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CATECHETICAL
LEADER



SAINTS, SCRIPTURE, AND SOLIDARITY

IN THIS ISSUE:

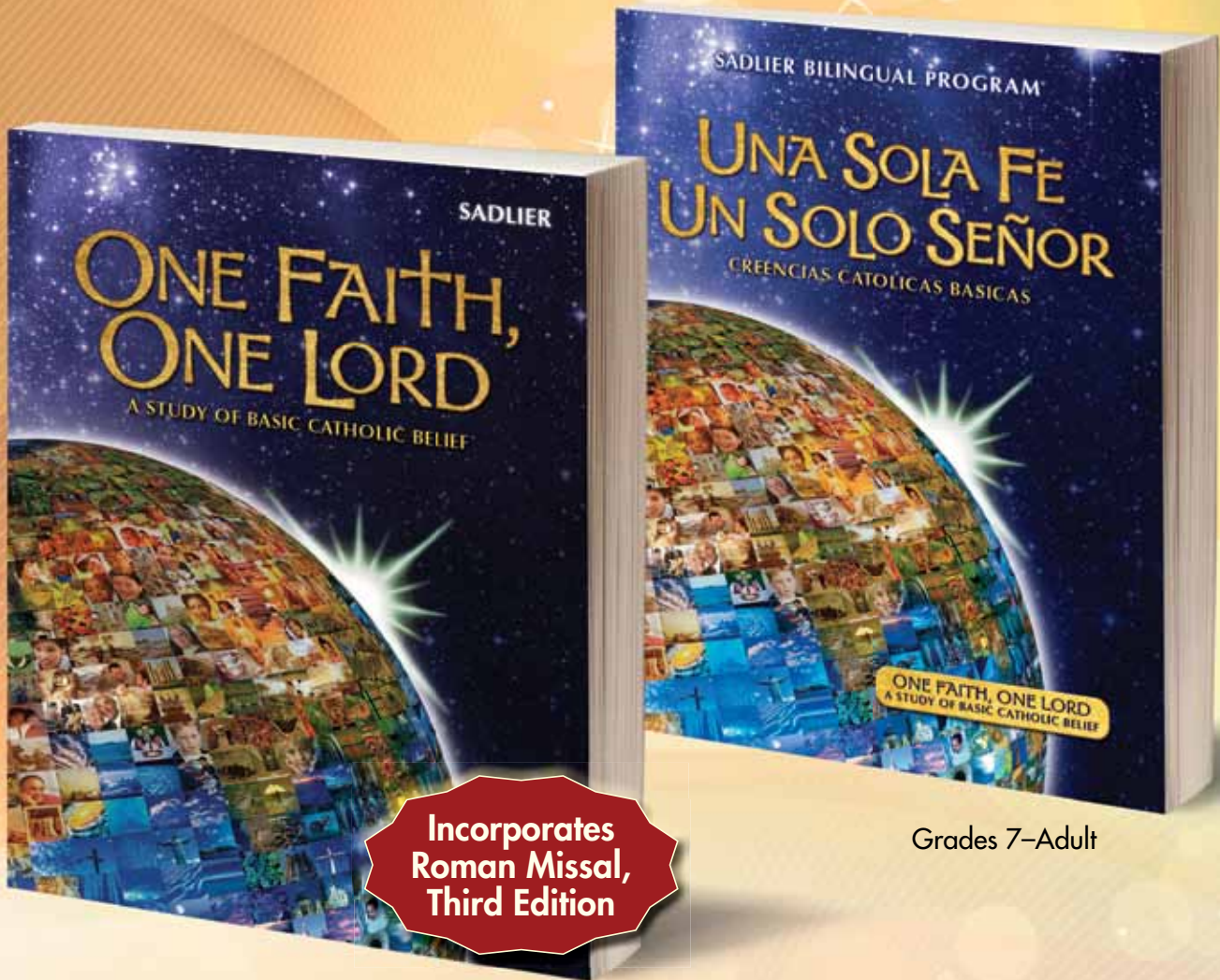
Vincent De Paul's Recipe for Solidarity:
Charity, Justice, & Organization

Connecting Catholic Families
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CATECHETICAL UPDATE:

Transitions—
A Transformational Journey

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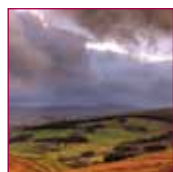
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Anne Roat



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership

In August, I had the opportunity to attend the National Symposium on Lay Ecclesial Ministry in Collegetown, Minnesota. NCCL was one of the sponsoring organizations, and we were allowed to send six representatives. My attendance at this symposium helped me realize the impact and influence our NCCL members have on lay ecclesial ministry throughout the United States.

Expecting to be with people I did not know, I was happy to find myself on the shuttle to the university seated next to José Amayo, a fellow member of NCCL. José is an anima-

tor for the Forum on Catechesis with Hispanics from Washington, D.C. Despite 98 degree temperatures and no air-conditioning, we had a great conversation that centered around the new bylaws article on federations. José and I were able to continue that conversation during the symposium with Maruja Sedano (representing the Archdiocese of Chicago) and members of the NCCL board.

At the symposium, I renewed my acquaintance with Barbara Romanello-Wichtman (representing LIMEX of New Orleans) and Ken Gleason (representing the Alliance). Both Barbara and Ken are members of the Cincinnati province. That province sent two recommendations to the NCCL Board of Directors for discussion during our July meeting; both recommendations had to do with the NCCL annual conference. One concerned the date of the conference, and the other had to do with finding organizations that would be willing to partner with NCCL for joint conferences. I assured Barbara and Ken that NCCL is actively seeking other national Catholic organizations that would be willing to have a joint conference. We also set our 2013 and 2014 conference dates for the third week in May – hoping to miss most parish first Communion and confirmation celebrations.

Also in attendance at the symposium were Julianne Donlon-Stanz (representing NCYAMA) and Bryan Reising (representing MCEA), both members of the 2013 NCCL Conference Committee. Of course, whenever two or more members of any NCCL committee are present, we do what comes naturally. We hold a meeting! During a lunch break, we gathered with Lee Nagel and Mary Jo Waggoner to review the speakers who had accepted our invitation to be keynoters in San Diego. With such an impressive line-up, I am sure that the 2013 Conference will be a memorable experience.

There were 43 co-sponsors and collaborating organizations. There were 40 NCCL members in attendance.

Ernesto Vega (representing the Archdiocese of Los Angeles) was seated at my table during the process

for the symposium. He introduced himself by telling me how much he enjoyed our conference in Atlanta, and was especially enthusiastic about the TED style of presentations used there. As a young adult, he had wondered if the conference would offer him anything of interest. Ernesto then assured me that he would be joining us in San Diego.

Approximately 230 participants attended the symposium at St. John's University in Collegetown, with 43 co-sponsors and collaborating organizations. There were 40 NCCL members in attendance. That means that 17% of the participants had an NCCL connection!

One of the stated goals for the symposium was to publish recommendations to advance excellence in lay ecclesial ministry. Given NCCL's presence during this symposium, I am sure that our organization will have a voice in crafting these recommendations. As Bishop Blasé Cupich noted in his capstone address to the symposium participants, "The Spirit of God was working in our midst and keeping the work of lay ecclesial ministry alive." The mission of NCCL was well-served during the symposium.

God bless,

Anne

President, NCCL

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AUTUMN LEAVES, MARY, AND FRANCIS

Leland Nagel



As fall appears on the horizon, here are three images to consider: autumn leaves, Mary, and St. Francis – three images that can represent diverse and often contradictory meanings to people, even to us as individuals. How we see them, or what these images mean to us can and will change, depending

on the particular lens in use at any given moment of our lives – lenses focused (and re-focused!) by experiences or knowledge acquired. Allow me to offer some examples plucked off of both ends of the same continuum; I share my thoughts to prime your reflection pump.

From the grumbling and complaining associated with the annual fall ritual of raking and bagging leaves, to the sheer delight of jumping in a pile of leaves only to be buried in an array of beautiful color, autumn leaves offer two views of life. One view sees life as a burden that must be endured. This outlook is a result of original sin, and “In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life” (Gn 3:17). The other perspective sees life through the eyes of the Creator of whom it was said at the end of each day in the *First Story of Creation*, “God saw how good it was” (Gn 1).

Autumn can be associated with the later years in life, when pretense is shed and all that remains is the core. Some find this refreshing while others see it as an embarrassment. When the word *bare* is used in this season of life, it is related to baring one’s soul. The positiveness of that phrase is lost when instead of *bare*, *naked* is used, “Who told you that you were naked” (Gn 2: 11). Apparently, *bare* is something *you do*, as in letting go of your inhibitions or dropping your leaves, while *naked* implies something *done to you* by another, as in “they will leave you stark naked” (Ez 16:39).

October, like May, is designated as a month of Mary and in particular, the Month of the Holy Rosary; this is most likely because the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is celebrated annually on October 7th. This feast day was instituted to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary in gratitude for her protection of the church in answer to the praying of the rosary by the faithful. Growing up, as a family we prayed the rosary during this month; so my thoughts are on Mary.

Over the past year, I have received more than 20 different books on this woman. Mary is often portrayed as a young, docile girl who innocently responded to God with a *Yes*. Yet, on the other end of the continuum are those who describe

her as a bold, young woman, who casted a rather courageous shadow rather than a diminutive silhouette. Can one be both brave and meek? Is Mary both mild and forthright when she says to Jesus, “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3)?

St. Francis: Radical Christian or disillusioned idealist? Was he a lover of animals, or a stringent overseer of his order who demanded an austere life of absolute personal and corporate poverty for his followers? While it is easier to see Francis as the first environmentalist (Brother Son and Sister Moon), or a lover of all God’s creatures (Wolf of Gubbio), or the creator of the manger scene, it is important to grasp his deep desire to imitate the life of Christ and to carry out this work in the same manner as Jesus – a challenge all of us face.

How do we respond to our baptismal call to be a true disciple of Jesus? Does it not demand we “go, sell your possessions and

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give to the poor” (Mt 19:21)? How does one create a morning prayer of praise? What does Francis demand of us as stewards of God’s creation? How does one balance the practical with the ideal? As my father would often say, “If you give everything to the poor, then we will just have another poor person.”

So, while you are out walking and kicking some leaves around, join me in reflecting on the lives of this woman, Mary, and this man, Francis. One is called the first disciple, while Ignatius Charles Brady writes, “No one in history was as dedicated as Francis to imitate the life, and carry out the work, of Christ in Christ’s own way.”

The question to consider is not how dedicated you are to this task but rather, where on the continuum of discipleship do you place yourself?

Hmmmm ... There might be a clue in the way you approach autumn leaves. ■

Vincent de Paul's Recipe for Solidarity

Charity, Justice, & Organization

Meghan J. Clark



In the wake of widespread natural disasters, the interdependence of the one human family comes clearly into focus. The damage of Hurricane Irene, flooding in Mississippi and Tennessee, the earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent nuclear meltdown in Japan, and the devastating earthquake in Haiti all reveal a profound vulnerability and connection within the human family. Like the Samaritan in Luke's Gospel, we experience a communal feeling of compassion and respond by generously giving donations. In the last 30 years, grand campaigns of charity have become commonplace. From *LiveAid* in 1985 to the *Clinton Bush Haitian Fund* in 2010, the American people have demonstrated a great capacity for charity as almsgiving (personal financial donations). Charity, in popular discourse, often exclusively refers to these types of actions. Despite the fact that charity is a word Christians hear and use often, charity as the pervasive and umbrella virtue has waned in the popular religious imagination. Instead, charity has become synonymous with almsgiving or material donations. However, Christian charity is richer, deeper, and requires a great deal more of us than simply *giving alms*.

THE CHARISM OF CHARITY

All Christians, by our baptism, are called to live charity. It is "by the virtue of charity, 'the bond of perfection,' we love God above all else and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God."¹ But what does that mean? What does *living charity* require of individual Catholics? What does it mean for faith formation? The heart of practicing the Christian virtue of charity lies in its intimate and necessary relationship to both justice and organization. A relationship exemplified in the example of St. Vincent de Paul and the communities he inspired. In Vincent, we find a concrete historical model for

how we can develop solidarity in our parishes, diocese, and national and global communities.

Charity and daily concern for the poor is the heart of the Vincentian charism. A deep and abiding commitment to all human persons as equally created in the image of God with full dignity is central to the mission of St. Vincent de Paul, the confraternities he founded (most notably the Congregation of the Mission, and the Daughters of Charity with St. Louise de Marillac), and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (founded by Frederick Ozanam in 1835 and placed under Vincent's patronage). For Vincent, the call of Christian discipleship demanded that "we should love our neighbor as being the image of God."² In order to love one's neighbor as the image of God effectively, Vincent recognized that charity required significant organization. Reflecting on the Charity of Women at

Châtillon-les-Dombres, France in 1617, Vincent notes:

Since charity toward the neighbor is an infallible sign of the true children of God, and since one of its principal acts is to visit and bring food to the sick poor, some devout young women and virtuous inhabitants of the town of *Châtillon-les-Dombres*, in the Lyons diocese, wishing to obtain from God the mercy of being his true daughters, have decided among themselves to assist spiritually and corporally the people of their town who have sometimes suffered a great deal, more through a lack of organized assistance than from lack of charitable persons.³

The observation that in situations of distress, the poor often suffer, not from a lack of charity or charitable persons, but

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¹ *National Directory for Catechesis*, 164.

² Abbe Maynard, *Virtues and Spiritual Doctrine of St. Vincent De Paul* (1877), (St. Louis, MO: Vincentian Foreign Mission Press, 1961), 126, 137.

³ Vincent de Paul, *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. Sr. Marie Poole DC, (New York: New City Press), 8.



rather a lack of organization holds as true today as it did in 1617. If one looks at Haiti in the wake of the earthquake, there was a massive outpouring of charitable giving and of charitable persons willing to donate their time and services. The difficulty, however, is that in order to be effective, charity needs organization. In his recent book, *Haiti After the Earthquake*, Paul Farmer explains:

We all gave thanks for the Good Samaritans who struggled to save lives after the quake, even as we struggled with chronic problems such as low public-sector wages and lack of supplies. Giving thanks for Good Samaritans was one thing; coordinating them, [was] quite another. On day four after the quake, it was clear that the wounded city was mobbed with rescue and relief workers. More medical care was available in urban Haiti than ever before. The coalitions brought together by the disruptive force of January 12 included a veritable horde of highly trained health professionals, most from North America (including hundreds of Haitian-Americans).⁴

4 Paul Farmer, *Haiti After the Earthquake* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs Books, 2011),14.

Need for people, money, and supplies remained, but at its most basic level the charitable response to the Haitian earthquake required organization to be effective. The act of “giving” was not and is not sufficient for living charity in light of the gospel.

EQUALITY AND DIGNITY

For Vincent de Paul, living charity requires that organization engages the poor and suffering as equal human beings with dignity. In a society full of suffering and upheaval, “the social mission of St. Vincent de Paul was to restore these victims of war to their dignity as human persons, to their proper stature as children of God. His program for the reconstruction of society was simplicity itself.”⁵ Vincent provides concrete historical witness to contemporary Catholic catechesis’s recognition that “respect for the inherent dignity of every human person is the foundation of a just society, and its ultimate end is the development of those persons to their fullest potential.”⁶ Respecting the dignity of each human person in the community requires confronting reality. Just as the aid workers

5 Most Reverend James A. McNulty, DD, “St Vincent De Paul and His Social Mission,” *Saint Vincent De Paul: A Tercentenary Commemoration of his Death 1660-1960*, 62.

6 *National Directory for Catechesis*, 169.

and healthcare professionals needed to be coordinated and organized in order to provide effective aid, charity that does not engage reality is not charity. Because Christian charity is grounded in love of neighbor as *in the image of God*, it requires not only the proper intention and motive, but also listening and engaging those in need as neighbor. As Christians, we cannot assume that we know the appropriate and effective charitable response without listening to the needs and voices of those in question, or we run the risk of perpetuating the victimization and vulnerability of the poor; then we are not practicing Christian charity.

ACTING WITH JUSTICE

Practicing charity in light of the gospel also requires justice. In founding the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederick Ozanam would distinguish the two stating, “Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked. It is justice’s role to prevent the attack.”⁷ What does it mean to both pour oil on the wounds of the traveler AND prevent a future attack? In the Daughters of Charity’s hospital social work, we find a historical example of simultaneously providing organized charity and working for justice. For St. Louise de Marillac and the Daughters, *care of the sick* was not limited to acute illness; Louise established hospital social work, seeing to it that in Paris “before a young girl was discharged from the hospital there, the sisters assisted her to find suitable work so that she would have a means of support and would be able to live in dignity.”⁸ Responding to the direct need of the sick is an act of charity; attending to the future of these women is an act of justice. Both are required for living in light of the gospel.

The necessary union of charity, organization, and justice in Christian discipleship is evident in Scripture and Catholic social teaching. For example, in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus himself clearly links both charity and justice stating, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty

to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” A favorite of Christian groups focused on charity as well as those focused on justice and organization, Luke 4:18 is central to the mission statement of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Demonstrating the intersection of charity, justice, and organization, CCHD has a “dual pastoral strategy of education for justice and helping people who are poor speak and act for themselves reflects the mandate of the Scriptures and the principles of Catholic social teaching. CCHD also provides the Catholic faithful with concrete opportunities to live out the love of God and neighbor in ways that express our baptismal call and continuing Eucharistic transformation.”⁹ Catholic social teaching and the demands of our baptismal call are emphasized in the *National Directory for Catechesis*: “Our society needs the witness of Christians to take the social demands of the gospel seriously and who actively practice the virtue of social justice.”¹⁰ This is a crucial part of our moral formation. The intersection of charity, justice, and organization is essential if we are to dismantle social sin and injustice, as “social injustice can be so deeply rooted and ingrained into the life of a society that is almost defies eradication.”¹¹ Still, this is precisely what is asked of us, by our baptism, by Christ. We are called to be both the Good Samaritan and actively work for a more just society. The poignant insight of Vincent de Paul is that responding to Matthew’s parable of the Last Judgment¹² is simultaneously a matter of charity and justice.

7 “Charity and Justice,” <http://www.vincenter.org/res/word/fowords.html>.

8 Margaret J. Kelly, DC, “Louise de Marillac: The ‘Gentle Power’ of Liberation,” *Vincentian Heritage Journal*, 36.

9 *Catholic Campaign for Human Development Review and Renewal*, 2-3.

10 *National Directory for Catechesis*, 170.

11 *Ibid.* p. 172.

12 ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me’ (Mt 25:35-40).

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SOLIDARITY

This integration of charity, justice, and organization provides a base recipe for developing solidarity. Catholic social teaching's principle of solidarity has as its foundation the fundamental commitment to the full and equal dignity of every human person, regardless of poverty or infirmity, as a child of God and brother or sister in Christ. For Vincent,

All [human persons]men form a mystic body; we are all members of each other; all our members have such sympathy and are so connected together that the evil of one is the evil of the other. Yes, to be a Christian and to see a brother in affliction and not weep with him, not feel for his sickness, is to be devoid of charity, is to be a Christian in appearance only, it is to be without humility.¹³

The unity of the Christian community means not only that we are to feel sympathy, but also that the neighbor is an extension of ourselves. To be Christian is to feel pain with those in

pain as well as to feel joy with those who are rejoicing.¹⁴ In *On Social Concern*, John Paul II defines solidarity saying, "this felt interdependence is a new moral category, and the response to it is the 'virtue' of solidarity. Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or a shallow sadness but a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good. It is in attitude squarely opposed to greed and the thirst for power" (SRS 39). Inspired by the challenge and example of Vincent de Paul, we are called to cultivate solidarity through practicing organized charity and justice through listening and encountering them as equals. Only then, will our well-meaning efforts to reach out to those in need embody the virtue of charity inspired by the gospel, which is ultimately *friendship with God*. **I**

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13 Maynard, 131.

14 Ibid, 132.

Four ways to cultivate solidarity through charity and justice

1. **On the Parish level:** What projects and activities are your local Societies of St. Vincent de Paul and parish social justice groups engaged in? In the midst of busy lives, engagement in our local parish grounds us and provides a strong link to the world around us. It is often easier to see poverty and suffering in other parts of the world, than it is to recognize the needs in our own backyard. Working for charity and justice in our own parish is crucial for facing the reality of suffering in our community.

2. **On the Diocesan level:** Catholic Charities and Catholic Campaign for Human Development work in your diocese. Contacting your local Catholic Charities website or local CCHD coordinator will alert you to diocesan projects focused on charity and justice. Through learning about, supporting, and participating in CCHD community organizing efforts, we cultivate solidarity within our neighborhoods. (<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/>)

3. **On the National level:** The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in coordination with Christian leaders around the country, has launched the "Circle of Protection." As Catholics, we are called to join our voices with those whose voices are not heard in Washington – the poor and vulnerable. As the "Circle of Protection Statement" reminds us: "They do not have powerful lobbies, but they

have the most compelling claim on our consciences and common resources. The Christian community has an obligation to help them be heard, to join with others to insist that programs that serve the most vulnerable in our nation and around the world are protected." (For more information: <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2011/11-085.shtml> and <http://www.circleofprotection.us/>)

4. **On the Global level:** As mentioned above, the theology of accompaniment calls us to walk *with* the poor and vulnerable. Many people engage in this through joining volunteer organizations (many religious orders, like the Jesuits, Franciscans, Vincentians, etc. have volunteer organizations. For more information: <https://www.catholicvolunteernetwork.org/>). Are there ways that those of us living in the United States can join in solidarity with those in other countries? Three organizations are at the forefront: Jesuit Refugee Service (<http://jrsusa.org/>), Catholic Relief Service (<http://crs.org/>), and Christian Foundation for Children and Aging (<http://www.cfcausa.org/>). While less well known than the others, CFCA is a Catholic organization that organizes sponsorship of children, college students, and the elderly. Modeling its work on solidarity and *walking with* our neighbors, CFCA prioritizes relationships based on equal human dignity and respect. **I**

Connecting Catholic Families with the Bible

Joan Weber



INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI called bishops from around the world to the Vatican for the *Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. Renewed interest in engaging Catholics with the word of God followed. Church leaders began to look for new ways to engage parishioners with Scripture. Because we acknowledge the home—the domestic church—as the primary place where faith is learned and shared, it seems only fitting that we develop strategies for encouraging Catholic families to break open the word of God.

This article summarizes a workshop offered by the Center for Ministry Development (CMD) in over 60 sites around the U.S. and in the Caribbean to train parish catechetical leaders in resourcing families on sharing God’s word in the parish and at home. The workshop began in 2010 and continues today.

SURVEY OF PARISH AND DIOCESAN LEADERS

In 2009, CMD conducted a survey to determine the status of Catholic families reading and praying with Scripture. More than 400 parish and diocesan leaders in catechetical and pastoral ministry from across the U.S. responded to our questions. Given the high volume of responses received and the consistency of those responses, we concluded that the survey revealed the general impressions of parish leaders today.

Leaders pointed to time and priority among families as the biggest challenge. They used words and phrases like “intimidated,” “uncomfortable,” and “unable to understand” to describe families’ relationships with the Bible. Many commented that Bible reading has not been part of Catholic family life and that Church leaders have not encouraged use of the Bible at home.

When asked how parishes can help families become more biblically literate and familiar with the great stories of the Bible,

leaders offered two responses to this question: 1) use the Bible as a primary text in all faith formation programs, particularly ones for adults and parents; and 2) make Scripture simple and understandable. Because many families are intimidated by and ignorant about the Bible, parish leaders need to put the Bible in people’s hands, get them to open it, help them understand how it’s organized, and make them comfortable with its contents. If parishioners become more adept at using the Bible in gathered settings (e.g., intergenerational faith festivals, adult faith formation sessions), they will consequently be more comfortable using it at home.

The most common responses to how to get parents to share the word of God with their children centered on encouraging them to read and/or tell the great stories in the Bible to illustrate important life lessons and offer spiritual inspiration. Another common response was going to Mass on Sunday and becoming familiar with the lectionary readings week by week. Another response was connecting Scripture lessons with the events of daily family life. Leaders need to encourage parents to bring the Bible into family conversations and decision-making, and to use the Bible in family prayer.

We asked what leaders do in their ministry settings to bring Catholic families and the Bible together. Responses generally fell into two distinct categories: non-gathered strategies that invite parents and families to

use the Bible at home, and gathered programs designed specifically to help people grow in their understanding of and comfort with the Bible.

Non-gathered. Among the most popular non-gathered strategies is the “Question of the Week,” which offers a question or two for reflection and discussion about lectionary readings of the week as they pertain to one’s daily life.

Gathered. Among the gathered programs, many responders indicated that they chose to do an entire year of intergenerational faith formation based on Scripture. Many responders described age-specific programming, particularly for youth

*Sacramentality,
then, is the potential
that all reality can effectively
communicate God’s
presence to us.*

and confirmation candidates, specifically focused on biblical literacy. Other responders recognize the need to provide basic biblical understanding to adults and parents. They noted that we cannot take for granted that parents know anything about the Bible.

CHURCH DOCUMENTS AND SCRIPTURE

In addition to polling the field, we researched contemporary Church documents to get the wisdom of the magisterium on connecting Catholic families with the word of God.

We used several key questions about families and Scripture to frame our exploration of the teachings of the Church. The questions and answers follow.

1. What is meant by the “word of God”?

The document from the 2008 Synod is most expressive about the word of God:

- *The word of God is like a hymn with many voices, proclaimed by God in a variety of ways and forms* (9).
- *The ultimate and definitive word of God is **Jesus Christ*** (preface).
- *The word of God displays all the qualities of true communication between persons, which the Bible often calls covenant dialogue, in which God and the person speak to each other as members of the same family* (10).

2. For whom is the Bible intended?

The simple answer is *everyone!* Before the Second Vatican Council, Catholics hardly read Scripture. In many Catholic homes, the family Bible served mainly as a book in which to record the names of new children and the dates of their baptisms. So it was no small statement for *Dei Verbum* (25) to invite “all of the faithful of Christ” to acquire “through frequent reading of the divine Scripture ‘the surpassing knowledge of Christ Jesus’ ” (Phil 3:8). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “Access to sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful” (131).

3. What purpose does the Bible serve?

Recognizing the Bible as God’s revelation, *Dei Verbum* says point blank: “The purpose of revelation is simple: salvation.” The *Catechism* (107) is just as blunt. “The inspired books teach the truth.” The *Introduction to the Lectionary* (47) refers to the Sacred Scriptures as “the source of life and strength . . . the gospel is the saving power of God for everyone who believes.”

The Bishops of the world bring home the purpose of the Bible in a rich and poignant way.

- “Surely, the most important matters in the Bible are those most directly linked to daily life, as was the case with Jesus” (Synod, 22).

- “In the prophetic style of Jesus of Nazareth, the proclamation of the word of God ‘ought to appear to each person as a solution to his problems, an answer to his questioning, a widening of his values and an overall fulfillment to his aspirations’” (Synod, 51).

4. Who interprets what it means?

Many Catholics think that only bishops and theologians can tell us what the Bible means. And it is certainly true that the interpretation of the meaning of Scripture is entrusted to the magisterium. The Church also recognizes that all who encounter the word of God have a responsibility to share the truth revealed to them. The Vatican document *Interpretation of Scripture* is quite profound on this point. Consider these direct quotes:

- “Thus all members of the church have a role in the interpretation of Scripture.”
- “The entire biblical tradition and, in a particular way, the teaching of Jesus in the gospels indicates as privileged hearers of the word of God those whom the world considers *people of lowly status*. Jesus acknowledged that things hidden from the wise and learned have been revealed to the simple (Mt. 11:25, Lk. 10:21) and that the kingdom of God belongs to those who make themselves like little children” (Mk. 10: 14 and parallels).
- “Those who in their powerlessness and lack of human resources find themselves forced to put their trust in God alone and in his justice have a capacity for hearing and interpreting the word of God which should be taken into account by the whole church.”

There is a specific Catholic way of interpreting Scripture, but the effort of discerning God’s message from the pages of Scripture is not reserved for a few—it is the privilege and responsibility of all believers.

5. What are pastoral implications of the Bible in ministry today?

The 2008 Synod emphasized that “the laity urgently need to be aware that they are not passive subjects in relation to the word of God; rather they are to become both hearers of the word of God and, after due preparation and support from the community, proclaimers of it” (Preface).

Leaders in pastoral ministry are challenged to help parishioners of all ages hear and proclaim the word of God. Specifically from the Synod, the Bishops challenge us to:

- Develop pastoral programs on the Bible.
- Present simple criteria for reading the Bible with Christ in mind.
- Provide proper instruction to those Christians who say they don’t read the Bible.

- Emphasize continually in teaching the reading of the Bible.

Our challenge can be summed up in this statement from the Synod:

Pastoral activity then must devise ways to help the faithful come to know what the Bible is, why it exists, its value in the life of faith and how to use it.

6. Do the Bible documents say anything specific about Catholic families?

While there are few references to families in the documents, the pastoral implications mentioned above can and must be applied to our work with families at all stages of their growth and maturity. In specific reference to families, from the document on the Synod, the Bishops of the world wrote:

A privileged means of encounter with the God who speaks is catechesis within families which can be enhanced with the Bible passages and preparation of the readings of the Sunday liturgy. The family's task is to introduce children to sacred Scripture through reading the great stories of the Bible, especially the life of Jesus, and through prayer inspired by the Psalms or other pertinent books (51).

READING THE BIBLE AS A CATHOLIC FAMILY

The *Catholic Faith and Family Bible*, the first Bible ever published with text articles specifically designed to help Catholic families break open the word together, offers six different ways Catholic families can interpret the meaning of Scripture. All six can help families grow deeper in their relationship with God as they expand their biblical spirituality.

Become Storytellers

The first books of the Bible emerged from oral tradition and great storytelling by members of the faith community. The storyteller is one who gathers the community, proclaims the word, and in the name of the community breaks open its meaning for all to benefit. This is our experience each time we go to Mass; the Scripture readings are proclaimed and the priest in his homily breaks open its meaning for the sake of the community.

As storytellers for their family, parents can seek to answer the following questions:

- What insight does this passage or story contribute to how we live as a family of faith?
- What do the practices and teachings of our family contribute to the meaning of this passage or story?
- How does this passage or story connect to our understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church?

To encourage families to become storytellers, picture yourself engaging them in the following exercise around the story of Zacchaeus in the gospel:

1. Have someone proclaim Luke 19:1-10.
2. Pause for a few moments of quiet reflection on the text.
3. Read a reflection or commentary on the passage.

Zacchaeus was not only a tax collector, which made him a sinner in the eyes of the Jews, but he was also a rich man. Luke's Gospel is full of Jesus' warnings to those who are wealthy and the difficulty they will have entering the kingdom of God (see 1:19-31 and 18:24-25). Still, Jesus chose to have dinner with Zacchaeus, an encounter in which Zacchaeus was transformed. Jesus' redemptive love is not reserved for a chosen few; rather, it is available to all of us. Zacchaeus illustrated what is required: accepting Jesus' invitation into our lives and being open to the change that invitation requires of us. Take a moment and imagine what Zacchaeus' experience must have been like for him to decide to give half of his possessions to the poor. What has your encounter with Jesus required of you? (Take It to Heart * Redemptive Love, *Catholic Faith and Family Bible*).

4. Discuss:

How does the story of Zacchaeus connect to your own life? What do you have in common with him?

Just as the Romans bullied Zacchaeus, the little guy, into collecting taxes for them, so too did Zacchaeus bully the Jews into paying the burdensome taxes. Where have you seen bullying in the world today? Have you been a victim of bullying or been bullied by someone else? How did you feel? How did you respond?

What does "redemptive love" mean to you? Where and when have you experienced the redemptive love of Jesus?

Come up with three activities your family can do to share the redemptive love of Jesus which Zacchaeus experienced in the passage you just explored. These can be one-time actions (e.g., defending someone who is being bullied on a regular basis) or involve a long-term commitment (e.g., supporting Catholic Relief Services in its work with the poor around the globe). Challenge yourselves by asking what Jesus would do if he were a member of your family.

Become Puzzle-Masters

To truly appreciate God's word, families need to step back and look at the *big picture* to see how all the pieces fit together. Salvation history is the story of how God has saved, is saving, and will continue to save humankind from the effects of sin so that we can live in union with God forever.



With an understanding of salvation history in mind, as puzzle-masters families can place a chosen Bible passage or story in the context of the whole body of Scripture. Faith in Jesus is their starting point in understanding the message of their passage.

As puzzle-masters, families are challenged to answer the following questions:

- What insight for our lives does this passage offer?
- How does that insight contribute to the BIG picture of salvation history?
- How does the BIG picture of salvation history contribute to our understanding of this passage or story?

Become Seekers

As seekers, families explore the spiritual sense of the Bible by praying with the text. Very simply, this means that the meaning of a passage or story is revealed when the family opens itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the foundational belief from which the meaning emerges.

As seekers, family members answer the following questions:

- How does our prayer reveal the meaning of this passage or story to us?
- How does our meditation and reflection on this story or passage affect the way we pray?
- How does our prayer and reflection on this passage impact the way we live as a family?

One example of spiritual seeking with Scripture is *lectio divina*. While there are many forms of *lectio*, simple ones are best for families with children. An example of a “family-friendly” *lectio* process includes the following steps: reading the text and sharing a word or phrase which strikes each family member; reading the text and meditating on its meaning for one’s life; reading the text and offering a prayer based on the fruits of one’s meditation; and reading the text and contemplating God’s love as it is revealed in the passage.

Become Advocates

Many of the texts found in Scripture challenge us to love, care for, and seek justice on behalf of those who are denied a life of dignity. This challenge is extended to both individuals *and* communities.

Families are invited to explore a passage to understand how the social situation influenced the author and shaped the text. As advocates, they see God’s liberation of Israel from slavery (see Exodus) as a key to understanding whatever passage they are exploring. This message of liberation is taught by the prophets and finds its fulfillment in the Good News which Jesus brought to all, especially the poor. For advocates to fully understand this biblical message, they must read the Bible

“with the poor,” standing in solidarity with those in need of God’s liberation *today*.

As advocates, families seek answers to these questions:

- What is the injustice in this passage?
- What does the passage or story reveal about the social situation in which it was written?
- Does this passage or story have social, or economic, or political implications for today? If so, what is God calling our family to do to stand in solidarity with those who are being treated unjustly?

Become Students of Literature

When we understand what literary form—what type of writing—the author used, we can better interpret its meaning. The Bible is not a book with chapters but a library with books—73 in all—which come to us in many different literary forms. Many adult Catholics are unaware of this; consequently, they fail to take the type of literature into account when probing the meaning of a passage.

- As students of literature with a particular Bible passage or story in hand, families can seek answers to the following questions:
- What type of literature is this? (Hint: The Introduction to each book in the *Catholic Faith and Family Bible* indicates the various types of literature found in each book.)
- What is the meaning of the passage?
- Who are the characters? The narrator or speaker? The implied audience?
- How does this passage or story fit into the overall literary structure of the book?

Once families gain insight into these questions, they then can ask:

- How does this literary “portrait” of the passage or story help us more fully understand its meaning and challenge for our family today?

A simple but effective exercise to help families become students of literature is providing them with a matching game. Place the names of various books in the Bible in the left-hand column on a sheet of paper (or online), and the types of literature they each represent in a second column. Invite the families to match each book with the appropriate genre. Place the correct answers in your parish bulletin or on the parish website.

Become History Detectives

All the books of the Bible were written a long time ago. The earliest biblical writings date back to about 1000 BC, and many of those writings refer to historical events going back



to about 1850 BC. Even the most recent writings of the New Testament are dated around 100 AD. The Bible truly covers a vast span in the story of God’s salvation.

If we want families to understand the meaning of these ancient writings, we have to help them acquire at least some understanding of the historical and cultural world in which the canons were written. We also need to learn about the people and the events in history from which the writing emerged. As history detectives, with a particular Bible passage or story in hand, families seek answers to the following questions:

- When, where, and why was the story written?
- What did the story mean to those who first heard it?
- What was the author trying to say to his or her audience?

When families gain insight into these questions, they then can ask:

- What does this passage or story mean for us *today*?

Don’t Become Literalists

One way that Catholics do *not* read and interpret the Bible is as “literalists.” By that, we mean people who take every word in Scripture as literal truth. Some people believe the Bible is without error in every possible way, including both historical and scientific accuracy. This is not how Catholics view the Bible. The Bible is without error in *teaching the truths God*

wants us to know to save us from sin and death. The Bible does not need to be without error regarding historical and scientific facts in order to teach us what we need to know about *salvation*. The point here is not to ask, “Is the Bible true?” but rather to ask, “How is the Bible true?” And the answer is that the Bible is true to what we need to know to be in right relationship with God, with each other, and with the earth—what we need to know for our salvation.

Parish leaders can help families understand the difference between a literalist and a Catholic approach to exploring Scripture.

CONCLUSION

Parish leaders have a genuine yet joyful challenge in connecting their families with the word of God. Multiple approaches will ensure that each family in the parish finds its way into the Bible. Only then will families find the answers to their questions, the solution to their problems, the deepening of their values, and the fulfillment of their dreams—in God’s word. ■

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Becoming a Saint by Being Drawn into Trinitarian Conversation

Christopher Collins, SJ



I. LEARNING WHO WE ARE BY LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF THE LITURGY

In the third Eucharistic prayer, the celebrant prays, “May he make us an everlasting gift to you.” Now, if you’re at all like me, sometimes these phrases uttered during the Mass simply pass us by, in large part because the pronouns run together, and we can forget who is saying what to whom. It can be a moment of mild confusion within Trinitarian conversation and Communion! So I suggest pausing for a moment to get our bearings and recall who is doing what here. “May he make us an everlasting gift to you.” The “he” here is Christ. The “you” is the Father, and the “us” is the collection of those people gathered in worship. Speaking with and on behalf of the assembly, the celebrant speaks to the Father and asks that, through his Son, those gathered in worship might be able to be transformed into an everlasting gift given to him, the Father.

Insofar as this is accomplished, the prayer continues with the declaration that this gift received by the Father will then “enable us to share in the inheritance of the saints, with Mary the virgin mother of God, the apostles and martyrs and all those who have done your will throughout the ages.” Sharing in the inheritance of the saints, then, is the consequence – the fruit of being drawn into this dynamic of gift-giving and receiving in which the people of God participate in the very life of the Trinity. Guided, then, by the *lex orandi lex credendi* principle (what we believe is present in what we pray), the Catholic understanding of the Trinitarian dynamism at work in the formation of saints is crystallized.

Dialogical Nature of Liturgy

At the core of the Eucharistic celebration is a dialogue of Father and Son that is made possible by the bond of love that

is the Holy Spirit. The role of the liturgical assembly, in turn, is to participate in this dialogue. In speaking to the Father, the assembly, through the mediation of the priest, asks that the love of the Son might be that which “makes us” into that everlasting gift to the Father. What is transformative for the congregation, for the faithful, is not our own efforts, or discipline, or goodness, but rather the power of the love of Christ for his Father and for his people. This love is accessible to us in the congregation by virtue of our entering into Christ’s dialogue with his Father. This is a dialogue that, as it turns out, takes place in all eternity in the Triune God, the listening and speaking of the Father and Son united in their Spirit. Because of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, however, this dialogue does not remain locked away in eternity, but has

*What is transformative
for the congregation,
for the faithful,
is not our own efforts, or discipline,
or goodness, but rather the power
of the love of Christ
for his Father and for his people.*

entered into human history and is made available to all who are willing to enter into relationship with the eternal word who has become flesh in human history. Those who allow themselves to be radically formed by this relationship, those who are drawn up into this eternal Trinitarian dialogue that has entered into history, these are the saints.

At this point, let’s pause before proceeding and highlight three aspects of this liturgical approach to understanding the Trinitarian dynamic of the formation of saints.

It is the triune God who initiates and does the work of sanctification of the people. It is the Trinity who “makes saints.” People do not make themselves saints!

This path to sanctity is at its heart a path characterized by dialogue that is open to every human being.

This path to sanctity is undertaken communally, as an *ekklesia* of the faithful gathered first and foremost to *listen* to the word of God. This *ekklesia* becomes its true self as it gathers to receive that word of God that is made flesh and given as love in the Eucharist. In this reception of the word made flesh, the

ekklesia, the church, is transformed by the dialogue that at its heart is a giving and receiving of divine love itself.

II. POPE BENEDICT'S DIALOGICAL THEOLOGY

One of the great theologians of our day who has helped to make clear this connection between what we believe as Christians, how we pray, and the nature of the path to holiness, is our current pope. For Benedict, the starting point of theological reflection lies with the nature of revelation. Having written his second doctoral dissertation on St. Bonaventure's theology of history, which is basically a way of understanding the nature of divine revelation, and then a few years later being asked to serve as a *peritus* (expert) at Vatican II, working especially on the drafting of what would become the Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, the theology of revelation had become for the young Joseph Ratzinger something of a specialty. His understanding of the way revelation unfolds in a dialogical and narrative mode sheds light on all the other aspects of theology. In one of his essays commenting on the documents of Vatican II immediately in the wake of the Council, he noted the profound development that had just taken place in the church's understanding of revelation. The more traditional understanding up to that point was seeing revelation as essentially information given by God to the church that is information *about* God and about humanity. All of this remained basically extrinsic to God himself. Revelation was seen more as *ideas about* God and humanity. What emerged in place of this at Vatican II, Ratzinger saw, was a more biblical and narrative way of seeing revelation. In this view, he says, revelation was now to be "seen basically as dialogue."¹

From the moment of creation, of course, God has been speaking in human history. In the beginning, God said, "Let there

be light." And there was light. When God says something, it happens. All of reality comes about by divine speech. And God continues communication with his creatures all throughout salvation history – from Adam and Eve, to the call of Abraham, to his covenant with Noah, and his plan to lead his people out of slavery by way of his "face to face" communication with Moses. And of course, God continued to speak through all the prophets, calling his people back to communion, to friendship with him. But this dialogical nature of revelation is made clear for Ratzinger only when we see that the person of Christ is placed at the center of the story that is basically a dialogue between God and humanity. The entire drama of salvation unfolds in human history, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of the person of Jesus Christ, the fullness of the word of God spoken in the flesh in human history. In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger explains that the person of Christ reveals that God turns out to be not only *logos* (word) but *dia-logos*.² Not only is God intelligible in speaking his *logos* to us, but because of Christ, we realize that God is *dia-logos*, dialogue itself. From eternity, within the life of the triune God, there is dialogue. God himself is not static and silent, but within God's very essence, there is speech, intelligibility, and the dynamism of relationality. Furthermore, this God who turns out to be *dia-logos*, can be known by his creatures insofar as they participate in the dialogical relationality of Father, Son, and Spirit and thereby move from being merely creatures of God who passively receive their existence from their creator to becoming adopted sons and daughters who can listen to and speak intimately with their eternal Father.

From Propositional to Dialogical

In his own personal memoirs, *Milestones*, then Cardinal Ratzinger notes his dissatisfaction with the dry, propositional,

1 Herbert Vorgrimler, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), v. 3, 171.

2 Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 183.



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and abstract theology he was exposed to in his early days in the seminary. He felt it lacked the capacity to speak “the language of shepherds”³ and, in so doing, diminished the capacity to communicate the fullness of the Christian vision. His deliberate reliance on biblical and patristic sources helped to provide a language more conducive to the church’s mission of proclaiming the gospel in the world. The combination of the influence of the biblical and patristic sources, in addition to the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber, combined to produce a unique emphasis in Pope Benedict’s thought that stresses the narrative and dialogical structure of all of reality. The formation of saints by participation in Trinitarian communion is just one aspect of the dialogical structure that he sees operative in the whole of the Christian vision.

III. SAINTS HEARING THE WORD

The beginning of this formation of the saint happens when one is open to hearing the word of God in his or her life. Sanctity begins, then, with receptivity of the word. Benedict points to the figure of Mary, in a narrative manner selecting a central character from the drama of salvation history, as one who is paradigmatic of this path to sanctity characterized first and foremost by receptivity of the word. He writes,

Mary was, so to speak, ‘at home’ with God’s word, she lived on God’s word, she was penetrated by God’s word. To the extent that she spoke with

God’s words, she thought with God’s words, her thoughts were God’s thoughts, her words, God’s words. She was penetrated by divine light and this is why she was so resplendent, so good, so radiant with love and goodness.⁴

This “radiance of love and goodness” is the mark of the saint. For Benedict, the radiance of the saints is a manifestation of true beauty. This beauty is cultivated in the faithful to the extent that they allow themselves to be reconciled by God, to God, and to one another,⁵ and to be shaped by the love offered first by Christ. In receiving this love and allowing this love to reflect through them, the saints reflect Christ in the world. This is what is to be a saint. It is not the heroism of sanctity expressed by one outstanding individual that marks the saint, but rather the conversion of the whole self to a way of being that is essentially relational – both to God and to the world. The saint becomes whom he or she is only as a result of entering into the dialogical relationship with the person of Christ and allowing herself or himself to be transformed by it.⁶

IV. SAINTS PROCLAIMING THE WORD

If, for Pope Benedict, there is a Trinitarian pattern to the formation of the *identity* of the Christian saint, there is also a Trinitarian pattern to carrying out the *mission* which is given

3 Benedict, *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927-1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 121.

4 Parish Church, Castel Gandolfo, 15 August, 2005.

5 Ratzinger, *God is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*, 60.

6 *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 41.



to every Christian and which the saint especially exemplifies. In an Angelus address on the Solemnity of Christ the King, the end of the liturgical year in the first year of his pontificate, Benedict turned to a key passage in *Gaudium et Spes* to explain the Christological centrality and the Trinitarian pattern of Christian *identity* as well as *mission*. He cites *Gaudium et Spes* #45, some 40 years after its promulgation:

The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the centre of mankind, the joy of all hearts and the fulfillment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead. Animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history which fully corresponds to the plan of his love: 'to unite all things in him, things in Heaven and things on earth.'

He goes on to explain in his own words, "In light of the centrality of Christ, *Gaudium et Spes* interprets the condition of contemporary men and women, their vocation and their dignity, and also the milieus in which they live: the family, culture, the economy, politics, the international community. This is the church's mission, yesterday, today and forever: to proclaim and witness to Christ so that the human being, every human being, may totally fulfill his or her vocation."⁷

7 Angelus Address, St Peter's Square, Sunday, 20 November 2005, Solemnity of Christ the King.

The saint is the one who has fulfilled this vocation given from God, who has been drawn up into Trinitarian communion, been transformed by this communion and then missioned to proclaim the possibility of this communion in the world, in word and deed. We understand the church's essence, then, in light of the figures of the saints. And saints are to be understood in light of their friendship with the Triune God.

Benedict notes that, in the wake of the Council, a good deal of tension had arisen and some confusion over terminology used in the Conciliar documents. Foremost among these, the term "People of God" came to be understood in the years after the Council largely in "horizontal" sociological and political terms. Originally, however, in the drafting of *Lumen Gentium*, it was meant to describe the "vertical" relationship to God.⁸ The saints are those who most dramatically show the church to herself in this regard. They are those who have entered into, been claimed by God, and then given away so radically in the world. They have become radically "for the world" by first being taken up into trinitarian communion that is the "basis of the definition of the Church."⁹

In the saint, we see the eschatological fulfillment of the person. The saint is the one who has been conformed to Christ, joins him in his Sonship of the Father, and lives in the freedom of the Spirit of love that is the bond between Son and Father, and who, in turn, becomes a missionary to the world

8 Benedict et al., *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 2005), 128.

9 Ibid.

to proclaim this freedom of participation in divine love. This mystery of divine love, into which the church is missioned to draw all people, is a love that is trinitarian in its essence.

V. AN EXEMPLAR: JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

In being given new confidence and new hope in eternal life by being shaped by the hope of Jesus Christ, the saints become a source of hope for the whole church by pointing them back to Christ. As such, “The Church of the suffering gives credibility to Christ.”¹⁰ The saints, who live in suffering and yet in hope and love, participate in the Sonship of Christ and indicate to others that confidence in this identity, and the strength that comes from it, is possible. In his second encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict draws immediately upon the example of a saint to illustrate this very reality of the liberty that comes with coming to know the person of Christ and that through this encounter, through entering into dialogue with Christ and therefore cultivating a real relationship with him, present circumstances of suffering can be approached with new confidence.

In an effort to illustrate how hope arises from encounter with the true God in Jesus Christ, he turns to the example of Josephine Bakhita, the 19th century Sudanese slave turned religious sister who had only recently been canonized by John Paul II. Having been sold numerous times and endured several brutal beatings at the hands of various masters, Bakhita ultimately was sold into servitude to a master who took up residence in Venice. While there, Benedict describes her coming to know a very different kind of master, or *paron* in Venetian dialect. Benedict recounts her experience:

Up to that time she had known only masters who despised and maltreated her, or at best considered her a useful slave. Now, however, she heard that there is a “*Paron*” above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her – that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme “*Paron*,” before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. She was known and loved and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her ‘at the Father’s right hand.’ Now she had ‘hope’ —no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: ‘I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good.’¹¹

Benedict goes on to explain the further transformation that came in St. Josephine’s life. Upon recognizing that she was

loved, the next step was to let others come to know this freedom that she had only recently discovered. Her next move was of a missionary character. Upon being baptized, confirmed, and receiving first Communion from the Patriarch of Venice in 1890, she was then received into the Canossian Sisters where in part she became a kind of missionary within Italy telling the story of her experience of “the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ.” Benedict goes on to explain, “She felt she had to extend [this message], it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had ‘redeemed’ her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody.”¹²

Here, encapsulated in this one story of one saint, is the pattern for the life of the whole church in Pope Benedict’s theology. One who is caught in slavery, and darkness, and suffering comes to hear the word of God in his or her life. As the seed of that word is planted, it begins to take root. The more clearly the word of God is heard in that person’s life, the greater the transformation that begins to unfold. This is a transformation undergone not in isolation, but always in the context of the ecclesial community, being with others seeking to hear the word as well. The hearing of this word culminates in the sacramental life of the church where the word is given in the flesh, in love, in the Eucharist. Upon reception of this word in the flesh, the one who has been transformed by this love seeks to respond in love – in the flesh. And so, the one who has heard the word of God seeks to do the will of God in the world. This is characteristic of those who have been drawn into friendship, into intimacy with Christ. As Jesus explains in Matthew’s Gospel, “Whoever does the will of my Father is my brother and sister and mother” (12:50). The one who has been drawn into Trinitarian communion – transformed by it and missioned into the world to proclaim that same communion – this is the saint. And this saint in turn becomes a guidepost along the road for the rest of us who are still on the way. In this sense, then, Ratzinger can say in his short book, *Called to Communion*, that sought to describe the life of the Church today,

The saints are the true normative majority by which we orient ourselves. Let us adhere to them; they translate the divine into the human, eternity into time; they teach us what it is to be human and they never abandon even us in our pain and solitude; they accompany us in the hour of our death.¹³ |

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10 Ratzinger, *God is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 40.

11 *Spe Salvi*, #3.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 154.



CATECHETICAL UPDATE

A publication of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership



TRANSITIONS— A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY

Maureen Gallagher



Catechesis has experienced many changes since Vatican II. It has been impacted by the changes in the larger church and the transitions within our culture. Some transitions were welcomed; others were dreaded. Consider some of the following transitions. With which do you most identify?

- Catechesis has risen to a professional level with many catechetical leaders having degrees in theology, ministry, or pastoral studies.
- More and more emphasis has been placed on adult formation and Scripture study.
- The American bishops have taken an active role in ensuring that Catholic doctrine is properly stated in textbooks.
- There has been a renewed interest in youth ministry and both training and resources to support it.
- The number of priests continues to diminish in many dioceses throughout the United States.
- In parts of the country, more parishes are run by Parish Life Coordinators or the equivalent.
- Community outreach to the marginalized and involvement in service projects are often integrated into catechetical programs.
- New technologies, equipment, and staff development have changed the way some aspects of catechesis are delivered.
- In some dioceses, 25 percent or more of the parishes were consolidated.
- There has been a thrust toward family or intergenerational catechesis and liturgical catechesis.
- Praying with the Scriptures is becoming the norm for many parish groups.
- Parents play an active role in preparing their children for first reconciliation and first Communion.
- Changes to the Roman Missal will affect all liturgical assemblies.
- There is fear that some of the reforms of Vatican II are not being honored.

Changing from one pastor or bishop to the next often brings about many transitions. In *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, William Bridges speaks to the new work environment. Innumerable changes have affected it. Bridges points out that change is part of life, and rapid change is inherent for all organizations in the 21st century. According to Bridges, transitions are different from changes. Changes are often connected with particular events: we were merged;

our Catholic school closed; we added a business manager to staff, etc. Transitions, on the other hand, call for psychological reorientations.

The chart below illustrates Bridges' notion of "*endings—wilderness zone—new beginnings*," as well as the work of the late J. Gordon Myers. Myers acknowledged Bridges' "wilderness zone" and saw that when organizations and/or individuals dealt with transitions by remembering the past, articulating the present, grieving and letting go, knowing what is remaining the same or deepening, and embracing the hopes and dreams for the future, they were able to get through the wilderness in a more meaningful way.

Bridges names the phases in dealing with change "the transitional elements," while Myers describes the five areas that need attention in order to successfully navigate the wilderness zone and move from what is dying to what is struggling to be born. From a faith perspective, we are talking about the paschal mystery at play.

Endings happen when a new addition is built on to a church; there is internal reorganization in the parish or school; a key staff person changes; there is a reduction in force; schedules are radically changed; parishes share a pastor or go into partnerships with other parishes; new technology is introduced, etc. Endings become stressful when comfort levels are lost, confidence is shaken, co-workers leave, no significant reason for the change is apparent, and/or a person's ministry and very identity is changed or questioned. The more radical the change, the more vulnerable people become to paralyzing stress.

On the "change spectrum," people are "wired" differently to deal with change. Some thrive with change and seek out challenging transformations; "bring it on" is their motto. At the other end of the spectrum are the settlers; "if it is not broke, don't fix it." Settlers struggle with change in a big way. Most of us rest somewhere in between the two ends; there are certain parts of our ministry, or way of practicing our faith, or annual events, for example, that we do not want to see change, but we can basically accept change and transition, especially if we are involved at some level in creating what will be new or how it will be implemented.

Two images from Scripture help us understand the wilderness zone — that in-between time when something of significance has ended and new beginnings are waiting to be born. One is the metaphor of Moses in the desert. Moses journeyed in the desert for many years. The old days of oppression had ended, but the Promised Land was still far off. Along with ending the oppression by the rulers of Egypt, the reality of knowing what to expect and everything that was familiar also ended. There was disarray in the desert; the culture was changing, new rules were emerging, and the old "survival methods" no longer worked. People were living by trial and error. As the Israelites looked back, they were beginning to think that life in Egypt was not all that bad. At least there they had food and drink.

The Israelites were not handling the unpredictability of the wilderness very well, but there was no turning back.

The second Scripture story about transitions is the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The disciples were disillusioned. They had felt secure and believed that Jesus was "the real Messiah." They were bonded with him and thought they knew his expectations of them. The disciples understood what their jobs were and how to do them. They expressed their troubles to someone they believed to be a total stranger; they were hurting. The "stranger" listened compassionately, without judgment, and then shared his perspectives. After offering him hospitality, they recognized the reality of the situation. Their openness in a time of stress led to new understandings and energy. Their transition was painful but not as time intensive as that of Moses or the Israelites.

These two Scripture stories help connect us in solidarity to our past, to our legacy of experiencing periods in the wilderness, of questioning and disappointments. They also give us models from our traditions who showed openness; models who demonstrated a welcoming spirit even in the midst of self-absorption, and discovered new life, new ways of thinking, new possibilities by traveling with others through the wilderness.

My own experience as a consultant, walking with educational, religious, health care, or parish communities through the wilderness, supports the five actions Myers described as ways to help people get through that in-between time. It should be noted that the five topics in the circles on page 21 often overlap, frequently are revisited in the wilderness, and need not be addressed in any particular order. Experiencing parish and school consolidations are times when the catechetical leader can make a positive contribution by sharing a framework such as the one above and taking some initiative to be sure that the "work of the wilderness zone" is attended to.

Remembering the past is critical to moving through the wilderness. Honoring all the efforts put into catechesis from earlier times when the sisters did it on Saturdays, to the times when the pastor would "shoulder tap" generous parents and grandparents to "do CCD," to the present when training for the ministry has evolved significantly, many transitions have taken place. Recalling the past does not mean it needs to be idealized or romanticized, but rather remembered for its challenges as well as for the values it espoused. In some cases, the past needs to be remembered so that it will not be repeated. This is especially true if people were treated poorly, without dignity or respect, or if they were oppressed and dealt with unjustly.

Articulating the present with its strengths and struggles empowers people to begin to take steps out of the wilderness. Even in the midst of chaos, there is strength. Recognizing those strengths gives groups power to act upon them. Many of the struggles in the wilderness zone deal with loss of meaning. Margaret Wheatley notes, "All change results from a change of meaning. Change occurs only when we let go of our certainty,

Transition Process



our current views, and develop a new understanding of what’s going on.”

During the transition time, it is important to encourage conversation about strengths and struggles. This helps individuals and groups articulate meaning. It helps people deal with the “heart of the matter.” Dialogue in the wilderness zone aids people not to feel isolated, not to feel disenfranchised. Conversations mobilize the “wanderers” and help them feel connected. Myers has coined a phrase that is very helpful as we deal with change. He expressed that leaders really help people “See, Name, and Act.” Often people can see the chaos, but have a hard time naming it. Helping people name the issues in transitions gives them power to act upon them.

Grieving losses and hurts, naming them, empowers people to let them go. The disciples on the Road to Emmaus were basically grieving. They were hurt, let down. Who could they trust? To help them during this time, note that it was both the connection to the past as well as their honesty and openness in the present that helped them see reality anew.

Using artifacts from the past, sharing “relics” of former practices, and distributing memorabilia are all ways to help

people deal with what has been and acknowledge their grieving. In one case where four parishes were consolidated into one new parish, using one of the existing church buildings, the grieving rituals made all the difference in the world. A procession where a “beloved statue” was removed from the primary worship site, like a coffin with pall bearers, brought tears to those who were welcoming parishioners from other parishes. As soon as the statue was removed, a figure of the Blessed Virgin was brought in from another church to the applause of the tearful crowd. Within the next 30 minutes, an altar from another one of the consolidated parishes was installed, as were “stations of the cross” from the fourth parish. These rituals and the stories that were shared allowed healthy grieving and were the formation of a new parish community.

At other times, windows or other artifacts from chapels or atriums of old buildings are incorporated into the new edifice to remind people of continuity with the past. Even Moses brought the bones of Joseph (Ex 13:19) with him into the wilderness to help connect the people with the past. Using storytelling, prayer, and reflection, interspersed with shared meals, allows people to contribute to meaning and connect with

each other during the transition in the wilderness. Such events help diminish isolation and encourage bonding. They are truly celebrations of the paschal mystery and the familiar domain of catechetical leaders.

The chaos of the wilderness often presents opportunities to regroup and come to a new or renewed realization of what the meaning and purpose of life, or a job, or a relationship is. It is a time to grow and be nurtured by the strengths, starkness, and beauty of the wilderness. It is a chance to question basic premises and come to new realizations. New cultures are created in the wilderness zone; new relationships are formed; new insights into faith are made. The Ten Commandments came out of a culture of the wilderness where new rules were needed, new associations were made, and where mutual trust and respect were needed. Wandering in the wilderness zone often provides opportunities for reflection and contemplation. It gives opportunities to name what is remaining the same or deepening. It is a time to see the interconnections between the paschal mystery and our own suffering and loss. If we can connect to the bigger picture of the life-death-resurrection mystery of Christ, we will be less inclined to “live in pity city,” less vulnerable to cynicism, and more energized in time to contribute to a hope-filled future.

Discovering hopes and dreams for the future is the last of Myers’ areas, which if attended to, helps people move through the wilderness zone. When people are embedded in the morass of change and transition, it is sometimes hard to envision a positive future. Given time, patience, and invitations to create something new, those experiencing transitions will begin to get energy to help build something new. At first it may just seem as a glimmer of light, then it will grow to be a beacon of hope and new life.

People who love change often start here, with imagining the future. They instinctively dream of what could be and are often not sympathetic to the “settlers” among us who would rather not budge. Problems arise when a person in leadership focuses only on the dreams and hopes for the future and has little patience for the realities of the wilderness zone. Effective leaders give time and resources to travel the wilderness zone at a reasonable pace. If this is not attended to, people will spend more energy trying to return to the past, and that will not be life giving.

When handled well, transitions can produce amazing results:

Innovation can blossom in the wilderness zone. The creative tension between the past and what could be is fertile ground for ground-breaking ideas.

The wilderness zone presents opportunities for fruitful conversation. Margaret Wheatley reminds us that “conversations take time. We need time to sit together, to listen, to worry and dream together. As this age of turmoil tears us apart, we need to reclaim time to be together. Otherwise we cannot stop the fragmentation.”

The skills and abilities to successfully navigate the wilderness zone include sharing memories; listening to the heart of the other; being attentive to the facts and realities; engaging in storytelling and ritualizing; using conversation and dialogue to connect to each other; reflecting on the mission of Christ, the big picture; and being able to mobilize a group to care for each other at the same time as it moves forward out of the wilderness.

Catechetical leaders are in a unique position to share insights and lead others through the wilderness zone because they are steeped in the life-death-resurrection mystery of Christ. It is second nature for them to use storytelling and ritual to bring about new understandings and nurture faith. The greatest temptation among catechetical leaders may be not seeing the connection between the paschal mystery and the changes and transitions individuals and organizations are faced with, or being hesitant to step up to the plate and take leadership in an area that is much broader than training catechists or catechizing children. Today, in this ever-changing church and tumultuous world, catechetical leaders are called to expand their usual horizons and embrace an opportunity to be a leader in the transition from the wilderness zone to the “promised land.” ■

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WILL THERE BE FAITH?

A New Vision for Educating & Growing Disciples
By Thomas Groome

Reviewed by Daniel Thomas



In 1980, Thomas Groome published his classic, *Christian Religious Education*, in which he introduced the Shared Christian Praxis process that has been associated with his name ever since. In Groome's new book, *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Education and Growing Disciples*, he looks back at

how this process has developed over the years, some of the new issues that have arisen (whole community catechesis, the importance of adult faith formation, forming disciples, etc.), and foretells how his title question can be answered positively. His way of describing this process is "life to faith to life."

This book is full of theoretical reflection done in a reader-friendly style. Groome relates theory to everyday practice with examples from kindergarten, grade school, high school, the college classroom, adult scripture study, and even parenting. The book is a conversation with the reader about catechetical developments over the last 30 years, and how we will move into the challenging future upon us.

SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Groome begins by discussing the daunting challenge that teaching faith is in our world today. As he says, "These are extraordinarily difficult times for faith on earth" (7). These difficulties involve both the church's loss of credibility because of the actions of some and the way in which secularism permeates our culture. Part of the response to this is to do Christian religious education through the movements of shared Christian praxis, which is succinctly summarized in this quote:

[R]eligious education in particular should enable people to reflect critically on their own lives in the world, lend ready and well-informed access to the faith handed down, and encourage participants to know and understand their faith and then to make judgments and decisions about its truths and spiritual wisdom for their lives (97-8).

Using Charles Taylor's, *A Secular Age*, and sociologist Christian Smith's study of adolescent faith, Groome points to our culture's disenchantment with religious belief and a "moral, therapeutic, deistic" image of God that needs to be faced with a positive, authentic presentation/experience of the God of the good news. "What is urgently needed is a comprehensive approach to religious education that is effective in the context of our time and user-friendly for both teachers and parents" (9).

One of the outstanding ideas in this book is what he calls "A New Apologetics for the Christian Faith." He proposes an

apologetics that both defends and persuades. It is not one that is defensive and authoritarian, but rather one that

appeals to people's deepest desires and human longings, that persuades by rational coherence, that prompts them to see for themselves that Christian faith is a most life-giving and nourishing way to live – personally and 'for the life of the world' (Jn 6:51). We need a persuasive representation of Christian faith to entice people's freely chosen commitment in this postmodern age (147).

Groome says further, "We must educate so that people can appropriate and make their own the truth and beauty of Christian faith, so that they come to personally embrace the spiritual wisdom it offers for their lives" (152).

TOTAL CATECHESIS

Another insight from the last 30 years is the role of "the village" in passing on the faith. Here, the role of the parents and the parish community come to the fore. In discussing total community catechesis he states,

I used 'total' [because] it echoes the total nature of Christian faith: to engage head, heart, and hands; to become lived, living, and life-giving; to require that people be informed, formed, and transformed in Christian identity. [It] signals that all Christians [should be involved] in teaching and learning together. [It] suggests that parishes harness every aspect of their shared life and ministries to maximize their educational potential (163).

In Chapter Five: "Faith on Earth Requires a Village" and Chapter Six: "It's (Almost) All in the Family—with Help," Groome uses the six core functions of a parish (welcome, witness, worship, well-being, word/preaching and word/teaching) to present specific, practical strategies in each function for both the parish and the "households of faith" to bring faith to life and life to faith. **These, in themselves, are worth the price of the book.**

Chapter Seven: "Catholic Schools as Educators in Faith," summarizes the key ideas from one of Groome's earlier books, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*. He uses the Joseph and Mary School in Karachi, Pakistan, as a model of what Catholic schools could/should be: excellent educational institutions that have "found the universal values that are foundational to Catholic faith and have turned them into an education philosophy that can be embraced by and will

benefit any person of goodwill” (231-32). “It educates people to have a life as well as to make a living” (233).

We are indeed to ‘catch’ people, attracting and actively engaging them as agents of their own learning, so that they may become more fully alive for themselves and for the life of the world (238).

Chapter Eight: “Life to Faith to Life: The Foundations” presents the theory of Shared Christian Practice but in a most nontheoretical way. Here, we see how a good presentation on theory can be done: by keeping practical examples and specific uses right at hand.

Groome’s summary of the process follows:

So anyone aspiring to take this approach must commit to creating a community of conversation among participants; to actively engage them as agents of their own and one another’s learnings; to invite them to express and reflect critically on their lives in dialogue with each other; to lend them ready, persuasive, and meaningful (connecting to their lives) access to Christian Story and Vision; to encourage them to appropriate its teachings and spiritual wisdom as their own; and to invite them to make decisions for lived Christian faith (262-63).

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Chapter Nine: “Life to Faith to Life: The Movements” explores and analyzes each movement (not **step**, but **MOVEMENT**), emphasizing that the process flows and adjusts to the different situations in which it is used. For example, parents can use it in conversations with their children; he demonstrates this from his own parenting. Both of these last two chapters intertwine and integrate theory and practice seamlessly so that the reader is intimately involved in understanding the process.

This is a truly outstanding book that confronts the contemporary realities of secularism and postmodernism by embracing the questions they raise. Groome’s method is to respect the issues they raise, wrestle with them honestly and fully, present the Catholic Christian Vision and Story, call for a free response, and let go and let God. As he says in Chapter Five, “My colleague Jane Regan says that proselytizing is telling other people what *they* should believe, whereas evangelizing is letting people know, as appropriate, what *we* believe” (175). **I**

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 dantthomas@sbcglobal.net.

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Emotional Intelligence and Faith Formation

Jo Rotunno



Echoes of Faith Plus holds some hidden treasures that you may not have uncovered yet. One of these is the bonus interview with Mark Markuly, PhD. We interviewed Markuly on the subject of emotional intelligence at Loyola University in New Orleans before he moved to his present position as

Dean of the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University. Anyone who works in faith formation with children or adults can benefit from reflection on the very important issues he raises regarding the implications of emotional intelligence for faith formation.

In his interview, Markuly shares that his interest in the topic of emotional intelligence began when he worked with undergraduates in St. Louis. He observed that for a number of students, their faith had not “caught” yet and was not integrated in their lives. He studied the work of

Daniel Goleman on emotional intelligence and came to feel that Goleman’s insights might hold a key to developing an approach to faith formation that would address the whole person – body, mind, and spirit.

Markuly describes emotional intelligence as the affective dimension of human intelligence. There is an emotional factor involved in all learning, and he cautions that the educator who does not recognize this will probably not teach very much. Grace builds on nature, and God’s revelation comes to us through our whole human experience — our intellect, our senses, and our emotions. He cites the insights of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose life experience brought them to the conclusion that, in spite of their keen intellect, it alone could never bring them to the fullness of religious experience.

I N T R O D U C I N G

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Faith formation requires attention to both the emotional and social dimensions of faith. In his seven-part interview, Markuly also addresses the notion of social intelligence. We are created for relationship and for community. Our social connection begins in the womb and continues throughout life. The catechist who is attentive to both of these dimensions of faith will be far more successful than the one who addresses only the intellect.

Markuly cites the emotional experience that lay behind the experience of the early church. The emotional power of the faith of the early disciples of Jesus was critical in driving forward the mission of the church. He ends his interview by appealing to catechists to honor the affective dimension of faith. It is as critical today as it was in the first century if the mission of the church in the modern world is to succeed.

The Program Director's Manual for *Echoes of Faith Plus* provides you with discussion questions for this and every

*Faith formation
requires attention
to both the emotional
and social dimensions of faith.*

interview. Here are the ones provided for this fine reflection on emotional intelligence:

- Why is emotional intelligence important for faith formation? How will you support emotional self-awareness in your learners?
- In what ways does Catholic identity extend beyond what we know?
- What aspects of social and emotional intelligence theory would you like to apply in your catechetical setting? In what ways might you do that?

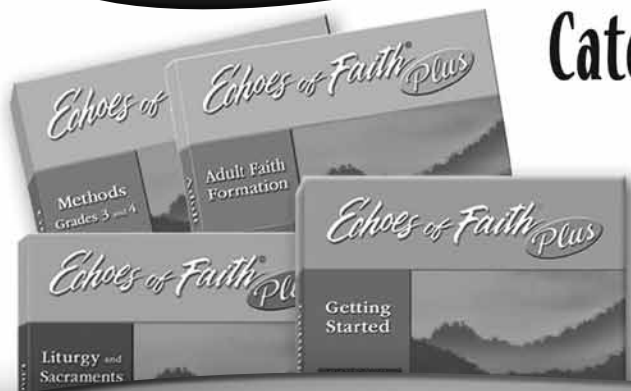
Wouldn't you love it if all your catechists could answer these questions? As always, *Echoes* is here to help. ■

Jo Rotunno serves as Publisher at RCL Benziger. She speaks nationally on catechetical topics and has developed catechist resources throughout her 27-year career in Catholic curriculum publishing. You can reach her at jrotunno@rclbenziger.com.

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“Do This in Memory of Me”

Ann Pinckney



Wow! “Do This in Memory of Me” is a wonderful theme for the year. It truly brings us back to Jesus’ request at the Last Supper. Christ’s sacrifice of sharing, and his directive to do so in remembrance of him keeps him with us now and for all time. Catechesis calls us to a “form of ministry of the word which matures initial conversion to make it into a living, explicit and fruitful confession of faith” (NDC, 19A). As catechists, we must remember Christ – the one we receive, the one we become – in order to bring him to others. Sharing the presence of Christ with others requires first that he be ever-present in our own lives. As Christians, and especially as catechists, this year’s theme reminds us what Jesus called us to do.

This year’s catechetical theme lends itself well to liturgical catechesis. It is especially beneficial this year as the church implements the new English translation of the *New Roman Missal*. It is an opportunity to rediscover and discuss the richness of the Mass and the English translation. One of the key points in this discussion is to keep a positive and optimistic attitude about the English translation and demonstrate how it is true to the Latin text. “Do This in Memory of Me” helps us approach this new translation by remembering it is about keeping Christ present. The basic elements of the Mass have not changed; the way Christ is present with us is the same; and the way we are transformed by and through the Eucharist is the same. A new translation can perhaps bring us to a richer and fuller understanding of Jesus’ command. Our attitudes about these changes can influence how others accept them. As the famous composer and Savannah native, Johnny Mercer, once wrote, “Accentuate the positive. Eliminate the negative.”

The Diocese of Savannah is a mission diocese in south Georgia. With 37,000 square miles, 79 parishes and missions, and approximately 80,000 Catholics, it makes up two-thirds of the state’s total area. Like most dioceses in the United States,

it is comprised of both urban and rural parishes. The majority of our lay parish catechetical leaders (PCLs) are volunteers. They are incredibly dedicated and extremely generous with their time, especially considering most of them hold full-time jobs outside of their parish ministry. As a diocesan office, we must constantly be creative with the challenges of assisting these extraordinarily devoted PCLs. The Eucharistic nature of this year’s catechetical theme helps bring us together to remember Christ and celebrate him through our ministries.

Communication throughout the year brings to the forefront the catechetical theme. Frequent electronic communication is necessary considering the vastness of our diocese. Directing PCLs to helpful workshops, webinars, and websites is part of what we do. Each August, the PCLs across the Diocese of Savannah gather together for a day to share and learn about happenings in the diocese as well as in each other’s parishes. Obviously, this year we will spend quality time focusing on how “Do This in Memory of Me” will aid us in a positive way toward teaching about the new translation of the *New Roman Missal*. By having everyone come together in a spirit reflective of Christ, there is little obstacle in remembering that he is present in our gatherings, our ministries, and our lives.

With the introduction of the new translation of the *New Roman Missal*, the challenges and blessings of catechetical ministry can become worrisome, scary, or stressful. However, if we can keep Christ present and at the center of our lives through reflection on Jesus’ command, our burden becomes lighter, perhaps even joyful. This makes it easier to allow the peace of Christ to overflow into all areas of life, and teaching others to “Do This in Memory of Me” is just part of what we do and who we are. ■

Ann Pinckney is the Diocesan Director of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Savannah. She attained her MRE from Fordham University. She has been a member of NCCL for more than 17 years and involved in catechetical ministry for more than 30 years.

With the introduction of the new translation of the New Roman Missal, the challenges and blessings of catechetical ministry can become worrisome, scary, or stressful.

Pope Benedict Addresses Friends from the Digital Continent

Russell Peterson

With the rise of Facebook, the term “friend” has gained a new definition. As Pope Benedict XVI stated at the 43rd World Communications Day, “The concept of *friendship* has enjoyed a renewed prominence in the vocabulary of the new digital social networks that have emerged in the last few years.”¹ Digital social networks have been modifying the concept of friendship and the ways friendships are formed since before Facebook was created.

In the mid-1990s my sister-in-law was active on AOL instant messaging. As a teenage girl, she found common interests with several other girls her age in a different state. Only a couple of the girls had ever met outside of the digital continent; my sister-in-law had met none of them in person. The friendships grew over the course of many months and became important relationships that helped her cope with high school. As the pope noted, “It is in and through our friendships that we grow and develop as humans. For this reason, true friendship has always been seen as one of the greatest goods any human person can experience.”

After months of regular online contact, one of the girls was struck by a car while crossing the street and died. It took a couple of days for my sister-in-law to discover and learn about the loss of her friend. And then she grieved. She had lost a friend – a true friend. However, the “ordinary” means of grieving, such as attending a funeral Mass or going to the graveside were not available to her. The realness of the friendships only became apparent to the family with the realness of the grief, and we could not share in her grief for we did not know the young person. It was a difficult grieving process for both her and the family.

According to Pope Benedict, “We should be careful, therefore, never to trivialize the concept or the experience of friendship.” He continues, “It would be sad if our desire to sustain and develop *online* friendships were to be at the cost of our availability to engage with our families, our neighbors, and those we meet in the daily reality of our places of work, education, and recreation.” In many ways I agree with this sentiment. However, we must not trivialize the

concept of friendship or experience of friendship in such a way that we deny the possibility of true friendships being formed online.

Friendships are created in locations. I may form a friendship through work, through my child’s sports activities, or through my parish. The location at the beginning of the friendship may become a defining characteristic of the friendship – a friend from work for example. Or it may also be the starting point for a friendship that grows much deeper than just the location; the location then does not define the friendship, and the fact that the origin of a friendship is the digital continent does not make it unreal. A friendship from school may turn out to be a quality friendship or simply a shallow acquaintance or even a backstabbing, painful relationship; it is not the location of the school that causes the outcome, but rather the quality of the friendship. The depth of sharing defines the quality of the friendship – the mutual likes and dislikes, a true concern for the other among other factors.

I agree with the pope that collecting friends and followers can become unhealthy. “If the desire for virtual connectedness becomes obsessive, it may in fact function to isolate individuals from real social interaction while also disrupting the patterns of rest, silence, and reflection that are necessary for healthy human development.” At the same time, I also believe that the quality of friendships formed or nurtured online can be fantastic. In our catechetical ministry, we need to be present to all of the friendships of those we catechize – including those on the digital continent. We need to be aware of our body language and words when a person describes a friendship as being online, and be cautious in labeling them as “not real.” The joys and hardships of a relationship occur in all true friendships. And someone in your ministry may be grieving over the loss of an online friend. ■

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

¹ All the quotes in this article are from Pope Benedict XVI, *New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship* (The Vatican: May 24, 2009).

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

Compiled by Dan Pierson

Vatican II Themes

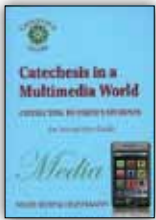
Beginning with his July 18, 2011, "Essay in Theology" column for the *National Catholic Reporter*, Fr. Richard McBrien explored the major ecclesiological themes or principles proclaimed at the Second Vatican Council.

As he noted in his first column, *Vatican II themes: The church as mystery, or sacrament*, the late Pope John Paul II wrote in his apostolic letter of 1994, *Tertio millennio adveniente* (On the approaching third millennium), "the best preparation for the new millennium can only be expressed in a renewed commitment to apply, as faithfully as possible, the teachings of Vatican II to the life of every individual and of the whole Church."

See more at ncronline.org/blogs/essays-in-theology

Catechesis in a Multimedia World

Reviewed by Sr. Judy Dieterle, SSL, regional leader of the Sisters of St. Louis, Los Angeles, CA



In *Catechesis in a Multimedia World: Connecting to Today's Students* (Paulist Press), Mary Byrne Hoffmann writes an interactive guide that begins by clearly stating that catechists today are charged

with a threefold mission centered on:

- discovering possibilities the media culture offers them,
- developing critical skills and a moral compass in relation to the media, and
- teaching those skills to the students so they can realize how multimedia shapes their sense of meaning and their faith (cf 7).

The book is divided into two main sections. In the first part, *The Media Pilgrimage*, Hoffmann invites the reader into a world of experiencing the evolution of storytelling from oral to written to print and currently to electronic mass media. She proposes that with each of

these shifts, there has been a parallel movement in the development of spirituality and culture. She explores the way the essential basic questions of life and purpose are answered in each of these evolutionary stages and offers the challenge to catechists to become storytellers in this new image-driven language of our times.

After experiencing the pilgrimage and becoming rooted in the imagery of our encounter with God, the second part of the book offers practical ways to catechize in a multimedia world. Hoffmann traces the amazing development of technology over the past 100 years.

She then develops five core concepts about media awareness. This part of the book must be experienced hand in hand with the online activities that are suggested at each step of the way. (These are available at paulistpress.com/csg_byrne.shtml).

Catechesis in a Multimedia World: Connecting to Today's Students is a book not to be read, but to be experienced. It is not a case of understanding, but of imagining, perceiving, and allowing something new to unfold in our depths rather than in our heads. It is an invitation to emerge into the multimedia world with our new ways and new methodologies to touch the new generations. This is a must-have for any contemporary catechist!

National Survey of Parish Catechetical Leaders

In spring 2011, T&R Research (Tom and Rita Walters) sent an invitation to the National Conference of Catechetical Leaders (NCCL) and the National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors (NPCD) asking if they would be willing to invite their members to participate in a national, online survey of parish catechetical leaders. Both organizations agreed to do so and also provided input into the design of the survey.

In addition, a request was sent to all diocesan directors of religious education with available email addresses found on their

diocesan websites inviting them to extend an invitation encouraging their parish catechetical leaders to take part in the study. Seventy-two dioceses accepted the invitation. A note was also posted on dre-talk@yahoo.com inviting all parish catechetical leaders to complete the survey.

It must be noted that this was not a scientific sample. However, the large number of catechetical leaders who completed the survey does provide a unique perspective as well as helpful information on the state of the catechetical ministry in the United States and its leadership. Two thousand eight hundred thirty (2,830) catechetical leaders from 150 dioceses took part.

Results of this survey can be found at trresearch.web.officelive.com/default.aspx

All parish diocesan and parish catechetical leaders are invited to respond and offer their reflections.

Technology & You

Tim Welch, consultant for educational technology for the Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota, is the author of "Technology & You," a monthly column in *RTJ's Creative Catechist* (rtjcreativecatechist.com).

In the September issue, he addressed "How blogging can help you be a better catechist." Future columns will include podcasting with the saints, having children creating a video commercial on awareness of the presence of Christ, digital storytelling for the liturgical seasons, and creative reflection tools for the sacraments. Don't miss these columns! They promise excellent ideas for helping catechists begin to use a variety of media in sharing the Good News. ■

*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.*

“Timely, vivid, and rich in valuable information. This book is an unsurpassed resource.”

– Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Philadelphia



“If St. Peter, St. Ignatius, and St. Augustine had access to today’s new media, they would do exactly the same things as the contributors to this book.”

Mike Aquilina, author and v.p. of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology

“The book’s lucid insights and practical ideas should be shared and replicated by Catholics around the globe.”

Mark Hart, V.P. of Life Teen International

“A valuable guide for those who want to serve the mission of the Church.”

Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., Archbishop of Chicago

“Precisely the right book, released at precisely the right time.”

Elizabeth Scalia, the blogger known as “The Anchoress”

“This book will give the Church courage and wisdom.”

– Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York

“An outstanding handbook of digital evangelism!”

Dan Andriacco, Communications
Director for Archdiocese of Cincinnati

“Everyone involved in Communications and Evangelization ministries for the Church should read it.”

Cardinal Seán O’Malley, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Boston

“The book for all engaged Catholics to be reading and talking about!”

Sr. Helena Burns, Daughters of St. Paul and Pauline Books and Media

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