not. Pope Benedict XVI, on a flight last spring from Rome to Mexico, linked the new evangelization directly to the Second Vatican Council which noted that "the split between the faith which many Christians profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age" (GS, #43). The effects of that split were evident in the 1970s and 1980s as many "good Catholics" who had been taught the tenets of the faith in the pre-Vatican II years – including many hours memorizing the Baltimore Catechism – dropped out from active participation in the church.

The roots of the new evangelization can be traced back even further than Vatican II: all the way back to the beginning of the church. As Paul and the other disciples were preaching the good news to gentiles who had no understanding of Yahweh or Jesus Christ, they were also preaching to the believers, helping them to understand the new faith that they professed and encouraging them to live by that faith. Evangelization and the new evangelization were active in the early church, appearing side-by-side.

In some ways this should be encouraging to parish and diocesan catechetical leaders; we are not being called to do something in this millennium that has never been done before. In other ways, it can be discouraging. If, in 2000 years, the church hasn't found the magic bullet for helping all Catholics to internalize and live their faith, how can we be expected to do it now? Relying on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we look to church documents and effective methods as our guide.

Familiarity with the General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis gives a solid foundation for our planning. The NDC (52) states:

All dioceses and parishes, in the efforts and resources they focus on the new evangelization, should pursue the following fundamental objectives:

1. To foster in the heart of every believer an experience of personal conversion to Jesus Christ that leads to a personal renewal and greater participation in the Christian life in the church, the Mystical Body of Christ...

This theme of personal conversion being tied to the heart, not the head, is repeated throughout church documents. This doesn't mean that head-knowledge of Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the teachings of the church are not important. It means that head-knowledge, alone, is not enough. (The difficulty that people have in applying the rules of grammar or the rules of math proves the point. One can "know" the rules in the abstract, but unless one can apply the rules to everyday life, the knowledge remains limited, impersonal, and ineffective.)

The key, then, to effective catechesis is to focus on the heart, on helping people to experience their faith, even while teaching the tenets of the faith. While there is no magic bullet, there are some tried and true processes that PCLs can incorporate into parish catechesis to do this.

1. MAKE SCRIPTURE COME ALIVE AND BE RELEVANT TO PEOPLE'S LIVES

Don't just read from Scripture; tell the story with a dramatic reading, or with individuals acting the parts of the people in the story. Flesh out some of details of what the scene looked like and what the various people in the story were most likely thinking and feeling. Follow up with questions such as:

- ❖ Do you think the people in the story would have been thinking or feeling what we just portrayed?
- ❖ Could they have had different reactions than what we portrayed? What might those have been?
- ❖ What might you have been thinking and feeling if you had witnessed what happened?

- ❖ Can you think of a similar situation today? How did people react in that situation? What difference did it make that Jesus was present in the Scripture story, but not physically present in the modern story?

Have the people work in small groups to write a modern-day story that is similar to the passage from Scripture and has a similar outcome. You could also use Dr. Pat McCormack's "ABCs": Are the Attitudes and Behaviors of each person in the story life-giving or life-blocking? Are the Consequences positive or negative? End the session by having the people quietly bring to Jesus in prayer their reactions, reflections, and feelings from the Scripture passage and discussion.

2. IN DISCUSSING THE SACRAMENTS, DON'T JUST EXPLAIN THE FACTS; GO DEEPER INTO THE FEELINGS

Discuss some of the words of the ritual, not just from the historical perspective of why we use those words, or rational perspective of what those words mean, but from an affective perspective, as well. Ask: What is your reaction to the words, in your mind and in your heart? What are those words saying to you and to your life?

Draw them deeper into the meanings by sharing your own reflections on the words and actions. For example, when discussing the Mass, don't just say, "We stand for the opening song." Instead say,

We don't just stand to wake people up who might be daydreaming. We stand because the opening song gathers us as a community. We entered as individuals, each with our own thoughts and concerns. As we stand, we become aware of this church full of people, who each came with their own thoughts and concerns. But, we're all here for the same basic reason: we want to worship God, to celebrate the relationship we have with God. As we stand together, we realize that we aren't just individuals. We are all connected to each other in and through our relationship with God. We might have arrived

alone, but as we stand we realize we, together, are one Body, one group, who will be praying together, praising God together, participating together in the greatest celebration God has given us, the Mass. The gathering song links us all together in one big invisible chain, ready to worship God together as one.

3. USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Post a question of the week related to the Sunday Scriptures. Start a "What would you do?" column using current news items. Post a quote from the Pope's weekly messages with a pertinent question.

Post short quizzes on the season of the year, saints of the week, etc.

4. USE SHORT FAITH-EXERCISES

Use these when you want to transition to a new activity or give the group a break after a more intellectual or intense presentation or discussion.

A favorite that works well with middle-school students through adults is one that I learned from Lee Nagel nearly 20 years ago. Start by reminding them that God is everywhere, so everywhere we look, we can find God if we look with an open mind and heart. That's obvious to most people when they see the mountains as they remind us of the majesty of God. But, it can also be true of everyday objects.

If you have time to prepare for this in advance, put a variety of everyday objects on a table. Divide the group into pairs and give one object to each pair. Tell them they have one minute to think of a way to complete the sentence "God is like (their object) because..." After one minute, give each group a chance to say their sentence. It's amazing how creative they can be.

If you want to do this activity, but you didn't prepare for it in advance, simply tell them to walk around the room for two minutes, and do the same with any object they see. When doing this exercise, a fourth grader once said, "God is like that



brick wall because God is holding all of us together and God will never let go of any one of us.” Profound!

5. ADD A RELIGIOUS ELEMENT TO OTHER ACTIVITIES

This is especially pertinent in the summer months when most parishes do not have any faith formation gatherings. For example, start a Bible Bike Club. Attend daily Mass together, then bike to a neighboring park, playground, etc. where you’ll take a 15-minute break with something light to eat or drink and discuss one of the readings of the day. Bike back to church where each person will write a few sentences on the impact that reading or the discussion had on them. Each week, enter their reflections into a file. At the end of the summer, give them each a keepsake book with all the readings and their reflections. A similar idea can be used with walking, swimming, exercise classes, playground fun, etc.

No matter what the topic is for an individual catechetical session, always include elements of reflection that move the content from head to heart.

For the new evangelization to effectively reach the entire parish, it has to move beyond the parish catechetical program. However, not all PCLs have a lot of input or influence beyond their programs. If you do, share resources from your diocese and others on their plans for the Year of Faith and new evangelization.

If you don’t, you can still begin to influence the parish beyond your specific programs by showing the rest of the parish whatever you’re doing and the impact that it has on others. Use the parish bulletin and social media not just to advertise the activities of your program, but also to highlight what took place and comments made by those participating.

Move beyond having the confirmation candidates moving tables or busing dishes, etc., as the primary way to work their service hours. Allow them to engage in helpful activities where they are visible to the larger parish. For example: Through the bulletin or social media, post a reminder of the meaning of Holy Saturday to the early followers of Jesus and the reason for the fire at the beginning of the Easter Vigil:

Jesus is dead. His body is in the tomb. God’s presence among his people has ended. The world has

been thrown back into the same chaos that existed before creation. This is the feeling that is to be conveyed on Holy Saturday, before the Easter Vigil begins. This is the reason the church tells us that we must wait until after dark to begin the Easter Vigil service. The church wants the people to feel the abyss – the emptiness – felt by the first followers of Jesus. There is something primal in fire that our very beings react to... it provides light and warmth, but it also can be devastating and totally beyond our control. Fire can be chaos. Fire can turn the land into an abyss. The fire that is lit before the Easter Vigil is meant to convey that chaos, the abyss that existed before creation, the abyss that the first followers of Jesus felt they had fallen into after Jesus’ death.

Having set the stage with that information, for 30 minutes to an hour before the Easter Vigil begins, have the confirmandi gather around the Easter Vigil fire and proclaim the psalms of despair. As the congregation gathers encourage them to stay around the fire, experiencing the abyss. At the start of the Vigil Liturgy, have the confirmandi, RCIA candidates and catechumens, and congregation follow the presider into church, bringing the Light of Christ with them into the darkness.

The new evangelization calls us beyond the classroom, beyond the textbooks and workbooks, to help people experience the faith of the church so the experience of faith becomes their own. It calls for creativity in showing how the tenets of Scripture and the faith are relevant to people’s lives and to take the issues of the day and view them through the lens of faith. When you succeed, the new evangelization becomes a reality. ■

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The Encounter with an Event, a Person

Russell Peterson



Evangelization appears to be a difficult word for catechetical leaders to grasp and embrace. Most catechetical leaders seem drawn to stating what evangelization is not; “It is not proselytizing.” “It is not like those other churches.” A few catechetical leaders almost use the word as a blunt instrument against

those with whom they disagree. (“If you did proper evangelization we would not have these problems.”) Some catechetical leaders appear to approach evangelization as another program to create with the mandatory committee, monthly meetings, and bulletin announcements; the program is posted in the diocesan or parish calendar, spaces are reserved, and flyers are created.

While there are grains of truth within each of these statements or approaches, each of them is missing a fundamental aspect of evangelization. Namely, evangelization is centered on introducing people to an event, a person. The event is the in-breaking of God into the human experience in the unique event of the Incarnation, teachings, and ministry of Jesus culminating in his paschal mystery. Jesus is the person whom we are introducing to people. Evangelization is centered on introducing people and helping them begin a relationship with Jesus.

The National Directory for Catechesis states that catechesis is part of the process of evangelization and has the objective of assisting people in growing in communion with Jesus. Both evangelization and catechesis are relationship-focused ministries. As catechetical ministers, we need to be matchmakers and networkers. This requires a change in vision for many catechetical leaders. Many of us are focused on institutions and doctrines. Too many of us are comfortable behind our desks and our books. We bemoan that people do not come to us, but fear stepping out of our comfort zones. Whereas Paul introduced Jesus to people in the marketplace, we tend to avoid talking about God away from our buildings. Too often, we sit in the corner reading books while the party of life occurs across the room. We critique the errors of people’s lives instead of entering into their lives. At our worst, we focus on words instead of the Word made flesh – a person.

CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON A PERSON NOT A BOOK

Catholics are Christians. We are not “Biblians” or “Dogmatians” or “Catechismians.” We are believers in a unique person, the Word made flesh – Jesus the Christ. As the Cat-

echism of the Catholic Church states, “the Christian faith is not a ‘religion of the book.’ Christianity is the religion of the ‘Word’ of God, a word which is ‘not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living’” (108). The core of all evangelization and catechism efforts must be rooted in the conviction that we can be in relationship with God. This relationship is intimate; it is a friendship, a calling to be a child of God. The person of Jesus, the Word made flesh, invites us to belief. At the core of Christianity is a belief in a person. In the Apostolic Letter, *Ubicumque Et Semper*, establishing the Pontifical Council on the New Evangelization in 2011, Pope Benedict XVI writes the following:

As I stated in my first Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction (n. 1). Likewise, at the root of all evangelization lies not a human plan of expansion, but rather the desire to share the inestimable gift that God has wished to give us, making us sharers in his own life.

AN ENCOUNTER

Being a Christian is the result of an encounter, a meeting. This encounter changes who we are and how we interpret the world. I have had the good fortune of meeting several people in my life who caused me to change how I understand the world. By speaking with them and watching them, I have been changed and inspired. As it has been with some individuals so it is with Jesus – only on an even more profound and deeper level. Jesus is the ultimate life-altering encounter. Jesus offers us the opportunity of encounter at a variety of times and through a variety of means. This opportunity of encounter is a grace and can be through silence, the sacraments, beauty, love, and any other means that God chooses to use.

The encounter with Jesus requires both the experience and the ability to understand the experience. A significant amount of Jesus’ conversations with the disciples are his efforts to help them understand their experiences of him. Through their encounter with him, they were called to give their lives a new horizon, a new direction, a new purpose. Through the Holy Spirit, the encounter with Jesus was brought to a new level

which propelled the disciples forward to preach and teach and sanctify.

Perhaps one way to explain the difference between evangelization and catechesis is to reflect on the difference between encounter with Jesus and conversation with Jesus. When Zaccheus climbed the tree and was called by name by Jesus, he was being evangelized. When Jesus entered into conversation with him and dined with him, Zaccheus was being catechized. As catechetical leaders we are called to mimic Jesus. We need to distinguish between the call (evangelization) and the conversation (catechesis).

In each of our lives, this encounter is the cornerstone upon which we build our lives. This encounter can develop into friendship with God through the gift of faith. We do not freeze our relationship with Jesus with our introduction. It is the starting point. As a married person can point to the introduction with their future spouse as the starting point in the movement to matrimony, so should a catechetical leader be able to point to the initial encounter with Jesus as the starting point for her or his ministry.

This deserves repetition; as catechetical leaders we must know our story of initial encounter with Jesus. We must know our personal story of being evangelized. We must name and claim our story of relationship with Jesus. Our encounter with Jesus must be at the root of our ministry.

OUR NEED TO BE ROOTED IN THE ENCOUNTER

This encounter is the beginning of the friendship with God. It cannot be frozen, and the friendship must grow and change. Relationships are not static. Our doctrines about God may be unchanging, but our relationship with God is forever changing. This changing relationship is not rootless however. We are rooted in our encounter with Jesus. Paul did not spend his time in Asia Minor seeking a second encounter like he had on the road to Damascus. He spent his time offering to others what had changed the horizon of his own life. From his writings we also learn that he did not forget his experience with the risen Christ. That encounter was the root of his life and of his ministry. His power was through his relationship with God.

As it was for Paul, so should it be for each of us. Our encounter with Jesus should grow into friendship and be the root of our lives and ministry. I find time and energy for friends that I do not find for other people and things in my life. My friendship with Jesus should propel me forward with time and energy to be his hands and feet in the world today. If my prayer life does not root me in Jesus and propel me forward to share God with other, it is time to examine what has gone wrong in my prayer life. If my ministry is pulling me away from my friendship with God, then I need to examine how and for whom I am doing my ministry. As Paul stayed rooted in his encounter with the risen Christ, so must we.

We are rooted in a relationship which gives us power and participation in his glory. “To those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name” (Jn 1:12). It is this power as children of God that gives us the courage and steadfastness to proclaim the love of God to those we encounter. It is a power that should propel us out of the comfort of our church offices and into the marketplace and the world at large.

IMPEDIMENTS TO INVITING OTHERS TO THE ENCOUNTER

The temptation to uproot ourselves from the encounter with God which empowers us and propels us is present throughout our lives and within our ministry. It is easy to focus on the projects and lose sight of the reason for the projects. It is easy to focus on the numbers and lose sight of the relationship. It is easy to focus on adherence to policy (especially Child Protection) and stray away from seeking communion with Jesus. It can be easier to focus on church politics than center on growing in relationship with God. Sometimes doctrine can replace love, and “truth” can become both a sword and a shield which keeps the vulnerability of love at bay. These temptations are not new. A reading of the second and third chapters of Revelation clearly illustrates the challenges to maintaining our focus on the encounter and relationship with God. Our encounter with God should lead to a relationship of love. This loving relationship with God should overflow into all of our lives. It is easy, however, to lose the focus on love.

To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write this: The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands says this: ‘I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and discovered that they are impostors.’ Moreover, you have endurance and have suffered for my name, and you have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. But you have this in your favor: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate (Rv 2:1-6).

Close to 2,000 years have passed since this was written, but I know of many Catholics and churches that it could be written to today. I have sat in many a meeting where people explained the work that they were doing and how many hours they worked at the parish. They spoke of the many decades of service that they have done, and it is obvious that they have persevered through some challenging times. They have endured the trials but appear to have gotten bitter. There is not a love flowing from them. They may have a love for God and for the people of the parish, but it does not flow out of them. In fact, Jesus,



God, and Holy Spirit are words that rarely are spoken. On both the so-called liberal and so-called conservative sides of the spectrum, I meet many people who talk church yet rarely talk about Jesus. They appear to have lost the love that they once had. They appear not to be grounded in their personal encounter with Jesus. At its worst it appears that the church, the bride of Christ, has become an impediment to Christ. The buildings and the programs and the stock portfolios and the financial statements have replaced the encounter with Jesus.

It is not only the business of church that can be a means of separation from the encounter and relationship with Jesus. The Ephesians are lauded for their focus on truth, but this focus has lost a key dimension; it has become disconnected from love. In the person of Jesus we are called to experience the unification of truth, love, and life. It is challenging for us, as humans, to keep love and truth operating in a unity in our lives. Through a focus on the encounter and relationship with Jesus we can be people of truth, love, and life.

MAKING US SHARERS IN HIS OWN LIFE

As people of truth, love, and life grounded in our relationship with the Trinity through the person of Jesus, we become sharers in his own life. This sharing in the Way propels us forward in love and truth. We live as witnesses of the encounter with Jesus and preach with our very lives. As sharers in his own life, we affirm St. Teresa of Avila's profound words

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the
world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

(USCCB website)

When our ministry is grounded in our sharing in the life of Jesus, we bring our encounter with Jesus to others and offer that encounter to others. It is easy to state that our ministry must be grounded in our sharing in the life of Jesus. It is equally as easy to lose that focus. I am tempted to provide a list of some of the worst practices of evangelization and catechesis that I have heard. However, I am aware of the plank in my own eye so I will refrain.

Pope Benedict XVI calls us to be grounded in our encounter of a person – Jesus. To be effective evangelizers and catechists, we must be diligent in our focus. The temptation to focus elsewhere is great. We must recognize our failings and recommit ourselves each day. I propose that our daily examination of conscience begin with the question, “Have I grounded my life and ministry in my encounter and relationship with Jesus today?”

It is through our encounter and relationship with Jesus that, as Pope Benedict says, “we have become sharers in his life.” Our power to do great ministry is through our participation in the Way, the Truth, and the Life. This power to be the ears of Christ in the world is a gift of God. We are the mystical body of Christ here on earth. Let us daily ground ourselves in our relationship with the Holy Trinity through the person of Jesus in the church. ■

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The New Evangelization: New and Improved or Just New Packaging?

Kathy Kleinlein



“Consequently, the new evangelization is not a matter of redoing something which has been inadequately done or has not achieved its purpose, as if the new activity were an implicit judgment on the failure of the first evangelization” (*Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*; Mar 12, 2011).

REALITY CHECK

Seriously? Catholics have done a good job in evangelizing others? Evangelization has successfully achieved its purpose? Then the purpose of the old evangelization must have been to drive Catholics from the pews in record numbers. Regular Mass attendance is at its lowest point in history. Catholics are more divided than ever on several issues, including gay marriage, women’s issues, and abortion. If evangelization efforts have been successful, we would be building many more churches and schools rather than closing them.

If we make the statement that past evangelization programs were not failures, then we should see evidence of success. Hard statistics and measurable results do not bolster claims that Catholics have done a good job in evangelizing. Young families do not populate our pews on Sundays; many parishioners have not attended a faith formation event since their confirmations; in some neighborhoods, parish outreach efforts are barely making a dent in the overwhelming need to assist the poor, homeless, or unemployed.

THE BLAME GAME

Who, then, is to blame for the lack of successful efforts to evangelize? Some may want to place blame on their parish priest. However, our priests speak about the Good News of the gospel every week; whether they do it brilliantly or poorly, what they do is still evangelization. Some priests might do more in the way of outreach, both within and outside the parish community, but it is hardly the sole responsibility of the priest to evangelize.

If we want to blame someone for the failures of evangelization, we also cannot look to the Bishops. The USCCB has made substantial efforts to establish criteria and implementation plans for evangelizing parishioners and renewing parishes since Vatican II. Much of the laity is both more informed

and more formed than ever before. Programs such as *Welcome Home Catholics*, *The Light is On for You*, and *RENEW*, among so many others, have brought the Good News to Catholics and non-Catholics alike in a new and enthusiastic way.

Where then, does that leave us as catechetical leaders in the blame game? Unfortunately, it leaves us too close to home for comfort. As diocesan and parish catechetical leaders, we have a duty to evangelize our catechists; in turn, we must ensure that every catechist is evangelizing his or her students. “Frequently, many who present themselves for catechesis truly require conversion. Because of this, the church usually requires the first stage in the catechetical process be dedicated to ensuring conversion” (The General Directory for Catechesis, #62). This GDC reference is not only to those who attend catechetical sessions; it also refers to those who volunteer as catechists and aides. If teachers have not been evangelized themselves, they will not be able to offer their students — children and adults alike — opportunities for initial and on-going conversion.

HARD QUESTIONS

“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

Without an in-depth understanding and lived praxis of the command Jesus gave us, can we ever succeed at evangelizing our charges? The very first word that Jesus uses in this Scripture passage is “Go.” I don’t recall any Bible verse which instructed disciples or potential disciples to come to the temple from 6:30-7:30 on Thursday nights to hear about the kingdom of God. Yes, Jesus did preach in the temple; but that was only one of many places where the Good News of salvation was proffered. We tend to forget that the arena for evangelization extends far beyond church classrooms.

Do we have in place in every program, every week, a time for faith-sharing? These are opportunities for on-going conversion. We must insist that our catechists witness to the gospel and share their personal stories of faith on a regular basis. And we must lead by example, continually witnessing to the gospel — both with and without words — to our catechists.

No one expects Catholics to knock on doors or proselytize at the Saturday morning soccer game. However, Catholics are not exempt from sharing with others the blessings and comforts God gives them on a daily basis. Many of us have adopted the secular attitude that being religious is embarrassing. We have a tendency to suffocate the Holy Spirit within us when prompted to speak about Jesus Christ because we don't want to appear foolish to our friends or non-religious family members. I have often heard Catholics say that you don't need to mention Jesus by name; that living a good life is enough. Don't kid yourself. Many atheists are good, kind people who do the right thing.

"Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Lk 9: 26).

When *Go and Make Disciples* was published in 1993 – almost 20 years ago – many dioceses undertook study and implementation strategies to renew their parishes. How many of your catechists are still in place from 20 years ago? Were you in the position you now hold 20 years ago? We often teach a document to our catechists once, but rarely refer to it again. Yet, *Go and Make Disciples* is a foundational document for all evangelizing efforts. The tenets of this document are clearly reflected in the GDC. (Have you been annually teaching new catechists in your parish or diocese *this* document?)

"The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ. All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ" (GDC, #80).

The goals of evangelization as outlined in *Go and Make Disciples* are as follows:

Goal I — Conversion Within the Individual

To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

Goal II — Conversion to the Church Community

To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.

Goal III — Conversion of Society

To foster gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

HARDER QUESTIONS

Are our evangelizing efforts as catechists promoting communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ or are our students still taking turns reading out of a textbook? Are our classrooms

quiet and orderly instead of vibrant, messy, and exciting? Do we discuss, along with the tenets of our faith, the current issues that families face in this increasingly isolationist and secular society and relate them to God's Scriptural promises? Do we even know which of our families is in serious crisis — whether financial, emotional, or spiritual — so that we can remind them of the promise of salvation through their baptisms? Are we offering adults a systematic program of formation classes in Christology, Scripture, ecclesiology, pastoral ministry, and apologetics?

Unless we're answering "Yes" to the above, we cannot hope to respond to the new evangelization in a way that connects our families, our community, or the world to the person of Jesus Christ.

BEYOND OUR BACKYARDS

Nor is the new evangelization taking up the first evangelization again, or simply repeating the past. Instead, it is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the gospel today (The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith).

The paths of former evangelization programs were clear: first, the on-going conversion of the individual followed by the on-going conversion and renewal of parishes; next, a deeper appreciation of Eucharist, sacraments, Scripture, prayer, and spirituality. As the faith and spirituality of the person and the parish community deepened, the parish reached out as a welcoming community of faith-sharing active Catholics to inactive Catholics, those unchurched, those of other cultures and those of other denominations and faiths. Our witness took us from our families to our workplaces. The implementation strategies for these goals were straightforward: organize parish focus groups, workshops, catechetical sessions, and finally develop outreach ministries.

Once we understand and live the guidelines outlined in *Go and Make Disciples*, we can better understand the new evangelization, the synod for which is scheduled for October 2012. And how will this new evangelization be different from the "old" evangelization outlined in the 1993 document *Go and Make Disciples*? For the most part, it is not different. The goals remain the same; the strategies have changed.

In 1993, most of us did not have personal computers and certainly did not have pocket cell phones. It was unheard of to have an instant global access to a community of like minds. In 1993, we were not the targets of growing numbers of secularists who oppose our beliefs and way of living. Our efforts to promote conversion to Catholics and non-Catholics have been a continuing effort from the time of Jesus Christ. So while our evangelizing activities must continue, they must reflect this very fast-paced and technologically minded society.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

If we are doing catechesis the way it was done ten years ago, we are not succeeding to the extent we might in our evangelizing efforts. Are your teachers using the new social media to catechize and evangelize youth and adults? Are *you* using the new media to teach?

A PERSONAL STORY

In preparation for our fall 2012 Professional Days for Catechists (an annual practical day for learning how to teach and apply curriculum standards using multiple intelligence theory and creative teaching techniques), I recently asked my PCL's to prepare lesson plans for our catechists on two standards, prayer and spirituality. My PCL's were spot on in their approach to various spiritualities and in how to incorporate the different forms of prayer. However, when I searched the e-mailed draft plans for the use of technology, there was a glaring void. No one proposed asking catechists to assist students in creating a Scriptural re-enactment for YouTube or producing a music video about their faith. When I brought this point up at a recent PCL meeting and asked why the void, my mostly baby boomers were silent. This is as much my failure as theirs.

The Catholic Church understands the power of the new social media and the formidable use of technology to sway people in a way of thinking. The Pope has a Twitter page; the Vatican has a Facebook page; there are blogs and anti-blogs enough on Catholicism to choke a horse (just joking, PETA). We must get into the mindset of our students and get our heads out of stale lessons long enough to look up and see that our captive audiences are on the whole bored and unenthusiastic. We are missing goal one of the "old evangelization" completely. "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

The new evangelization begins where *Go and Make Disciples* left off. Our efforts need to be more concerted, more technological, more global, and more persistent. We are not winning the battle to evangelize others for Christ, to spread the Good News of salvation in our isolationist and secular society. It seems like the more things change, the more they stay the same. Christ came to convert the Jews to the new covenant. Paul travelled the old world to convert the Gentiles to Christ. Was it easier when the world was smaller, societies were fewer, means of communication was simpler? Maybe. But there is strong evidence that the new evangelization can lead us to a place where we can proclaim the Good News of salvation faster, bolder, and better to more people than ever before. And that truly is good news if we can adapt and adopt the new methods of teaching and learning.

CREATING A NEW PARADIGM

Prior to the 1960s, the United States was considered a country based on Christian-Judaic values. No one questioned whether or not *In God We Trust* should be on our money; no one argued whether or not the Ten Commandments shouldn't be listed inside of a state courthouse; prayer in schools was not an issue of discrimination. All of this has changed. American society has become blatantly anti-Christian and specifically, anti-Catholic. The Marxist mantra, *religion is the opiate of the masses*, has become a theme permeating today's newspapers, movies, television, and music.

We need the new evangelization because the world has become a much darker place... but it is not without great hope. We need to bring our lights out from under our bushel baskets and let them shine, despite ridicule or humiliation. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. Now more than ever, we need to "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

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CATECHESIS SINCE THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: AN INCOMPLETE REFLECTION (PART 1)

Gerard F. Baumbach



The following article offers some general observations about catechesis¹ since Vatican II with a principal focus on the United States using a combination of personal experience and historical recollection through familiar, yet incomplete, categories. I am confident that others will add new brushstrokes over

time, do some refinishing as their own experiences come to the fore, or revisit Council documents, especially those that are not addressed below.

"SEEING" WITHIN

It is late as I write; my weary eyes seek closure. Yet they "see" memories never too far from view, hidden yet present. Experiences shaped by the Second Vatican Council rise to the surface as I write about some of the numerous dimensions that together form a unity for probing that great event that occupied the fall seasons from 1962 to 1965, a mere speck of time in the life of the church.

I close my eyes and drift back to January 1959. No, not to Blessed Pope John XXIII's announcement that a second Vatican council was in the offing, to be held some 90 plus years since Vatican I. Nearly 13 at the time, I had other priorities – a field trip, finishing eighth grade, and figuring out where I would spend my high school years.

Eyes still closed. It is now the spring of 1960 and I am a freshman. Academics, activities, friendships, and hitchhiking five miles to my home after track practice fill my days.

Now falling into more of a slumber, it is 1961 and I am an altar server, with checks on my Latin during weekly group meetings, asserting the joy of my tender age: *Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam*. Ah, the wonders of youth! In the early fall, a group of us are at Yankee Stadium (box seats behind home plate

on the day Roger Maris swats his 61st home run) as guests of the parish priest responsible for our training (formation). Can life as a young Catholic teen get any better? I would eventually learn that, yes, it could. In succeeding years, life beyond familiar turf would propel me toward a world stadium in a trajectory of cultural awareness destined to challenge and enliven my faith in new and discomfoting ways.

Slowly opening my eyes, I recall the fall of 1962, when Vatican II began. As a high school senior in same year, I readied myself for college, a time that eventually provided the opportunity to become a catechist assisting a young person with special needs. That formative experience, along with coordinating and leading faith-based college events, led to service as a catechist while serving at military installations in the United States and on Okinawa. Reminders of baptism literally surround me for 16 months.

Living in an island community wounded from scars of war in the midst of an enriching cultural blend, I grew in and through the love and witness of others. What might be described today as "discipleship" was a standard expectation of Christian living. We are each other's keepers, after all. Extraordinary and powerful faith seemed the norm, and the call to catechize seized my heart. I could not say no. God had called.

The impact of the Council was resting gently upon my shoulders, awaiting my response. It was as if I were already living the charge of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People): "No less fervent a zeal on the part of lay people is called for today; present circumstances, in fact, demand from them an apostolate infinitely broader and more intense."² Assuming the guidance of the Spirit and armed with an admittedly predictable naïveté, I left a budding career as an Air Force officer in 1972 to seek a then unknown ministry position in the United States.

Something deep within drew me to Christ in a catechetical sort of way. A recent catechetical directory says it better: "The

1 Other terms, with their own implicit or explicit meanings, have been used in the United States to name this ministry; for example, "faith formation" as an "umbrella" term; "religious education," etc. See the "Afterword" of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1999) for informative commentary on terminological distinctions. Catechesis is the principal term used in this paper.

2 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. "Apostolicam Actuositatem" ("Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People"). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 1.

object of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ. Catechesis leads people to enter the mystery of Christ, to encounter him, and to discover themselves and the meaning of their lives in him.”³ How my movement to lay ecclesial ministry eventually came about is a story for another time, but suffice it to say that the Second Vatican Council would impact, affect, and change my life for the next 40 years.

A COMMUNAL CATECHESIS

Almost no aspect of Christian life was left untouched by this 20th century event, which began less than 20 years after the end of World War II and concluded during a time of fever-pitch debate and a fractured and exhausted human spirit over the war in Vietnam.

I lived the Council as I learned the Council and I learned the Council as I lived the Council. I do not recall a distinctive “faith seeking understanding”⁴ moment for me regarding the Council while attending college in the 1960s. However, the notion of the church as servant seemed to come naturally, perhaps because my life formation until that point had been rich in those types of experiences. Serving Christ, “the light of humanity,”⁵ and serving on behalf of Christ and the church had been a type of personal norm, a familial and parish expectation. Coming to understand the church as sacrament emerged gradually as I began to experience what it meant to live faith within diverse cultural environs that confirmed over and over again for me the reality that “the Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).”⁶

My introduction to Vatican II and its resultant catechetical warming came, then, via the ecclesial experience of community: “None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself” (Rom 14:7). Experiencing the church as sacrament was both humbling and demanding: What was I called to be and to do? How might I participate in this mystery? How might we see ourselves within the Scriptures? What did it mean to be called to holiness both individually and as a community?⁷

I suspect these notions may have been true for others of my generation. Enlivened by the ongoing movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, the Council provided more than a legacy. It offered renewal, refreshment, and restoration all in one but not just for me alone. Communal enthusiasm was contagious. *Dei Verbum*, the Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, would affirm at its outset the

desire for “the whole world to hear the summons to salvation, so that through hearing it may believe, through belief it may hope, through hope it may come to love.”⁸

The Council offered up greater awareness of the complex world in which we live, and in doing so challenged prior assumptions of preferential “first world” approaches to humanity, suffering, and the gospel.

I recall the hope that relations with the Jewish community would in my own lifetime traverse centuries of sadness, tragedy, and discord. The Council’s groundbreaking declaration *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions) spoke of “a common spiritual heritage” between Christians and Jews in the interest of “further[ing] mutual understanding and appreciation.”⁹ Three decades later, in anticipation of dialogue with other religions marking the turn of the millennium, Blessed Pope John Paul II would reference *Nostra Aetate* and state, “In this dialogue the Jews and the Muslims ought to have a pre-eminent place.”¹⁰

Within Christianity, Catholics began to understand, some with surprise, the validity of the baptism of other Christians as they learned that “reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church”¹¹ did not demand a second passing through sacred waters.¹² Ecumenical conversation moved from polite conversation to mutually challenging and sometimes fragile and painful discussion. But at least people were talking — and witnessing.

The communion in faith called the Catholic Church to which I joyfully affirmed loyalty took on a more serious stature for me; for example, I began to probe more deeply dimensions of the many Eastern Churches and the Latin Church. Those moments, secure but not frozen in time, offered a compelling sense of a people formed in faith in common yet distinctive witness to the gospel. Over time, I would grow in understanding of the Church as People of God, Body of Christ, and Temple of the Holy Spirit. (See, for example, *Lumen Gentium*, 8ff. and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Paragraph 2, above 781.)

I also began to explore the meaning of “religious freedom.” We recall that *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious

3 *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, 19B.

4 Cf. Anselm of Canterbury; “*fides quaerens intellectum*.” See his *Proslogion*.

5 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. “Lumen Gentium” (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 1.

6 *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

7 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter V.

8 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. “Dei Verbum” (“Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation”). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 1 citing St. Augustine, *De Catechizandis rudibus*, c. 4, 8; PL 40, 316.

9 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. “Nostra Aetate” (“Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions”). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 4.

10 Pope John Paul II. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente (On the Coming of the Third Millennium)*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, 53.

11 English translation of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* © 1974, 1985, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL), 562.

12 See *RCIA* 480: “The sacrament of baptism cannot be repeated and therefore it is not permitted to confer it again conditionally, unless there is a reasonable doubt about the fact or validity of the baptism already conferred.”

Liberty) states, in part, “that the human person has a right to religious freedom. . . . This right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right.”¹³ Whether or not they were viewed by most catechists as connected to this document, such phrases as “freedom from” and “freedom for” became for some serving in this ministry supports for promoting Christian morality and understanding and cultivating discipleship.

For those of us who do not know anyone who experienced the Council firsthand, our potential for catechetical witness is of no lesser value. Rather, our experience of the Christian community in a new century serves as a type of ongoing welcoming agent for the Council. This happens in ways that appeal to accounts of the Council, to its documents, and to the rhythm of derived influence emerging from subsequent catechetical experience and documentation. All of this has a role to play as we seek to live as witnesses to the faith we profess and proclaim, and as we welcome the Year of Faith¹⁴ to mark the 50th anniversary of the Council. We share with Council participants a common faith and a witness formed in Christ, now guided by the Spirit in the life of the Christian community, the church. One link to the past is not only ink on pages or instantaneously accessible websites, but also the lives and faithful witness of believers on whose shoulders we are privileged to stand.

The passage of time is gift to us, enabling exploration of Vatican II as an event that affirmed the transcendence and immanence of God. But this is no attempt to recapture a sort of paradisiacal glow, seemingly destined to fade over time as sometimes happens with historical events. Rather, the *aggiornamento* that is descriptive of the renewal generated within and by Vatican II and the embrace of earlier church sources represented by *ressourcement* may together serve in the present moment to reinforce the depth and impact of what seeks to define not only our Christian identity, but our sense of personhood and community 50 years later.

THE COUNCIL AS BROADENING CATECHETICAL MOMENT

One could say that the Council itself *was* an extended catechetical moment. In fact, Pope Paul VI would identify it as “the great catechism of modern times.”¹⁵ With church fathers from around the world, consulting theologians, and observers

of many other faith traditions present, the Council became an extended moment for broadening pathways for a more firmly and deeply rooted catechesis on behalf of the gospel, sparked from within the life of the church.

The movement of the Spirit swept across the universal church to and from the halls of the Vatican and to and from the farthest corners of the globe in a breath-taking and breath-giving sweep. Vatican II had as much to do with long-term formation of attitudes and dispositions of faith as it did with bolstering the church’s own identity as a vibrant community of faith.

One significant disposition of faith, especially in forming communities of faith, has to do with the formation of an informed attitude of faith regarding cultural diversity within the church and in society. The Second Vatican Council continues to speak to people of all cultures and backgrounds. Today, even more opportunities are before us for ensuring that catechesis not only runs deep but also is made available to all by all.

The beauty, wonder, and gifts represented by cultural diversity in the life of the church and in contemporary society impact catechesis and the types of catechetical options in parish life. Such catechetical witness, deliberately and joyfully applied, is especially important. In referring to ethnic diversity, the *National Directory for Catechesis* notes that, “Since persons can only achieve their full humanity by means of culture, the Catholic Church in the United States embraces the rich cultural pluralism of all the faithful, encourages the distinctive identity of each cultural group, and urges mutual enrichment. At the same time, the Catholic Church promotes a unity of faith within the multicultural diversity of the people.”¹⁶

The glue of the Spirit has held for decades, with a conciliar impact assured by its own widely recorded history and with a rich preserve of new, proven outcomes for ecclesial life and ministry. One such outcome has to do with catechesis. As catechetical scholar Berard Marthaler, OFM Conv., has noted, “*Catechesis* is not a new term, but it has taken on new meaning in the years since Vatican II.”¹⁷

Signs of expansive catechetical growth garnered one sense of the renewal in catechesis from Vatican II. A practical outcome in the United States was the growth in numbers of listings for positions in catechetical ministry in the Catholic press. An intensified interest in spirituality¹⁸ only sweetened the backdrop of the catechetical enterprise. There was much to be studied,

13 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. “Dignitatis Humanae” (“Declaration on Religious Liberty”). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 2.

14 Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, October 11, 2011. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei_en.html

15 *Catechism of the Catholic Church, second edition*, copyright © 2000, Libreria Editrice Vaticana—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, 10.

16 *NDC*, 11C1.

17 Berard Marthaler, OFM Conv. “A New Meaning of Catechesis.” *NCCL Catechetical Leadership*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Summer 2002): 5.

18 The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)*, in addressing briefly the reception of Vatican II, uses the term “deep ecclesial spirituality” in referring to the pursuit of “solid ecclesial cohesion” within the communion of the Church. See Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis [GDC]*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference—Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997, 28.

probed, examined, and explained, and the post-conciliar years saw a re-assertion of the discipline of catechetical scholarship concurrent with the experience of faithful communal witness. Supporting such discovery were theological perspectives whose foundation is Christ and whose mystery is paschal.

Scriptural, liturgical, and catechetical renewal, well underway before 1962, found vibrant affirmation in the experience and impact of the Council. Among the many extraordinary statements of *Dei Verbum*, one stands out: "Access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful."¹⁹ Despite longstanding advances in advocating biblical study,²⁰ the Council precipitated a new curiosity and an explosion of interest for the Word of God. At least that was my experience of coming to know and experience the power of the Word.

Half a century later, we seek to make the conciliar moment our own, admittedly incomplete, not through rose-colored glasses but through lenses seeking deeper understanding from a distance. One way we do this is by our continued mining of the 16 Council documents, including *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), which was promulgated on the day before the Council closed (the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1965). However, I strike a cautionary tone lest the reader conclude that the passage of nearly five decades indicates shrinking regard for the dynamic and spirited deliberations of people of faith that helped to define this significant ecclesial event as conciliar documentation came to life.

I would suggest that *Gaudium et Spes* carries the church forward with particular urgency. "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish"²¹ of the human spirit demand even greater attention, especially in light of challenges to survive physically day to day in many parts of the world and as efforts to witness to faith are confronted by "standards" of individualism and consumerism. In addition, struggles within the church reaffirm the need for repentance, sustained healing, and renewed witness to the Word of God. This necessarily includes self-examination of one's own life of faith within the Christian community, within which we find healing.

The mission to go out and "make disciples" (Mt 28:19) that Christ offers us does not cease. Christ is with us in this effort. "Christ teaches us how to evangelize, how to invite people into communion with him, and how to create a culture of witness: namely, through love."²²

We recall that "At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task."²³ This responsibility rightly gives us pause, a reminder to all who serve the ministry of catechesis that people's lives are in our hands. Our listening in our own time for echoes of the Council needs to incorporate careful listening with ears and hearts planted in the soil of ongoing conversion to Jesus Christ. The other is not "just" another and we do well to remember that "The incarnation of the only Son of God is the original inculturation of God's word. The mystery of the incarnation is also the model of all evangelization by the Church."²⁴

Four major conciliar constitutions (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation; and Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) continue to provide theologically rich and persuasive foundations for believing, teaching, and living the Christian proposal, not just individually but collectively.

The convergence of kerygma, didache, leitourgia, koinonia, and diakonia was then and remains now part of the fabric of a developing catechesis. From 1959 to 1968 a series of six "study weeks," held at various locations around the world, probed and mined numerous elements of and relating to catechesis, surrounding the Council with a wide variety of catechetical perspectives as the future became the present. Renowned catechetical scholar Johannes Hofinger, S.J., was the driving force behind this study week concept, which yielded sustained international catechetical exploration.

Simply stated but profoundly important statements from *Christus Dominus*, the Council's Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, set a tone that has changed the way in which catechesis is understood for all. For example: "They should take steps to reestablish or to modernize the adult catechumenate."²⁵ *Christus Dominus* would also call for the development of "a directory for the catechetical instruction of the Christian people ..."²⁶

Catechesis would not be the same. Enhanced efforts for developing "a living, explicit and active faith, enlightened by doctrine"²⁷ would begin to shape even more directly the venture of catechesis. The resulting *General Catechetical Directory*

19 "Dei Verbum," 22.

20 For example, Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943.

21 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. "Gaudium et Spes" ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World"). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 1.

22 Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*, 2012: 10. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/upload/Disciples-Called-To-Witness-The-New-Evangelization.pdf>

23 *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

24 *NDC*, 21A.

25 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. *Christus Dominus* ("Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church"). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 14.

26 *Christus Dominus*, 44.

27 *Christus Dominus*, 14.

(GCD, 1971) and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA, 1972),²⁸ issued within a year of each other, would become groundbreaking and seminal texts for an emerging catechesis formed “in light of the Council.”

Scholar of catechesis Anne Marie Mongoven, O.P., wrote that the GCD “changed catechesis from a one-dimensional task (instruction) to a multidimensional ministry in which the catechist and the community integrated four tasks into the one ministry of catechesis: building community, sharing the church’s stories and beliefs, working for justice, and praying together.”²⁹

Relying on pastoral theology as a foundation, the GCD would identify several dimensions of the church’s ministry of the word, among them “evangelization,” “the catechetical form,” “the liturgical form,” and “the theological form.” Neat distinctions indeed, but the GCD would realistically state, “in the concrete reality of the pastoral ministry, they are closely bound together.”³⁰

The church “exists in order to evangelize.”³¹ So wrote Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World), his encyclical that followed Vatican II by ten years and the synod on evangelization by a year. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* became a usual piece for discussion vis-à-vis catechesis and emphasis on the relationship between evangelization and catechesis became a permanent part of the lexicon of catechetical conversation. Identifying catechetics as “a means of evangelization,” the Holy Father connected systematic instruction and Christian living, promoted methodological adaptation,³² and noted the importance of the catechumenate while also ensuring due attention to children.³³

Serving up well-defined border points between “primary proclamation” and “catechesis” remains no simple task, a reality acknowledged by the 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis*.³⁴ Experienced catechetical leaders surely can confirm such an observation. Overlap happens; perhaps this is another gift of the Spirit.

Contributing to the discourse of the time were the participants in the international catechetical congress in Rome, conducted just a few months after publication of the GCD. In his opening congress address, Pope Paul VI would say that catechesis “requires the living and direct work of the whole community of the Church.”³⁵

I would suggest that *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the first promulgated constitution, helped to set the tone not only for probing the understanding of worship but also for the dynamic experience of faith and birth into discipleship. Its oft-quoted statement, “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows,”³⁶ continues to inform and shape the Christian life before, during, and after the liturgical experience. Nearly three decades after the Council, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* would cite that just-quoted statement and then affirm that the liturgy “is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God.”³⁷

In my recollection, advocacy for catechizing “from” the experience of the Eucharist found much but not unanimous support, even though the issuance of the RCIA strengthened inclinations for the commingling of liturgy and catechesis. Unfolding catechumenal realities were already alive in other parts of the world before the Council. However, accepting the restoration of the catechumenate was one thing, but applying a catechumenal mentality to a broadly focused catechesis was another.

Berard Marthaler, OFM Conv., points out that, after the RCIA, “The liturgical and catechetical forms of ministry were no longer compartmentalized. The RCIA redefined liturgical catechesis and put responsibility for catechesis on the Christian community as a whole. The catechumenate changed the catechetical model from school to apprenticeship and shifted the emphasis from instruction to experience.”³⁸

The 1977 synod on catechesis, held between the appearance of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Catechesi Tradendae*, helped to solidify and set the tone for reinvigorated catechumenally-driven catechetical foundations. This would blend well with Pope John Paul II’s coming and oft-quoted assertion, “the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.”³⁹

28 English translation of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) © 1974, 1985, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL).

29 Anne Marie Mongoven, O.P. “The Story of Renewal.” In Anne Marie Mongoven, *The Prophetic Spirit of Catechesis*. New York: Paulist Press, 2000, 67-68.

30 Sacred Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory* (GCD), Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1971, 17.

31 Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [EN] (On Evangelization in the Modern World). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, December 8, 1975, 14.

32 See *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 44: “The methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned; they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life.”

33 Cf. EN, 44.

34 Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis* [GDC]. Washington: United States Catholic Conference—Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997, 62. Perhaps we see here a reminder of the attempt to distinguish different dimensions of the ministry of the word as identified in GCD, 17.

35 Rev. William J. Tobin, Ed. “Importance of Catechetical Congress Address of Pope Paul VI” (Unofficial translation). *International Catechetical Congress*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1971, 4.

36 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. “Sacrosanctum Concilium” (“The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy”). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 10.

37 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1074.

38 Berard Marthaler, OFM Conv. “A New Meaning of Catechesis,” 5.

39 Pope John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae* [CT] (On Catechesis in Our Time), 1979. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 5.

Catechetical leaders of the time already were working closely with liturgists on foundational linkages. Little more than a dozen years after the Council, *Sharing the Light of Faith*, “the first document of its kind to attempt to guide catechesis for the United States,”⁴⁰ would state that catechesis and liturgy “are rooted in the Church’s faith, and both strengthen faith and summon Christians to conversion, although they do so in different ways.”⁴¹

Applying, deepening, and intermingling those ways became part of the tasks, expectations, and growing pains after the Council as “liturgy” began to enter more deliberately existing catechetical settings and as “catechesis” began to identify more deliberately its sharing in the journey to the altar. This was not a mutually exclusive relation, for liturgy and catechesis lead to active discipleship in the world. “*Sharing the Light of Faith*” would do much to promote discipleship—movement toward justice, mercy, and peace in society.⁴² Surely, projects and programs exemplified these priorities as heightened attention to such elements as spiritual formation, conversion of heart, and renewed appreciation for the dignity of the human person took hold.

OPENING NEW CATECHETICAL DOORWAYS

In 1972, I secured my first full-time catechetical position as coordinator of religious education for a suburban parish in upstate New York. Having returned to the United States from my overseas Air Force assignment, I was unemployed and grateful for the opportunity before me. Shortly after being hired and during a conversation that included the pastor, I mentioned that I would be “working for” the people of that parish. The pastor, an older man, turned to me and in a very gentle voice stated, “No, Jerry, working with.” I still rejoice that this insight came near the start of my service as a catechetical leader.

The Diocese of Albany granted me a provisional license to serve religious education. Six years of ministerial and academic formation eventually led to meeting the requirements for the director’s license, earned just as I departed for what would become a quarter century of service in catechetical publishing.

Those six years in Albany, coupled with other periods as a catechist in Colorado, Ohio, and Okinawa, formed my catechetical foundation. One of the pillars supporting this foundation was my interaction with women leaders, both lay and religious. As I recall, only two men were serving as parish catechetical leaders in the deanery where I served in Albany.

My previous positions had been in the military, with a largely male leadership. So it was a change for me to be in the minority. I thank God today for that growth opportunity. The late Mary Reed Newland and Sr. Eileen Flanagan, C.N.D., took me under their wing. It was the former who persuaded me over a cup of coffee to stay the course with catechesis, while the latter tracked my academic and professional advancement.

Within less than a decade of the Council and for many years that followed, a number of contributing dimensions for coming to faith and sustaining faith emerged as a type of standard, underscoring the depth and meaning of catechesis and its doctrinal foundations. Some of these dimensions include enhanced reliance on sacred Scripture, heightened understanding of sacred Tradition, growing significance of evangelization and inculturation, and strengthening the catechetical formation of the ordained and the lay faithful. Other dimensions included exploring the experience of initial and ongoing conversion, embracing the baptismal catechumenate and probing its implications for all of catechesis, promoting the Catholic social tradition and the pursuit of justice, and forming disciples for a lifetime of witnessing to faith. Developmentally appropriate and systematic ways of presenting catechetical lessons and promoting catechetical understanding sprung up and secured a prominent place, especially with regard to children and young people. These patterns incorporated methodological approaches with insights derived from educational practices of the time.

Near the end of the 1970s, Pope John Paul II addressed “the Original Pedagogy of the Faith” in his landmark apostolic exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae* (On Catechesis in Our Time). After identifying some contributing elements to pedagogy, he would note that “pedagogy of faith is not a question of transmitting human knowledge, even of the highest kind; it is a question of communicating God’s revelation in its entirety.”⁴³

I am reminded of the synod on catechesis regarding children and youth held just two years before the church received *Catechesi Tradendae*. From that synod we would hear that “Pedagogy of faith therefore has this specific characteristic: an encounter with the person of Christ, a conversion of the heart, the experience of the Spirit in the ecclesial community.”⁴⁴

Existing catechetical priorities for children and teens in parish programs and in Catholic schools were joined by recognition of the importance of catechesis and other elements of faith development from within the setting of youth ministry programs and their accompanying outreach to young people.

The convergence of clarifying documentation and educational advances made for high expectations. It is fair to suggest that

40 Daniel S. Mulhall. “A Brief Walk through the *National Directory for Catechesis*.” *Catechetical Leader*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (March 2005): 5.

41 National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (SLF)*: Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1979, 113.

42 See *SLF*, Chapter VII: “Catechesis for Social Ministry.”

43 *Catechesi Tradendae*, 58.

44 “Message to the People of God” [MPG], Synod 1977. *Origins*. Washington, DC: National Catholic News Service, Vol. 7, No. 21, November 10, 1977, 11.

many catechists struggled not only with determining how to formulate appropriate means of addressing such dimensions as “encounter, conversion, and experience of the Spirit” but also with how to utilize appropriate teaching processes. Catechist formation continued as a priority, but was especially challenging for catechists who had limited or negligible time with children and adolescents, perhaps 60 to 90 minutes a week for 30 weeks a year.

There was also growing and in some places gradual awareness of the importance of family faith formation, leading to a wide swath of pertinent approaches. In addition, narrow assumptions that heretofore had seemed to limit the availability of catechesis to children were broadened to include availability of catechesis for adults (a need noted by Pope Pius X in his 1905 encyclical letter, *Acerbo Nimis* [*On Teaching Christian Doctrine*]) and for all. Sometimes the term “adult” would be used as a synonym for “parent,” thereby unintentionally limiting attention to the needs of young adults, single adults, couples with no children, and older adults.

The Council’s *Declaration on Christian Education* had declared that “All Christians — that is, all those who having been reborn in water and the Holy Spirit are called and in fact are children of God — have a right to a Christian education.”⁴⁵ Succeeding documents would use such terms as “chief form”⁴⁶ and “summit” and “center”⁴⁷ in referring to the place of adult catechesis in the catechetical sphere. Pope John Paul II would identify adult catechesis as “the principal form of catechesis.”⁴⁸

In the United States, adult formation programs and approaches became a usual expectation of catechetical ministry. Specialized parish and diocesan positions emerged in some areas, though some of these positions would eventually be combined with other named posts, presumably for economic reasons. Although the weary catechetical leader’s plate remained full, major support nationwide came with the 1999 publication of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*.⁴⁹ This brief but detailed plan has proven to be an important resource for parishes large and small.

Adult catechesis is an urgent need. Perhaps its emerging and ongoing linkages to the new evangelization will yield broader and more creative approaches, for what is needed is far more

attention than ever for catechesis that engages both young adults and adults “of a certain age.” The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*⁵⁰ is a widely available resource for assisting in developing a comprehensive adult faith formation.

The new evangelization demands explicit engagement of catechists and catechetical leaders with both the active faithful and with those who are considering a return to the faith they once called their own. This must be a cross-generational effort, accomplished without abandoning purposes of evangelization directed to those of no religious tradition who yearn for the lasting peace of a relationship with Christ. It also bears mentioning that the subject of new evangelization is not only the person “alongside of me,”⁵¹ but “me” as well. “The New Evangelization calls all Catholics first to be evangelized and then in turn to evangelize.”⁵²

Among all of the overtures put forth for specifying and engaging the ministry of catechesis since Vatican II, the relationship between evangelization and catechesis has continued to deepen. Catechesis, which serves both initiatory and ongoing dimensions of faith formation, lives within “the context of the Church’s mission of evangelization” and is “an essential moment of that mission.”⁵³

One could argue that every Council document served up essential catechetical implications, as broad and as sweeping as the emerging broad and sweeping roles of diocesan and parish catechetical leaders. In the years following the Council challenges and expectations were, to put it mildly, massive. The leader often was expected to serve catechetical, theological, educational, spiritual, and even counseling functions.

A plethora of statements and documents about catechesis would follow Vatican II, enlivening ministry, generating lively discussion, and affirming the work of the catechist. In the United States, the bishops encouraged “all concerned individuals”⁵⁴ to study drafts of what would eventually bear the title *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States (SLF)*, which was published in 1979. It was my privilege to participate in the consultation process for this document while serving as a parish catechetical leader.

Catechetical leaders in the United States have had the benefit of supporting ecclesial documentation for decades. Daniel Mulhall

45 Austin Flannery, OP (Ed.). *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. “Gravissimum Educationis” (“Declaration on Christian Education”). Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, Inc., 1975, 2. Note 8 follows the word “Spirit” in this quotation and states: “Cf. Pius XI. Encycl. *Divini Illius Magistri*, loc. cit., p. 83.”

46 GCD 20. This reference and term are cited in the GDC, 59.

47 SLF 40.

48 *Catechesi Tradendae*, 43. This reference and term are cited in the NDC, 48A.

49 *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1999.

50 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006.

51 See *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., 2002.

52 *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*, Preface.

53 GDC, 59. Cf. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 18.

54 Draft of *National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*. National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Washington, DC, 1975.

notes that the *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)*, which replaced *Sharing the Light of Faith* in 2005, “covers most of the themes presented in SLF, but addresses them from the perspective of evangelization and in greater depth.”⁵⁵ It, too, was subject to consultations prior to publication and benefited from the 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis*.⁵⁶

The *NDC* represents a statement of significant proportion for the ministry of catechesis in the United States. With its established linkage to evangelization, the *NDC* provides an underlying unifying framework in support of “proclaiming Christ, preaching Christ, bearing witness to Christ, teaching Christ, and celebrating Christ’s sacraments.”⁵⁷

One particularly enriching and enlightening dimension of catechesis addressed by the *NDC* has to do with affirming the need for catechesis for people with disabilities and for those who are in special situations at particular points in their lives. These aspects of catechesis for all can too easily be overlooked, especially when budgetary cuts are necessary. When the observation is made that “numbers” are not sufficiently high to be able to accommodate all or most of these catechetical needs, it is wise to remember an early church practice of catechesis in which one person would catechize another. Ultimately, it is important to explore just solutions that reflect all catechetical priorities when facing internal parish and diocesan challenges.

The two national directories were preceded in time, respectively, by the two worldwide general directories, the first of which (*GCD*) has already been addressed here. The *GCD*, after nearly three decades of use, was revised, yielding in 1997 the *General Directory for Catechesis*. The *GDC* benefits from both the passage of time and catechetical experience since the Council.

Some wondered in anticipation of the *GDC*, what would it propose and prescribe? The Catechism of the Catholic Church was already in use worldwide and was making a dramatic impact on people, products,⁵⁸ and catechetical perspectives. How would

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a revised general directory “work” with the new *Catechism*? While acknowledging the “generous dedication, worthy initiatives and . . . positive results for the education and growth in the faith of children, young people and adults” since the end of the Council, the *GDC* also asserted the reality of “crises, doctrinal inadequacies, influences from the evolution of global culture and ecclesial questions derived from outside the field of catechesis which have often impoverished its quality.”⁵⁹

Among its many topical areas, the *GDC* addressed evangelization-catechesis linkages, promoted the inspiring place of the baptismal catechumenate for catechesis (calling it “the model for all catechesis”⁶⁰), described contributing elements to the pedagogy of the faith, and promoted six tasks of catechesis.⁶¹ The term “six tasks” would become part of the woodwork of catechesis; a multitude of workshops would follow and mere mention of the term would lead to an almost immediate understanding of the breadth and challenge of this ministry.

In my estimation, reception of the *GDC* has been broad and lasting. Although its many features include compelling chapters on the “Pedagogy of God, source and model of the pedagogy of the faith” and “Elements of methodology,” one statement stands out:

“The communication of the faith in catechesis is an event of grace, realized in the encounter of the word of God with the experience of the person. It is expressed in sensible signs and is ultimately open to mystery.”⁶²

In the next issue, we will continue to probe further into the changes and lasting effects the Second Vatican Council has had on the shaping of current catechesis throughout the church. ■

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55 Daniel S. Mulhall. “A Brief Walk through the *National Directory for Catechesis*”: 5.

56 Mulhall writes: “Where SLF was developed from the *General Catechetical Directory (GCD)*, the *NDC* was developed from the *GDC*.” He writes that the *GDC* and *GCD* are “substantially different in style, content, tone, and approach” and states the same of the *NDC* and SLF relationship. *Ibid.*:18.

57 *NDC*, 17C. Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 17.

58 The world of publishing catechetical resources, in place for many decades before the Council, became an increasingly distinctive service to the Church in the United States during the decades since Vatican II, especially with the publication of bilingual resources. The catechetical slice of the publishing industry has been a significant contributor to the catechetical enterprise in the United States, not only through publications but also through catechetical consulting services to dioceses and parishes.

59 *GDC*, 2.

60 *GDC*, 59 quoting *MPG*, 8.

61 See *GDC* 85-87 and *NDC* 20 for fine treatments of the six tasks. The *NDC* presentation states: “*Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith. . . . Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments. . . . Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ. . . . Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ. . . . Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church. . . . Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.*”

62 *GDC*, 150.

Co-Workers Leads to Cohort

Linda Khirallah Porter



BACKGROUND AND THE FIRST STEP

In 2005, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* was issued as a resource to guide the development of lay ecclesial ministry in local dioceses. It was a document which addressed real issues for leadership development, formation of the laity, and just compensation

for laity in church ministry. Seven years after that document, our diocese now has 14 individuals who have completed the formation explained in the document.

However, while the aims of the document were valid, providing for every detail was not possible. Rather than relinquish it completely, a “compromise” occurred and the response was to take direction from the document and adapt it to our diocesan needs, resources, and realities.

THE AGREEMENT AND FIRST HYBRID MODEL

A Cohort between the University of Dallas School of Ministry and the Diocese of Tyler was created, focusing on formation of lay and diaconate leadership in the diocese already in active ministry. The formation was targeted at the four pillars of formation utilizing the School of Ministry professors for the intellectual pillar and diocesan personnel for development of the additional three pillars of the apostolate, spiritual, and human.

In January 2009, with the cooperation and commitment of both groups, the Cohort was named “JPII Faith Formation Program” as it was dedicated to the vision of Vatican II which our beloved Pope JPII emulated.

The first “hybrid” model of formation included face-to-face sessions once a month for three hours for one course and additional online work for the six remaining hours including blackboard postings, video presentations, and independent assignments throughout the month. School of Ministry professors traveled 200 miles once a month to provide these live sessions. Additionally, the online videos exceeded other online format courses. The professors who write the courses are the ones who present on the videos.

THE FOUR PILLARS

Students were asked to take two courses per semester. Additionally, the Office of Faith Formation provided personnel

once a month for a two-hour session to develop the three additional pillars. Rev. Gavin Vaverek, pastor, Promoter of Justice, Defender of the Bond, Moderator for Pro-Life, in addition to other pastoral leadership positions, became instrumental in assisting my office in this formation. Dedicated to lifelong faith formation for every person has been a high priority for this diocese and Fr. Vaverek implements that same vision in his parish and diocesan work.

Topics for discussion on the Sunday formation days included saint presentations by the students, biblical personality profiles, Myers Briggs assessment, authoritative teaching in the church, liturgical renewal, Christian Initiation, and others. Time was allowed for feedback and concerns the students had within their classes, with professors, homework challenges, and doctrinal issues. Also the session always included evening prayer before the group dismissed.

CAN OUR DIOCESE AFFORD THIS PROGRAM?

Students were asked to pay a portion of the cost, the diocese was to supplement the cost, and the School of Ministry offered discounts. Additionally, a grant of \$40,000 was achieved through a foundation for this program. My office for faith formation budget also provided hospitality, stipends, travel expenses, gathering expenses for the program in the beginning stages, as well as the celebration for families and friends when the program was completed.

Over 100 individuals attended the celebration January 14, 2012 when 14 students completed 36 graduate study hours in theology and scripture to satisfy the Masters of Theology Studies degree. Five of the 14 students received a Certificate for Advanced Studies since they did not have an undergraduate degree when they began. While the cost for the certificates was one-third less, the demands of the course requirements were exactly the same for all students.

Some students could not pay anything; however, their parishes were willing to supplement their tuition. All students were asked to purchase their own textbooks. No student was turned away for lack of ability to pay.

This program paid for itself and there was no additional cost needed from the diocesan budget. The following explains the financial breakdown of the JPII Faith Formation Program:

Approximate tuition cost for 14 students:	\$160,000
Approximate cost for additional expenses: (hospitality, travel, meetings, stipends, etc.)	\$5,000
Approximate revenue provided by students and parishes:	\$159,000
Additional revenue provided by foundation grant:	\$40,000

WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?

The individuals who participated in this program have been involved in ministry in the church prior to their participation in this program.

- ❖ Amy is a Catholic school principal
- ❖ Sandy is a parish faith formation leader and Christian initiation coordinator
- ❖ Peggy is the parish Director of Sacramental Formation
- ❖ Deacon Rick is Diocesan Director of Discipleship
- ❖ Deacon Ruben is the Diocesan Chancellor
- ❖ Deacon Blue is the parish faith formation leader
- ❖ Deacon Blue's wife participated and also serves as a Catechist
- ❖ Michelle is a parish catechist
- ❖ Lyndia is a parish Faith Formation Leader
- ❖ George is a parish catechist and a cardiologist
- ❖ Susan is a parish and Catholic high school catechist
- ❖ Sr. Angelica is the Diocesan Coordinator for Catechetics
- ❖ Sr. Susan Catherine is a Daughter of Divine Hope – Foundress of this order which was created during the three-year program in our diocese
- ❖ Ann is a Catholic school religion coordinator

Among these individuals there are 15 children under the age of 14. Over the three years of formation, they faced illnesses, deaths of loved ones, births of children, personal financial difficulties, and the frustrations of time management with respect to the demands of the course work. They traveled from nine cities covering over 22,000 square miles.

Here are some comments from some of the individuals who participated in the program.

“As a pastor, the blessing of having five parishioners with this type of formation is simply huge. It deepens our programs and formation opportunities in so many ways.”

Rev. Gavin N. Vaverek, JCL

“I am grateful for this opportunity that was a significant component in the establishment of the Daughters of Divine Hope, a new religious community in the Diocese of Tyler. This unique program helped prepare me for my profession of vows and my responsibilities as foundress.”

Sr. Susan Catherine Kennedy, DDH

“The JP II Faith Formation Program is a prime example of what can happen when partnerships are formed and love is put into action in a concrete way.”

Amy Allen, principal

“The opportunity to study for a Master’s Degree in Theological Studies was truly the answer to my lifelong prayer.”

Sandy Bunch

“I would just say that the program was such a blessing for me to learn more deeply and grow more spiritually. This was not just in the book learning but the experience with the other members of the group and the professors. I will never be the same. I will be forever grateful for the experience.”

Michelle Reynolds

“The JP II program gave me a much broader foundation in the faith which I find I use every day in my faith formation ministry but also deepened my own spiritual life and enriched my own personal call to holiness on a daily lived experience. It has not only increased my knowledge base, but how I direct catechesis in helping all members of a household grow ever deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Peggy Hammett

“The JP II program gives us more confidence and hopefully more effectiveness in our roles as catechists in our local parish. There is huge personal growth through formation in the rich tradition of the Catholic faith during three years of study, reflection, and sharing within our cohort... The JP II program empowers us to go forth and share our faith and to serve God with love.”

Dr. George and Susan Leatherman

THE RESULT

The Diocese of Tyler now has 14 more individuals who are well formed, dedicated to their ministry, their own faith formation, and are witnesses that discipleship of Christ is not an option but an expectation for all Catholic adults in their present life situations.

Many of the elements of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* were key in providing this cohort in the Diocese of Tyler. The formation, the dedication, the sacrifices both on the part of the students, the professors, the coordinators, and the unconditional support of Bishop Alvaro Corrada, SJ, and Dean Brian Schmisek of the School of Ministry has provided this small East Texas rural diocese an academic presence that never existed in its 25-year history and will continue to help the growth of the kingdom of God here.

It is my prayer that as a faith formation leader in this country, other dioceses will investigate opportunities for adult faith formation and ministry and look to the documents provided by our church for the vision to make this a priority in order to make Christ ever present. ■

Linda Khirallah Porter is the Director of the Office of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Tyler. She has served as a catechist, Catholic school teacher, presenter, and sponsor in various programs in her parish, in the diocese, and in other dioceses around the country. Contact her at Lporter@dioceseoftyler.org.

A Catholic Voice at the Evangelization Table: The Real Role of the Real Presence

Kristina M. DeNeve



When I offer evangelization workshops for parishioners around the Diocese of Green Bay, I regularly ask participants why they go to Mass as well as why they are Catholic. The overwhelming response is because of the Eucharist and because of the Real Presence of Jesus they receive in the Eucharist.¹

Unfortunately, when asked to elaborate on *why* the Eucharist is so important to their faith, it does not take long before I begin hearing reflections that contradict the fundamentally communal nature of this sacrament. These divisive statements tend to fall into one of three categories.

First, we contrast Catholic belief with other Christian denominations, often minimizing or belittling others' "inferior" rituals and "lesser" theological understanding of the Eucharist. Catholic pride can too easily translate into a sense of superiority.

Second, we too often forget that many Protestant denominations *do* share our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. While the precise doctrinal formulation regarding the Real Presence varies among each Christian denomination², we are being ignorant at best and imperialistic at worst when we brag that, "The Catholic Mass is the only place where a person can receive Jesus' Body and Blood."

Finally, we often talk with our less active Catholic brothers and sisters in less than charitable ways when it comes to the Eucharist and the Real Presence. It is understandably disheartening that as many as half of all Catholics are either unaware of Catholic teaching regarding the Real Presence or are aware of this teaching, but do not believe it.³ We do more harm than good, however, when we say, "You would get more out of Mass if you put more into it."

THE UNITIVE NATURE OF THE REAL PRESENCE

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that Eucharist is first, foremost, and always a unitive sacrament. Jesus unites himself to us and we are united to one another. Ironically, the best starting point for sharing our passion for the Eucharist may be with the sad reality that non-Catholic Christians are asked to not receive Holy Communion while attending Catholic Mass.

The reason non-Catholics are asked not to share in Communion is *not* because of the Real Presence. Rather, we ask this as

a concrete means to honor and acknowledge the very real and very painful religious divisions that exist between Christians. Sadly, we are not yet catholic, not yet one, universal Body of Christ. If we share Eucharist when we know we are not in full union, full communion, we disrespect our differences, our lack of universality, and the sacrament itself.

Obviously, humility and sensitivity are needed to talk with others about why we cannot share Eucharist. And it is this humility that makes me much less likely to utilize (whether intentional or not) imperialistic, superior, prideful language.

EVANGELIZING IMAGES OF THE EUCHARIST

After sharing our pain and grief associated with our disunity, discussion can then fruitfully turn to *why* the Eucharist means so much to Catholics. Images taken from the Catechism can be quite helpful in this respect, especially: Thanksgiving; Lord's Supper; Memorial of Jesus' Passion and Resurrection; Sacrifice; Meal/Daily Bread; Paschal Mystery.

Catechists also consult Fr. Ronald Rolheiser's *Our One Great Act of Fidelity: Waiting for Christ in the Eucharist*. Rolheiser develops 12 distinct images of the Eucharist. Catechists can empower parishioners to explore and then use an image or two that most deeply connects them with this Eucharist at this time in their own faith journey. ■

Kristina M. DeNeve, PhD, is the Evangelization and Welcoming Director for the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Contact her at kdeneve@gbdioc.org.

NOTE

1. People born between 1979 and 1987, reported feeling the need for the Eucharist as the most important reason for coming to Mass (at 77% of respondents), slightly higher even than the desire to experience the liturgy (at 72%). <http://ncronline.org/news/catholics-america/different-generations-church>
2. Wikipedia offers a good introduction to the positions Christian denominations hold regarding the Real Presence. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real_Presence
3. Perhaps 33% of Catholics are "unknowing unbelievers" while another 4% are "knowledgeable doubters." <http://ncronline.org/news/catholics-america/knowledge-and-belief-about-real-presence>

A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good

By Miroslav Volf, Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011 | Reviewed by Daniel Thomas



This book by Miroslav Volf, the Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School and director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, explores how Christians and politicians can better talk to one another.

Volf describes faith as prophetic because it involves both ascent and return, both of which are essential to true faith and capable of malfunctions. “The Christian faith malfunctions when it is practiced as a mystical religion in which ascent is followed by a *barren* rather than creative return” (7). Ascent malfunctions flow from the functional reduction of faith: “Gradually the language about God is hollowed out from within” (10). We make God into our own image.

One of the “return malfunctions” is idleness of faith, the sins of omission, a giving in to the power of systems and the culture. “If faith *only* heals and energizes then it is a crutch not

a way of life” (16). “Faith does its most proper work when it (1) sets us on a journey, (2) guides us along the way, and (3) gives meaning to each step we take” (16).

A second malfunction is coerciveness of faith, when it “impose[s] itself oppressively on the unwilling.” [T]he adherents of prophetic religion will let faith dictate the ends to be achieved...but fail to allow faith to determine the means to achieve those ends (opponents are not even respected, let alone treated with benevolence and beneficence).”

“Idleness...is one major malfunction of faith. Instead of setting goals and propelling a person toward them, idle faith spins in one place, like a tire in an icy hole” (23). The second chapter is a powerful analysis of idleness in relation to blessing (i.e., success in our work), deliverance (when failures happen), the danger of busyness, and faith as giving us guidance and meaning.

Chapter three focuses on coerciveness and distinguishes between thin and thick faith with the former often causing us Christians

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to coerce because we forget the call to love our enemies. There is a very useful section which answers the objections of those who attack the Christian church as the cause of violence in our world.

The most significant message in this book is best stated by Volf:

I will argue that in order to counter malfunctions of faith, it is important for Christians to keep focused on God and on the proper understanding of human flourishing. For this, in the end, is what the Christian faith is all about—being an instrument of God for the sake of human flourishing, in this life and the next (5). The proper content of human flourishing consists in love of God and neighbor and enjoyment of both (58).

One of his more challenging statements is this: “Maybe the most difficult challenge for Christians is to actually *believe* that God is fundamental to human flourishing...We must believe it as a rock-bottom conviction that shapes the way we think, preach, write, and live” (74).

Volf has some important challenges to the liberals, post-liberal, and separatists in our churches. We Christians need, he says, to say no to the total transformation of our society since this is unrealistic. And no to accommodation as well. But *yes* to engagement “to mend the world...with[our] *whole being*.”

“Sharing Wisdom,” the title of chapter six, is Volf’s way of talking about what we would call evangelization. It is an interesting difference. The voice is muted yet speaks the Christian message fully, caringly, clearly, and powerfully.

The final chapter stresses the importance of the Christian voice in the public square: “In this environment, [t]he only way to attend to the problem of violent clashes among differing perspectives on life—whether religious or secular—is to concentrate on the internal resources of each for fostering a culture of peace” (132).

Differences are a reality in our society so we need to practice “hermeneutical hospitality” in regard to each other’s sacred texts...Religious communities will continue to disagree and argue. The point is to help them argue productively as friends rather than destructively as enemies” (136-7).

This is a book that those of us involved in the public discussion of contentious issues need to read and reflect on together. |

Daniel Thomas was a director of religious education for 30 years in four different parishes in the Dayton area of the Cincinnati Archdiocese. He retired in 2010. He has been married to Eileen for 35 years, and they have two adult sons. Contact him at danlthomas@sbcglobal.net.

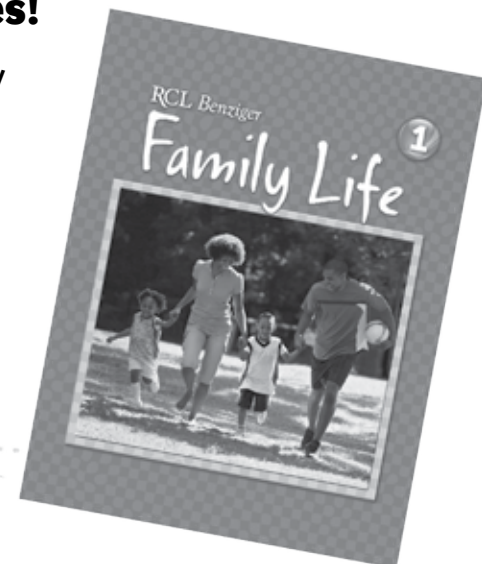
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Three Insights about Creating Meaningful Connections with Families

Leisa Anslinger



The last few months have been filled with conversations among catechetical leaders about the process of engaging families in lasting and growing faith, within the community of faith, the church. We have been exploring these concepts here in this column, and I have heard from many of you who read

Catechetical Leader that you are following the column and are talking about this with others in your parishes and dioceses, including pastors, catechists, and parents. Our explorations here are taking into account Gallup research that demonstrates the importance of drawing people to a deep sense of belonging, of being engaged, with one another as members of Christ's Body. We are also drawing on strands of other studies, and we are considering and the impact of this engagement on the ways in which people become committed to living their faith, especially parents and their families.

When we think about engaging parents, we know that the primary connecting point is their children. Parents take very seriously their responsibility for their children, and particularly in this time, when parents feel pulled in many directions and often voice the challenges of prioritizing their time and attention, helping parents to do this is key to the process of engaging them in lasting and living faith. Many of us already have practices in place that help parents to learn from each other or from more "seasoned" parents – those who have children who are older and who have the perspective of time. Others of us recognize the importance of more intentionally providing opportunities for parents to share the joys and challenges of being good Catholic parents, and seek best practices to establish such connections.

One of the most intriguing elements of the Gallup research and the experience of many catechetical leaders in the last few years is that when people have the opportunity to give of themselves with meaning, they are vastly more likely to be engaged. Specifically, the research says that when people are able to say, "In my parish, I have the opportunity to do what I do best," they are 2.5 times more likely to be engaged than not, and 38 times more likely to be engaged than actively disengaged. What does that mean for us in our ministry to and with parents? We will begin our exploration here and continue in the next column.

First, think of the many parents who are already connected to you and to the parish through your catechetical programs. Some may be catechists or classroom aides; others may offer

their time behind the scenes, helping in the office or with craft preparation, field trips, or activities for children or families. Some of your most engaged parents may be ones who have experienced the care of the community in times of difficulty and are now committed to sharing the love of Christ with others.

Secondly, some parents stay on the edge of parish life, not because they intentionally keep a distance from us (yes, some do, but the studies help us understand many are not intentional in their distance). They simply need someone to personally draw them in, and the best way to do this is by helping them discover their God-given talents and to discern how they can best develop and use those talents at home and in the parish. We will explore this in greater depth in the next issue.

Thirdly, parents often see needs that we do not, and sometimes our first response to an expression of need is to think, or say aloud, that the need expressed should be met elsewhere. Sometimes this is a valid response, but more than occasionally, if we listen to what is being shared by parents, there is an underlying desire to build a caring Catholic Christian community, and a hope to be part of the solution.

Where does this lead us?

1. Express gratitude to those who are already offering themselves meaningfully in your catechetical processes.
2. Help those who are already connected to understand the importance of inviting others to share their time and talent with the parish.
3. Put into place a process through which people are able to discover and develop their God-given talents and to use them at home and in the parish.
4. In doing this, you will create an environment in which parents realize that we all have a need to give, and that in giving, we share with one another the love of Christ. Doing this at home creates and sustains the domestic church; doing this at the parish engages people for a lifetime of faith. ■

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.

Drop-off, pick-up catechesis. How's that working for you?

Tom Quinlan



Parent and family faith formation is absolutely central to the effective transmission of Catholic faith to our children...and to its lasting impact on them.

Today, we are not merely for the catechizing of children...but for the evangelization of households!

In my decade-plus time as catechetical director for the Diocese of Joliet, little has become as clear as these first sentences. It is undeniable, indisputable, and needs to be addressed in every parish in my diocese...indeed, every parish in the nation. And the initial statements apply as much to our children in Catholic schools as they do in parish catechetical programs. This is a global reality.

Years ago, Catholic faith was primarily passed on to young people within the context of family. Societal elements such as school and neighborhood were important in supporting and reaffirming the faith being lived in the home. It all worked together to inculcate a religious identity and practice.

Our primary institutional model for child catechesis is much like it was generations ago. Children attend Catholic schools and parish programs for systematic catechesis and sacrament preparation. The model used to make sense. In today's dramatically different reality, the model, standing alone, fails woefully. Catholic schools and parish formation programs simply cannot be the primary (or often the only) religious component in the children's lives; they were never designed for this. They were designed to be a cooperating component to the primary influence of the home.

Any model of Catholic formation that ignores or circumvents parents is doomed to be ineffectual...if the goal is to bring young people into deep and lasting relationship with Christ in and through the church.

In the Diocese of Joliet, I continue to exhort parish catechetical leaders (pastors, DREs, principals, youth ministers, and adult faith formation leaders) to gather around this topic and explore how they can integrate family and intergenerational faith formation, as well as direct parent formation, into planning for the life of the parish. As studies continue to confirm what we already know about the erosion of Catholic faith practice, we can wait no longer. It is already late to be attempting to tackle this paradigm-shift and reframe our focus to give greater emphasis to parent and family formation. Rather than reducing their commitment to catechesis, as is

happening in many places, now is the time for parishes to be investing substantially, *particularly* as it relates to adult faith formation and, in particular, parent formation.

Nearly half of the parishes in my diocese have embraced this vision and have implemented some degree of family/intergenerational ministry. And many are trying creative ways to reach our parents with an evangelizing catechesis. The stories coming from these parishes are filled with hope — fathers who are seeing Catholic faith for the first time from an adult perspective; families coming to Mass more frequently and sharing faith together at home; moms becoming more active in parish ministries.

Having provided a consistent diocesan message affirming parent and family formation over the years has had an impact on the culture of catechesis here. Leadership formation has given parish catechetical leaders not only the vision but specific strategies for moving forward toward implementation. And having a consultant for family and intergenerational faith formation available through my office to support and guide parishes has proven to be a most important step.

If you have not given much attention to the family/intergenerational paradigm to date, the task may seem daunting. A modest yet crucial place to start would be to dig in and strengthen the family and parent components of proximate sacrament preparation. Baptism preparation would absolutely be *the* most important ministry for a parish to rebuild with an eye to evangelization. Preparation for reconciliation and Eucharist would be next. Design these ministries to engage families in their lived reality and to foster conversion.

Redoubling our efforts on the catechesis of children alone may be tempting as a way to address the erosion of faith practice in our nation. It seems safe. It is what we may be more comfortable with. It is what we've done for generations. And yet, as Dr. Phil might say, how's that working for us?

Dioceses and parishes that are trying to build a new paradigm (where parents are meaningfully formed in faith and families learn together) are feeling their way.

In the long run, an exclusive drop-off, pick-up model of catechesis that merely sacramentalizes vast numbers of children is a path headed to nowhere. It is the road of risk-taking and innovation that holds the greatest promise of new life for the church. ■

Tom Quinlan is the catechetical director for the Diocese of Joliet.

Social media: to use or not to use, that is the question

Claire M. McManus



It has been more than a year since Pope Benedict XVI issued the message “Truth, Proclamation, and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age,” exhorting the faithful to embrace social media as a means to evangelize: “I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life.”

Unfortunately, many faithful have either dismissed the use of social media because of concerns about its safety, or have missed the opportunity to use it as an effective tool for evangelization.

Indeed there are risks involved with social media, particularly when used by school-age children and youth. Social media has been used to bully, harass, and send lewd messages. There are privacy concerns, and there is worry about the inability to protect children from third-party advertisement groups. It is no wonder that many parishes and dioceses shy away from this form of communication.

There is also concern about over-use of social media by youth, leading to a condition known as “Facebook depression” that results from an addiction to the web. Apparently this is also a problem for young adults, as evidenced by the many *Mardi gras* posts that proclaimed farewell to their friends until Easter as they vowed to give up Facebook for Lent!

However, most parishes that don’t consider Facebook and Twitter to be a disaster waiting to happen have found ways to make good use of the media. They use the more controlled environment of the “Facebook page” which controls the visitors to the site and the messages that are posted. Other parishes have used networking tools that enhance their catechetical programs, bearing names like YouTube, GodTube, Busted Halo, blogs, and other such cyberspeak.

There are many websites that offer online retreats, spiritual exercises, and even a phone app for examining one’s conscience before going to confession.

While all of these websites and apps are great ways to connect people to a variety of spiritual resources, Pope Benedict is suggesting that we go one step further. He is asking us to seek out the young adults planted in cyberspace.

Young people of every generation have sought the truth. This is why the pope’s message to the world about social media contains the words “truth” and “authenticity.” When we use our Facebook and Twitter forums to spread gospel values, we can transform social media into a powerful force for engaging young adults at a critical moment in their quest. To become agents of change in their world, we have to do some soul searching ourselves. We must be willing to embrace authentic discipleship and engage in real and active dialogue about our faith through the use of social media. If Christ has transformed us, then post it unabashedly to that collection of cyber-followers whom we call friends.

Christianity, communal by nature, fits neatly in the realm of social media. The generation that eschews communal religion embraces virtual community; this is the paradox of the social media phenomenon in the young adult culture. Young adults have surpassed us in their ability to interact with the world. We may never in our lifetime have the opportunity to have an audience with the pope, but young adults are following him on his Twitter account, @pope2you, where he “tweets” Lenten messages to them. Pope Benedict is engaging youth in a way that could never have happened in the pre-Internet era.

We may not be very good at street corner proselytizing, but there is no reason why we can’t become cyber-evangelizers. We need to cleanse our posts of the polemical discourse that drains the charity out of fraternal correction, and engage in respectful dialogue that creates an environment that promotes true friendship. This is how we can use social media to spread Christ’s message of love and care for our neighbor, his abundant mercy, and his desire to be in a real, not virtual, relationship with us.

St. Ignatius of Loyola taught us to find God in all things, natural and created. Social media is part of the world into which God has placed us, and if we condemn it and leave it to the worldly culture, it will become a vacuous space posing as community. Social media is a field that is in need of preparation for the seeds of hope. We either take on the task of fertilizing it or we lose another harvest. ■

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

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

The Second Vatican Council

1962 – 1965

On October 11, 2012 the Catholic Church throughout the world will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII.

On October 11, 1962 I was a senior at St. Augustine Preparatory Seminary in Holland, MI. Over these past 50 years, I am ever grateful to the individuals, friends, colleagues, teachers, mentors, and writers for journeying with me in an education and formation in living and teaching in a Vatican II church.

As we enter the **Year of Faith** as proclaimed by Benedict XVI, and prepare to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the next few years are an excellent time to reread, read for the first time, study, and discuss the 16 documents of the Council. This will help catechetical learners better understand their vision, theology, and application to our lives in the church and in the world of today.

This is an excellent time for us to plan ways to share the teachings of Vatican II with our catechists and in our parish adult faith formation programs, bulletins, websites, etc. This can be a formal program or creatively introduced into existing programs and resources.

Let's face it. Church documents aren't easy to read since they are not written in our popular language. Thus, consider focusing on key themes and passages, especially from the four Constitutions:

- The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)
- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*)
- Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*)
- Pastoral Constitution on the

Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)

All the documents can be found on the Vatican website. In addition, Costello Publishing Company publishes three editions of the documents. One edition includes just the 16 documents and the other two editions include additional decrees and declarations since Vatican II. These editions are not available at Amazon, but are sold in Catholic, religious, and independent bookstores.

In preparing this article, I have identified the following books that will assist you, your catechists, and adults in understanding and growing in appreciation and application of the mission, vision, and theology of Vatican II for the next 50 years.

To begin

As a first choice, I recommend you begin with *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* by Edward P. Hahnenberg. St. Anthony Messenger Press/ Franciscan Media. This is an excellent introduction and overview and can be used as a reading guide for all the documents.

"The sixteen documents of the Second Vatican Council are the most important texts produced by the Catholic Church in the past four hundred years. They shape virtually every aspect of church life today. But hardly anyone ever reads them..." (Introduction).

"In this indispensable guide, Edward P. Hahnenberg outlines each of the sixteen documents produced by the Second Vatican Council. Offering the background for each work, its language and context, this book provides a clear and concise overview of the Council's work and its significance in the life of the

church. Each document's history, content, major concerns and effects are considered. Significant quotes provide a sample of the language, and contemporary topics provide discussion opportunities. Scripture scholars, students and every Catholic will find this a valuable resource" (from the publisher).

Recommended titles

What Happened at Vatican II by John O'Malley. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning by Massimo Faggioli. Paulist Press.

Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II by Richard R. Galliardetz and Catherine E. Clifford. Liturgical Press.

Vatican II: Its Impact on You by Peter Huff. Liguori Publications.

101 Questions and Answers to Vatican II by Maureen Sullivan. Paulist Press.

The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America by Colleen McDannell. Basic Books.

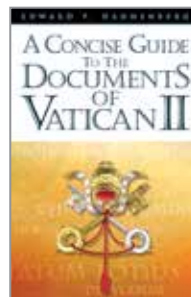
Vatican II in Plain English by Bill Huebsch. Ave Maria Press.

This three volume collection includes:

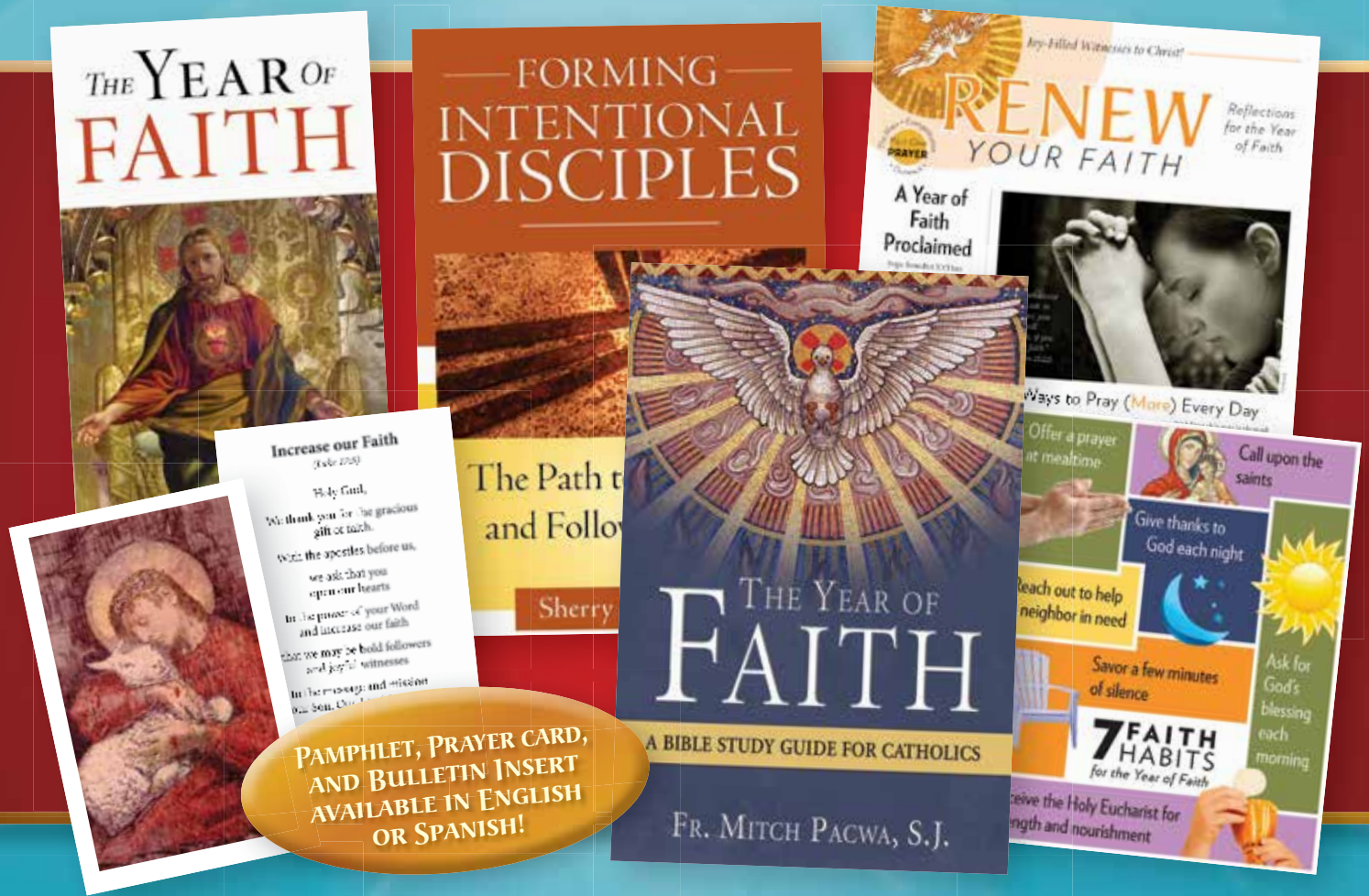
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Dan Pierson served as director of religious education for the Diocese of Grand Rapids for 17 years and is the founder of faithAlivebooks.com and eCatechist.com. He is co-author with Susan Stark of What Do I Do Now? A Guide for the Reluctant Catechist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



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