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# THE CHALLENGE OF OWNERSHIP

Mary Ann Ronan



We are your new leadership team: Father Davis Loftus, vice president (who will work on building up committees); Lorraine De Luca, treasurer (who will work with development); Janet Schaffer, OP, secretary; Harry Dudley (who will concentrate on task forces); Mary Caroline Marchal (who will concentrate on personnel and related fields); Joe Swiss; Tom Quinlan; Chela Gonzales; Bishop Richard Malone, episcopal moderator; Michael Steier, USCCB liaison; Neil Parent, executive director; and myself, president.

We are committed to you. Leader-to-leader communication will be open and emphasize dialogue. We invite you to communicate with us: call or email us with your questions and hopes.

Leader to leader, we challenge you to be owners that are invested in their organization. Owners participate. Are you a member of a committee? If not, go to the website and investigate committees and email the chair or one of us for more information. We need members from all provinces, the representative council, forums, committees and task forces engaged at their highest potential.

It was so great to see so many committees and task forces using the annual meeting to meet and plan for the future. We have been hearing from committee chairs who are energized around new projects and re-energizing old ones. During the election process, with the conference theme of “Catechesis and Culture” in mind, we challenged members to:

- a) Advocate before the Representative Council and Board intentionally and unapologetically on behalf of the various cultures we encounter
- b) Hold the Representative Council and Board accountable to the members for the relationship with the committee.

We extend this challenge to every committee and task force, inviting all to examine their charge to produce results that make a difference. We are encouraged that all forum leaders

talked about the need to serve their members throughout the year and solicit their input. We are committed to work with forum leaders on projects that build leadership and excellence in catechesis.

The Representative Council collaborates with the Board in clarifying and focusing future directions. To do this we need council members to be representative of the NCCL membership in their provinces, to grapple with the questions sent to them, and to raise issues or concerns from their areas, so the Representative Council may do its work.

We want to be an organization that gives vision to catechetical excellence and leadership development that works together for the reign of God. This only happens when each piece of the organization is responsible and accountable. As a board, we will grapple with the organizational questions and we do this by engaging the mission, bylaws and policies. Our responsibility is to provide creative and intentional leadership. The executive director and staff then become accountable for implementing those policies.

We do believe we further the Reign of God by working together with you, as owners of NCCL, “to go make disciples” that transform our church and society from our diocesan and parish offices. We are so grateful for the leadership of Harry Dudley, Charlene O’Connell, Kathy Gallo and Marc Gonzales. We also thank Dennis Johnson, Michelle Harris, and Joan McKeown. Their willingness to serve as candidates for the at-large board nominations led to an exchange of ideas, challenged the status quo, and called all of us to deepen our appreciation of leadership from all the members.

Each and every member of the Board comes from you, the diocesan directors, diocesan staff and parish catechetical leaders, to lead and serve you.

# THE COLLECTION BASKET ISN'T ENOUGH

Neil A. Parent



I think it fair to say that most of us don't think much about world missions until World Mission Sunday is observed in our parish each year, mostly in the form of a contribution envelope. Sometimes our consciences about missions are stirred when a visiting missionary vividly calls our attention to the daily struggles of peoples he or she has served overseas. The length of our focus on world missions is unfortunately about as long it takes for us to write out a check and drop it in the collection basket.

But that's not how it was when I was growing up. At St. Alphonsus Parochial School in East Los Angeles we spent a lot of time each year on world missions. Actually, we spent a lot of time raising money to save "pagan babies" from the perils of limbo. How all of that pagan baby business worked, we had no idea. I had visions of saving them from fates too terrible to contemplate. Still, an important byproduct of all that activity, intended or otherwise, was that as young Catholics we felt a connection through the program with our missionaries overseas. We especially thought about the children and how important it was to make sure that they experienced the blessings of Christian life. The campaign with its literature, photos, the charts and stars used to track the number of babies saved, and the enthusiastic support of the teacher, helped to meld the entire process into something that deeply influenced our religious imaginations. Simply put, world mission meant us.

Modern missiology has long since abandoned the notion of "saving pagan babies" as a way to engage the Catholic population back home. But the need for us to think about and become involved with world missions is as relevant and important as ever. Ironically, as the world has become increasingly smaller due to modern media and access to jet travel, we struggle to maintain our sense of connectedness to missions and look for new ideas to reinvigorate that connection.

If we are fortunate to be in a parish that has a sister parish outside the United States, such as Susan Thompson describes, we benefit from a pastoral situation that regularly stretches our ministerial outreach beyond our borders. But lacking something of this nature, our sense of responsibility toward world mission is likely to come down once again to the collection basket.

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*The part of the Gospel that our world desperately needs to hear is that of mutual compassion and human solidarity.*

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But for us as catechetical leaders, this simply isn't good enough. As Fr. Michael Montoya reminds us, quoting the U.S. bishops, "To say 'Church' is to say 'Mission.'" This means, I would suggest, that our entire catechetical enterprise has a world mission orientation.

Whether we are working with children, youth, or adults, we as catechetical leaders should endeavor continually to raise our awareness that we are part of a global community whose very core is God. We are brothers and sisters to each other. We are a human family that shares in the blessings of God's divine life, and nothing—nothing—should fracture our union in God. Indeed, our efforts in catechesis must be aimed at educating for human solidarity, for the establishment of a global family of God.

The Good News of Jesus, namely the core values around which we organize our lives as Christians, is in service to the building of God's reign on earth. This is a reign that offers justice, love and peace to each and every one of us, regardless of our country, race, ethnicity or religion. To be Christian is to be a missionary for this cause, wherever and whenever we find ourselves.

In our efforts to promote Gospel values globally, we may succeed in attracting others to our faith in Jesus and his church. While we rejoice when that happens, it is nonetheless vitally important that we succeed in stirring their imaginations and hearts to want to create a human family that displays unmistakable qualities of unity, compassion and justice.

I sometimes think that one of our mottos as Catholic Christians should be "Missionaries are us." Mission is at the heart of our discipleship in Jesus, and for that reason, mission is one of the six tasks of catechesis. "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature," he told his disciples as he took his leave of them for the final time. It is a mandate that extends to us today. The part of the Gospel that our world desperately needs to hear proclaimed today is that of mutual compassion and human solidarity. All of us, whatever our position or status, can and should be missionaries for this cause.

# How Big Is Our Tent?

Our church is so much bigger than our experience of it. Assumptions about what is essential pale before the lived experience of others.

by Barbara Humphrey McCrabb and Donald R. McCrabb

**T**he most arresting word in the “Our Father,” a friend likes to say, is the first one — “our.” How big is our community? Who do we include in our vision of the world? The great commission was to take the faith to “the ends of the earth.” Yet, for a lot of reasons, American Catholics have a hard time seeing beyond their own local community.

Catechesis for mission in and to the world evokes the horizontal dimension of the cross.

It is an effort to both articulate and integrate a Catholic vision the embraces the whole world. We can do this through personal and communal reflection on the daily experience of discipleship. We would like to describe efforts undertaken to articulate and integrate a global Catholic vision of the world in three contexts in which we ourselves live and work — a Catholic university, a multi-cultural urban parish, and a seminary. We will identify common threads that, we hope, will advance the practice of catechesis for global mission.

## THREE CONTEXTS

Barbara directs campus ministry at Trinity (Washington) University in the District of Columbia. Established in 1897 by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur as a Catholic liberal arts college for women, Trinity has been transformed into a dynamic urban university with a diverse student population. Today, Trinity’s student body is nearly 90 percent African American, Latina and Asian. Most of the students are Christian and the largest single denomination is Catholic. There are fourteen different Christian denominations represented on campus. Trinity has more international students today than in the past and it has developed, in addition to the historic liberal arts college for women, a robust evening school for adults to complete their degrees and a professionally focused graduate school.

Barbara and Don are active members of the Shrine of the Sacred Heart, a multi-cultural parish. Sunday Mass is celebrated in four languages — Spanish, English, Vietnamese, and Creole (Haitian). The Spanish community is the largest group. Sacred Heart is a



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*We must continually test the boundaries of our perspective  
lest we mistake the familiar for the essential*

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“mother church” for Salvadoran Catholics in Washington. The English community is racially and culturally mixed. The established families in this community are largely African-American, joined by a growing number of white professionals (lawyers, doctors, journalists, etc.), like Barbara and Don, who are raising their families in the neighborhood. There are also a growing number of single young adults. The English community includes Asians, Africans, and Hispanics who prefer to worship in English. Barbara chairs the liturgy committee and oversees the lectors. Don is on the parish council and the development committee and coordinates the marriage preparation program.

Don directs field education and teaches pastoral theology at the Dominican House of Studies. His students are preparing for the priesthood. There are Dominicans, of course, but also Maronites, Josephites, and Franciscans. While all his students are male, they are diverse in age, culture, and rite. The students in one class were: a Dominican (age 23) from Vietnam, a Josephite (30) from Nigeria, a Maronite (35) from Lebanon, and a Franciscan (55) from Pennsylvania.

### GLOBAL MISSION AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY

Trinity prepares its students, especially women, for “global leadership.” Consequently, a global perspective is warmly embraced by the faculty and administration at Trinity. Barbara coordinates programs that emphasize service and mission. The Sr. Seton Cunneen Summer Service Fellowship was named after a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur (and alumna) who directed Campus Ministry several years ago. The paid fellowship offers Trinity students the opportunity to work in a community service agency for ten weeks in the summer as a way of exploring social issues and providing valuable service to the Washington, DC community. Past participating agencies include: Covenant House (at risk children), N Street Village (homeless women), and the Institute for Public Policy and Religion (international issues). The students gather on a regular basis to reflect together on their experiences. They explore the systemic dimensions of injustice, racism, and economic disparity. They integrate, through reflection, the knowledge and skills honed in the classroom.

What do the students learn? Consider Khryslé’s experience. Working with homeless women transformed her unexamined assumptions. Contrary to her preconceived notions, she found that these women were not lazy. Many of them worked. Some dealt with mental health and addiction issues. Many had children and suffered from domestic violence. Khryslé saw homelessness through their eyes. In addition, she exercised leadership and care in the midst of difficult situations. While in charge of the night shelter, she dealt

with a wide variety of needs and conflicts that emerge among strangers trying to take care of themselves. She learned that service is hard work because ordinary problems are magnified by personal limitations and systemic obstacles. It is one thing to talk about the sacredness of each person. It is another to live that belief in the middle of the night when two women are fighting over beds.

Another opportunity for catechesis with a global dimension presented itself when the Archdiocese of Washington asked Trinity to host the Nigerian Catholic Church — a non-territorial parish that helps Nigerian immigrants grow in their faith, acclimate to a new culture, and preserve their identity. Barbara’s work with this community, fully supported by Trinity’s president, Patricia McGuire, required coordination with several department heads as Trinity made room — both space and time — for more than three hundred people. It has also required conviction and tenacity. These strangers are brothers and sisters in Christ. And yet, they are strangers. Their experience of life and faith are foreign. Can we hear their story of conversion and conflict? Can we appreciate the debate over celebrating Mass in Ibo or English?

### GLOBAL MISSION AT THE SHRINE OF THE SACRED HEART

At Sacred Heart there are two ministries, developed over the past several years, that address global mission — Corpus Christi Sunday and the marriage preparation program.

The parish council learned through a needs assessment that people love the wide variety of cultures, languages and traditions represented in the congregation. They wanted to learn more about and from each other. In response, the council organized a “blessing of the bread” on Corpus Christi Sunday. Parishioners provided bread indigenous to their culture. Baskets of bread were brought forward after communion, blessed, and taken to the social hall to be shared after mass. Council members distributed nametags and bread to all who came. It has become a wonderful opportunity for community building as people shared Native-American flat bread, southern corn bread, and Irish soda bread — to name just a few.

Marriage preparation includes three elements — the FOCCUS questionnaire, a support group for couples, and Pre-Cana program. The FOCCUS questions, designed to facilitate discussion of areas of concern, take on new urgency and global perspective when a couple is preparing for both their wedding and a State Department assignment to Cambodia. (How important is staying connected to our extended family? How? What is she doing while he builds his career?)

*continued on page 6*

Many couples bring global perspectives to the parish. Couples group members Andre and Melissa are an example. Andre, whose family migrated from the Philippines, works on environmental issues. Melissa, whose family is local, works with severely disabled adults. Seen through their eyes, the world is suddenly smaller.

Don's most eye-opening experience was working with Justin and Antoinette, who are from Togo, where there are three "marriages." The first is a traditional marriage, followed by the civil marriage, and the third is the church wedding. In Togo, a person can end a traditional or civil marriage, but the state will not allow divorce after a church wedding. Why? It was explained that a person can break a promise to their family or to the state. A person cannot break a promise to God.

Natural family planning became irrelevant to a couple, twice married, who delayed the church wedding to flee the country as a political refugees. Reunited in America after a year of separation, the woman was pregnant within three months. Once again, the message is resoundingly clear — our church is so much bigger than our experience of it. Assumptions about what is essential pale before the lived experience of others.

### GLOBAL MISSION AT THE DOMINICAN HOUSE OF STUDIES

Priests need to form the habit of theological reflection. This capacity cultivates, in the words of Pope John II, "pastoral charity." Theological reflection helps seminarians take on the mind and heart of Christ. At the Dominican House of Studies it is developed through a four-step process: the student selects a ministerial experience; conducts an analysis of that experience; ponders the experience through the Catholic theological tradition; and, finally, identifies ways to improve his pastoral response in the future.

One exercise Don did with the Nigerian novices in the Society of Saint Joseph (Josephites) focused on service. Since the Josephites minister with, to, and among African-American Catholics, the Nigerians are undergoing a radical transformation. They are leaving their world, adjusting to the dominant culture, and learning how to live and work in a minority culture. The exercise explored what "service" means in the Nigerian context, the American context, and the African-American community. For example, in Nigeria the priest holds a position of high honor. The novices struggle with the disrespect they feel from American teenagers. After this cultural analysis, we considered the implications of following Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples.

Seminarians serve in a local parish during their deaconate year and preach twice a month at the Sunday Mass. Their homilies are video recorded and then, with a select group of parishioners, their homily is assessed. This "focus group" is audio recorded. Both recordings are given to the student for review. In class, the video recording of the homily is presented. Both students and faculty comment on the homily. The student presents what he learned from the focus group. This type of analysis helps the student develop his technical skills for preaching — inflection, pacing, emphasis, clarity, vividness — but it also evokes the

larger question of mission: The Gospel must become embodied in every culture yet the Gospel itself is beyond any culture.

### STRETCHING OUR PERSPECTIVES

We define catechesis for mission as the effort to articulate and integrate an understanding of mission that embraces the whole world. Opportunities that stretch perspectives will move people toward re-integration. A person's perspective, and heart, grows through efforts to learn about other peoples and cultures. Jesus' command to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth requires a heart open and responsive to different cultures. It is one thing to talk about the global village. It is another to taste it when a Nigerian and an African-American share a piece of Irish soda bread.

What are the components of a catechesis for global mission? They are people of faith coming together to expand their cultural awareness. Relying solely on the fundamentals of the faith, people can develop in themselves a greater sensitivity to how big the "Catholic" tent is and how much work is involved to ensure that everyone feels at home.

*Barbara Humphrey McCrabb, MA, directs campus ministry at Trinity University in Washington, DC. Donald R. McCrabb, DMin, directs field education and teaches pastoral theology at the Dominican House of Studies. Both are active in their multicultural parish.*

### COMMON THREADS

Some observations from experience about catechesis for global mission:

- We can be profoundly grateful for the rich and textured nature of Catholicism. Recalling all the people we have encountered through our own ministries has been a little taste of heaven.
- Catechesis for global mission presumes an elementary understanding of the faith — the creed, the dignity of the human person, the catholic nature of the church, and the universal call to holiness. We continually go back to the fundamentals of the faith because their meaning cannot be exhausted.
- Catechesis for global mission requires that we have opportunities to come together around different stories. In the process of reflecting on these stories, our untested assumptions are exposed. This type of catechesis mirrors the Liturgy of the Word: gather the people, tell the story, and reflect together on its implications for our lives.
- We must stay grounded in experience even as that experience is stretched, challenged, and sometimes broken. Homelessness becomes much more than a "social problem" when we know women who are homeless.
- Being Catholic is much bigger than our own lived experience. We must continually test the boundaries of our perspective lest we mistake the familiar for the essential. Our own experience of Catholics from other continents and traditions has taught us the limitations of our own perspective.

—*Barbara and Donald McCrabb*

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# Together As Equals

## Forging Sister Parish Partnerships That Enlarge Our Vision

by Susan Thompson



In the early 1990s, parishioners in a very socially active parish in Northern Virginia listened to a proposal to begin a sister-parish relationship with a community in Gracias, Lempira, Honduras. “Don’t we have enough problems in this community, in this country?” a beleaguered parishioner asked. “Do we have to go to another country and spread ourselves thin?”

If the purpose of becoming a sister community with another parish in a third world country were to “help” them or to “fix” their situation, it would indeed be an overwhelming task. But the proposal was that the two communities come together in faith, to be equal partners in a relationship to share faith, cultures, and lives.

In our creed we proclaim that we are a universal church. As a child that meant to me that you could go to Mass anywhere in the world and have the same Eucharistic experience. But it also means we are related to each other as sisters and brothers through our relationship with our parent God. The sister parish team in Northern Virginia, of which I was the chair, decided that one way of understanding universality would be to engage in a relationship with a parish in Honduras. A young couple suggested the parish in Honduras where they had lived and worked as missionaries.

### PREPARING THE WAY

Our team was idealistic (a hallmark of infant organizations). People were motivated by the Gospel to work toward a more just and peace-filled society by educating others about critical social issues through a hands-on project. The idea was to use social analysis and theological reflection as tools to direct our efforts. We wanted to reach not only people who were heavily committed to social and economic justice issues, but also those who were interested but uninvolved, or merely curious. Even though the team began with a bias for the poor and marginalized people of the world, it seemed crucial to move the project out of the realm of the social concerns ministries and make it a project of the entire parish.

The team visited each organization, each group within the parish and invited each to become connected to this parish in the global South (see box). Participants came from the school, the school of religion, the choir, a children and mothers’ group, some of the prayer groups, the Hispanic community, and a ReMembering group, as well as ministries devoted to the needs of the homeless and the sharing of resources.

In doing their research, the sister parish team discovered that many sister or twinning relationships end up as check-sending enterprises. The parish from the North supports the Southern parish. The team wanted to avoid this. To be equals when one parish is so much more financially secure is tricky. Our goal was to find ways that both communities could be part of a project and to ensure that the Southern parish not become dependant on the financial support from the North.

During our formation time the young Honduran pastor visited our parish. He brought all the gifts of youth — energy, enthusiasm, joy — along with stories of his parish in Gracias. In Central America many parishes contain up to hundreds of communities that are geographically spread out over hundreds of miles. Pastors are only able to visit some communities once a year. The Gracias parish was one of these, made up of 107 communities each with a catechist, a lay

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*We wanted to reach not only people heavily committed to justice issues, but also the uninvolved or merely curious.*

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leader trained by the diocese. He was the one priest serving approximately 10,000 people.

The pastor also brought a proposal for financial help. His vision was that the southern parish not become dependant on the generosity of the North — that the two parishes remain independent and yet joined in prayer and sharing of faith. He proposed that the Northern parish help with the building of a centrally located education





center. (Some parishioners had to walk as much as fourteen hours to reach the existing center in Gracias.) The land had already been purchased and the labor would come from parishioners. What they needed was money for supplies. This was a project that was ongoing. It would go ahead — though at a snail’s pace — without the

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*First the Northern parish had to understand its own church’s teaching vis-à-vis solidarity and global economic justice.*

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help from the North. It seemed to be a way to be in solidarity with the Southern parish but not to overwhelm it.

#### MEETING FACE TO FACE

At the start the team had decided it was important for parishioners to meet one another face-to-face in both locations, and that our delegates needed to prepare for the trip if the relationship was to be deep and reciprocal.

The period of formation for the first trip south took eighteen months. There was much to learn: the history of Honduras, the current social and economic reality, the country’s relationship with the United States. But most of all, the Northern team had to understand its own church’s teaching vis-à-vis solidarity and global economic justice. The church’s social teachings molder on the bookshelves of many a parish. As we embarked upon our joint project, these teachings had to be brought out, dusted off and understood in the light of a just, global relationship.

The delegations from our parish were self-selected. All were active members of the sister parish team, which was made up of people from a variety of ministries in the parish. (Most delegates paid their own expenses. The parish offered scholarship funds where needed and paid Honduran delegates’ expenses — money was one of the resources we had to share.)

Before each of our periodic visits to Gracias, gifts were prepared — gifts from community to community with symbolic more than monetary value. To symbolize our shared relationship though a common baptism, an early delegation took white baptism garments prepared by our parish’s baptism team and confirmation candidates for the more than 150 babies to be baptized in the Southern parish over the course of a few months. The delegation was prayed over at each Mass in the parish and “sent” by the entire community.

#### VISITING THE PARISH IN HONDURAS

Our first delegation, like the ones that followed, was taken by our hosts to visit a variety of communities in the Honduran parish, traveling in the parish Jeep or on foot. Bells were rung when we arrived. The small chapels with dirt floors were decorated with pine needles and flowers. People came from miles around to attend Mass and meet the folks from their sister parish. After Mass food was brought out with hot drinks in the evening and cold juices during the day. What little people had, they shared. We visitors were given a deeper understanding of Eucharist at these events.

We made a pilgrimage to a logging site where the mountains were denuded of trees that had once provided important resources for the community. The year before, the company destroying the forest had been made to leave. Parishioners, including the pastor and at times even the bishop, had worked for ten years trying to get the company to be more responsible. Finally a rally was organized with more than 3000 farmers attending. The issue gained national attention and when the government was confronted with the destruction of the forest, the company lost its rights to log. A Mass was said in thanksgiving for the “saving of the forest.”

(It was only a few years later that Hurricane Mitch brought home the message to the Northern delegates of the true cost of denuding the mountains. Mudslides caused hundreds of deaths and destroyed many communities similar to those that we’d visited.)

*continued on page 36*

# Catechesis in a Globalized Context

By Michael Montoya, MJ



“Catechists are specialists, direct witnesses, and irreplaceable evangelizers who... represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young churches.” This is how John Paul II’s encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* (no. 73) identifies the role and importance of catechists to the whole mission of the church. It simply affirms what the local churches all over the world have known all along. But what does this mean to us here in the U.S.? Let me bring your attention to three actual parishes.

## THREE MULTI-CULTURAL PARISHES

The first one is a parish along the border of Texas and Mexico. At one point the pastor was Dutch, the associates were from the Philippines and Indonesia, the intern was from Africa, the religious education director was Mexican American, The youth minister was from the Philippines, the catechists and lay formation teams were Mexican Americans, some Mexican nationals, some Filipinos. The mission team was composed of Mexican nationals, Mexican Americans, and their leader was from the Philippines. The people in the parish are predominantly of Mexican origins although there are groups of Filipinos and white Americans, with the latter growing in number during winter months. The predominant language used was Spanish, but majority of the parish celebrations are predominantly bi-lingual, with some other languages used every now and then. For several years, the parish has been a site for the “mission exposure” of the Jesuit novices from Louisiana.

The second one is a parish in Chicago. The pastor is white. The associate is white and of Polish descent. Another associate is Filipino and a few years back an Indian priest also lived in the parish. The director of religious education is white, and the students that go to the religious education program are whites, Filipinos, and some Hispanics. The parish is predominantly Irish American and Italian

American, yet on Sundays, it is also a place where Polish-speaking people come to celebrate the Eucharist in Polish.

The third location is in Los Angeles. Here the pastoral team decided that there would be just one pastoral team for two parishes. The pastor and his associates are all Filipinos. They recently started what they call a Christian Faith Formation that encompasses a holistic approach to religious education and faith formation. They hired a director who is originally from the Fiji Islands. The lay formation team consists of people from Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and the Philippines. The parish is comprised of people from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and some North Americans. There is a deliberate move from the pastoral team to make the celebrations and formation programs sensitive to the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual composition of the parish.

Three different parishes, but with common denominators — they are multi-ethnic and multi-lingual in composition. The reality also affirms — and at the same time challenges — the cultural diversity

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*Our challenge is to learn how to effectively harness the gifts in a community for that community’s growth.*

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and multi-lingual abilities (or lack of it) of the parish leadership.

More and more, parishes all over United States are claiming their multi-ethnic and multi-lingual identity. Even parishes that were traditionally predominantly white are seeing the influx of new parish members coming from all over the world. And not only parishioners, but parish leaders and ministers have been coming from all over the world. Such a dynamic is having an impact on how we view Christian faith formation. The multi-ethnic compositions of both

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*It is out of the dynamics of interaction and dialogue between contexts and Judeo-Christian tradition that we envision Christian faith formation.*

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the religious and lay leaders in a parish with an even more multi-ethnic and multi-lingual parishioners is bound to have an effect (if it has not already) on how we approach religious education, liturgies, RCIA, youth ministry, community organizing, and even the parish and office administration.

### WORLD MISSION IN OUR BACKYARD

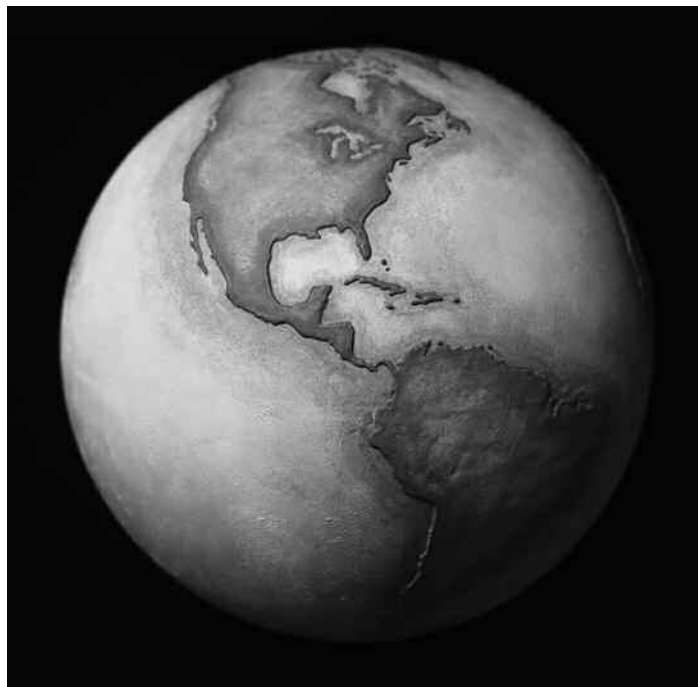
Why do I lift these three parishes to our attention as we talk about “catechesis and world mission”?

First, there is the “elephant in the living room” that cannot be ignored — the United States is composed of people from all over the world! Our country and the kind of lifestyle we enjoy now has been built by the blood and sweat of immigrants that have populated and developed this land. And the stories of immigration continue. Some people approach the situation as a problem to be solved. I would like to suggest that we look at it as an opportunity for growth.

If we look at the situation as an opportunity for growth, then we begin to be sensitive to the richness that surrounds us: that every person is a “bearer of gifts,” that every person, regardless of his or her ethnicity or language, is a vital member of the church. This is the kind of attitude that the US Catholic bishops promote in their statement “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity.” It is a stance that allows us to see God in the stories of people we encounter and to see the richness that diversity brings. Our challenge is to learn how to effectively harness the gifts in the community for that community’s growth.

Second, migration has literally pushed the world into our backyard. It used to be that when we talked about the world, it is that place out there... those people that talk differently, dress differently, eat differently. Well, “those people” are the people we see day in and day out in our parishes, schools, shopping malls, hospitals, even in our government offices. They are our priests, catechists, lay leaders, teachers, nurses, doctors. They clean our yard, harvest the crops we eat, drive our buses, take care of our elderly, process the food we eat, pave our roads, build our houses.

Third, parishes are being staffed by foreign ministers, both ordained and non-ordained. While initially the idea of bringing in foreign ministers may have been to “supply” parishes with ordained ministers and alleviate the shortage of American born priests, it also responded to the needs and challenges of culturally diverse and multi-lingual character of parishes. This further emphasized the fact that the church in the U.S. is both multi-ethnic and multi-lingual.



We all have heard of complaints about foreign priests and ministers not being understood by parishioners and stories of “cultural insensitivity” abound. But what we often times neglect to see is that their coming brought a different dynamic in parish communities. In Chicago, the Polish community was gathering from different parishes and even other cities to hear the Word of God and be nourished in the Eucharist in their own native tongue. Foreign priests and ministers are responding to the challenges posed by cultural and linguistic diversity. In the Los Angeles parish, the foreign ministers become bridges between two or more ethnic communities. Their ability to speak both the local languages of the people and the English language facilitated more deliberate intercultural and multi-lingual approaches to the activities of the parish that are both meaningful and effective.

Dioceses and other mission-oriented institutes have begun establishing cultural orientation programs for the foreign ministers. Attendees attest to their importance and to how they have helped them integrate into the U.S church. But this raises a question: As parishes become more multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, should not cultural orientation programs be given also to American-born ministers?

### CATECHESIS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

I would like to define catechesis as the total Christian faith formation, a task that belongs not just to “professional catechists” but to the whole church. Catechesis then is not simply teaching rote repetition of words, but offering a holistic process of reflecting and

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# Embracing the Messiness of Adult Faith Formation

By James R. Sheehan

A great opportunity in my ministry is the training of adult faith formation coordinators and teams. After training, they leave enthusiastic and ready to inaugurate many opportunities for learning and formation for the adults in their parishes. Then they encounter messy reality.

Some of these teams go forth and remain enthusiastic, relishing in the success of their programs. Others seem discouraged that after all the work they put into their programs, few people attend. Still other teams, after providing a few programs, seem to slow down and become discouraged — and not because of lack of attendance. Their discouragement stems from those programs that have quickly led to heated discussions and disagreements, becoming venues for some adults to argue and push different agendas. Because this outcome has been upsetting and draining for the teams, they tend to shy away from providing further programs.

Adult faith formation opportunities are usually open to all adults and they are voluntary in nature, so the gatherings are often not as controlled as classroom situations and things can become messy. This is one hurdle we need to address if we hope to make adult faith formation the “chief form of catechesis.”

## FINDING COURAGE FOR ADULT FORMATION

For some time now, there have been attempts at making adult faith formation a priority in parishes through pastoral letters, books, tapes and other resources. Yet, as the bishops of the United States acknowledged in their 1999 pastoral letter *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, “despite the consistency and clarity of this message, the Catholic community has not yet fully heard and embraced it. While most Catholic parishes place a high priority on the faith formation of children and youth, far fewer treat adult faith formation as a priority” (No. 13).

Perhaps this is due to the fact that the operative paradigm of educating children, especially for the sacraments, is ingrained in the psyche of American Catholics and seems acceptable to many people in the church. Many reasons have been offered as to why the paradigm shift has not occurred: secularism, materialism, indifference,

time constraints, relativism, and the persuasiveness and acceptance of religious pluralism. While all of these factors have hampered efforts toward making adult faith formation the central focus of our catechetical efforts, another factor must be considered: Many parishes lack the desire, support and courage needed to implement and sustain an active adult faith formation program.

## SUCCESSFUL ADULT PROGRAMS

In his 1993 *Living Light* article “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: The Foundation of Adult Religious Education,” Neil A. Parent names four attributes that help contribute to the success of adult faith formation in the parish: leadership with vision, a sense of mission, hospitality and welcome, and an accepting learning environment. All of these qualities will help adult faith formation thrive.

When I surveyed parishes that had large attendance at classes and programs for adults, I noticed that in all successful parishes the programs had the explicit backing of the pastor through pulpit announcements. The leadership had a vision that an educated laity could enhance parish activities and lead to evangelization in the local community.

Parishes that have a clear mission to the community and the world are able to invite adults to participate in activities on behalf of justice. These activities, which are particularly attractive to young adults, give the parish a sense of purpose and credibility.

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*Often opportunities are so tightly structured that they are no longer good learning experiences for adults.*

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Parishes that provide a sense of welcome and hospitality make the decision to participate in adult catechesis less fearful and more inviting. It is not uncommon for adults to attend adult faith formation activities alone, since many find it difficult to find others who will join them. Thus, when attendees are greeted, introduced to others, and made to feel welcomed, they will share this others and more people will be willing to attend.



The last attribute that Parent names is a quality of the learning environment: one that is accepting — not afraid of questions. In many parishes today, we strive for calm and quiet, not wanting to chance causing unrest through open questions or the sharing of experiences and insights. In such an environment, people's questions, observations and personal wisdom gained through reflection are often feared and avoided. Certain topics are treated as taboo and discussion is discouraged. Often gossip and denunciation will follow a program where open discussion was welcomed, creating headaches for pastors and catechetical leadership. The messiness of these situations has often persuaded parishes to make adult faith formation opportunities rare; and when they do occur, they are so tightly structured that they are no longer good learning experiences for adults.

### PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

In order for adult catechesis to thrive and be informative, formative and transformative, catechists of adults must know how to implement principles of adult learning. Educators are generally agreed on the following principles:

- adults are autonomous and self-directed
- adults possess a wealth of experiences and knowledge that they want to draw from and build upon
- adults are goal oriented and desire learning that will help them meet these goals
- adults want a reason for learning something
- adults desire something that is practical and has immediate application
- adults need to be treated with respect in their interactions with one another in an environment that is physically and psychologically comfortable

As practitioners of adult faith formation, we must ensure that our programs will respect and emulate these principles.

The *National Directory for Catechesis* notes that the way we catechize people must respect a twofold fidelity. "On the one hand, it must be faithful to God and to his Revelation; on the other, it must respect the liberty and promote the active participation of those being catechized" (p. 94). Jesus gave us the example of how to balance respect

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*Because adults come to our programs with a diversity of beliefs and backgrounds, adult catechetical programs can end up polarized.*

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for the liberty of people and the persuasiveness of truth while he walked along with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35). Jesus met the disciples on the road to Emmaus where they were. His methodology proceeded in a sequence, starting with the learners' own ideas and preconceptions. As catechists of adults we must begin by accepting adults where they are, noting their present understanding and interpretations. Then we must share the key principles and beliefs of our faith tradition and relate them to their lives.

In adult faith formation programs it is essential that we accept and respect where people are in both their intellectual and their faith development. The U.S. bishops note in *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, "Our programs and ministries must be in touch with people's real circumstances and concerns. Just as Jesus did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we must journey with people, listen to them, share our faith, help them to find in the Good News the answer to their hearts' deepest question, and prepare them to live as Jesus' disciples" (No. 27).

Because adults come to our programs with a diversity of beliefs and backgrounds, adult catechetical programs can end up polarized. In

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their 1998 draft of their pastoral letter on adult faith formation, the bishops wrote, “While many Catholics are at peace in the Church, others experience a great sense of polarization, mutual distrust and opposition. Some are accused of moving too fast and of heresy, others are accused of moving too slowly and resisting the Spirit. This conflict, sometimes strident, consumes much pastoral energy (No. 11).

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*An effective way to reach adults  
is to acquaint them with the  
“stages of spiritual growth”*

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In our church today, people have different theological and pastoral perspectives. We cannot deny that these conflicts exist. The challenge for the catechist of adults is to help the adults respect others’ interpretations and experiences and to assist all learners see the truth that can be potentially found in each of their understandings.

#### ADULT AGES AND STAGES

An effective way to reach adults is to acknowledge the “stages of spiritual growth” and acquaint adults with these stages.

Christian adults do not in fact share one static faith and people who claim the same Christian faith often differ in their interpretations of it. These facts call catechists to explore the theories of faith development. Although most practitioners are aware of the seminal work of James Fowler, they may find his work overwhelming. I would recommend that adult faith formation coordinators and catechists attend to the work of M. Scott Peck, M.D. who has adapted Fowler’s work, identifying four stages that are easily understandable and adaptable for adult faith formation. Peck names his four stages of spiritual growth: 1) *Chaotic/Antisocial*; 2) *Formal/Institutional* 3) *Skeptic/Individual*; 4) *Mystic/Communal*.

Stage I, the *Chaotic/Antisocial* stage, is marked by an undeveloped spirituality. This is the stage of most children; however, some adults may be in this stage as well. These people are self-centered, incapable of truly loving and giving to others. Peck calls them antisocial since even though they may pretend to be loving, their relationships are usually self-serving. They are chaotic since, having not found meaning, the only thing that governs them is their own will. This stage is marked by “lawlessness.” Adults in this stage may be in trouble with the law or with others; or they may ascend to leadership positions seeking power, since they have no qualms about doing whatever it takes to get to the top.

People in Stage II, the *Institutional/Formal* stage, need an adherence to an institution for their governance. Peck believes many churchgoers fall into this stage since many people are attached to the forms rather than the essence of their religion. Peck notes that it is the rituals and rules of religion that are responsible for their liberation

from chaos. So it is no wonder that people at this stage of their spiritual development become so threatened when people claim the supremacy of conscience and are able to bend or dismiss the established rules. Many people in this stage, attached to forms and definitions, are put into turmoil when they have to adapt to changes or new perspectives. People in this stage see everything in terms of black and white, and tend to adhere to the “letter of the law.” Fundamentalists of all faiths tend to fall in this stage. They tend to be legalistic and image God as a transcendent harsh judge.

The third stage Peck calls *Skeptic, Individual*. People in this stage doubt many of the forms and beliefs that they learned in Stage II. They may be agnostics or even atheists; however, many are just indifferent. They are not antisocial; they are often deeply involved in and committed to social causes. They generally still seek goodness and truth, but without organized religion. They tend to be scientific minded and desire proof before giving their allegiance, living by the “law of reason.” Although churches fear people in this stage, we need to be open to these people and their questions, observations, and critiques if we desire to truly evangelize.

Peck calls the last stage *Mystic/Communion*. People in this stage see a unity and interconnectedness in the universe. They understand humanity as one community with more sameness than difference. They would give credence to what we Catholics call the Community of Saints. They view God as a loving presence who wills peace and justice for all people without favoritism. They acknowledge that one can never know the reason for all things, and they view life as a mystery that they must try to accept. If people in Stage III search deeply enough they will inevitably run into mystery, which will help them get a glimpse of the transcendent nature of the universe. The more people search for meaning the more they will move into the mystery of life and find what they discover quite similar to many of the stories and myths they rejected in Stage II. The people in this last stage live by the “spirit of the law.”

Obviously, people in different stages may encounter each other and conflict may ensue. The conflicts that adult faith formation programs may encounter tend to arise from disagreements between persons in Stage II and Stage IV. Whereas the people in Stage II will view things in “black and white” terms or according to the “letter of the law,” the people in Stage IV will be comfortable with life’s ambiguities and thus advocate living according to the “spirit of the law.” The church must also be mindful of the many people in Stage III, who are often estranged from the church in her evangelization efforts. Efforts should be made to reach out to these people through personal invitation and through targeted marketing. These “Stages of Spiritual Growth” are only one tool that we may utilize when trying to journey with people starting from where they are — as Jesus did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. (For a fuller treatment of the subject, see M. Scott Peck’s *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, Chapter IX.)

## FINDING THE COURAGE

If adult faith formation is to be the principle form of catechesis in our parishes, time, effort, determination and courage are needed. Pastoral leadership needs to be comfortable with discussion and disagreements. If we only employ lectures or follow written scripts the real learning that we hope for will not occur. Adults need to be treated like adults with their experience and insights invited and respected. They need to be able to share these insights in an environment that is safe and respectful.

This does not mean that catechists need to shy away from presenting the teachings of the church. On the contrary, catechists must teach the truths of the faith given through the church's magisterium. Catholic adults have a right to know the fullness of their church's teachings given it through the Scriptures and Tradition. However, catechesis for adults must reflect, as the *National Directory for Catechesis* says, that "the Church's proclamation of the Gospel has been both progressive and patient, as was her Master's, respecting the freedom of individuals and taking into consideration their 'slowness to believe'" (p.93).

If Jesus was able to freely invite people to share their views, and sometimes not agree with their answers, we must also. Jesus came

and taught adults. His ministry was met by acceptance and also rejection. The teaching ministry of the apostles was sometimes accepted and sometime rejected. In the early church, arguments arose over the exact nature of the rightful Christian way (read the argument between Peter and Paul in Galatians 2). If we are to proclaim the Gospel to adults, we must accept the fact that it will not be easy. Conflicts and disagreements will ensue. It may get messy and ugly; we need to accept that. Our tradition attests to this fact. But if we ever hope to see adult faith formation as the "chief form of catechesis," we will need to have the courage and determination to pursue this goal even in the midst of hardship, disagreements and the messiness that will follow.

*Dr. James R. Sheehan is diocesan director of religious education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn.*

## FOR YOUR REFERENCE

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# PRESS RELEASE

## New Conference Model Debuted at NCCL Conference in Chicago

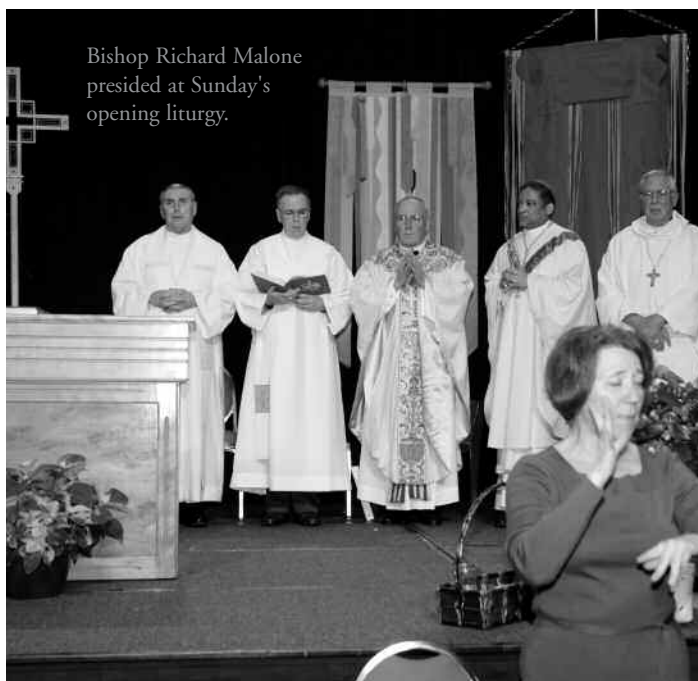
By Frank Koob

### SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 30

Chicago broke an historic drought as members and guests arrived on April 30 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel. Drenched and travel weary, they gathered for the evening opening session and liturgy.

Earlier in the day, Our Sunday Visitor treated those already in the hotel to a delicious breakfast and a presentation by Phil Lenahan, the author of *Seven Steps to Becoming Financially Free*. His book is the basis for OSV's new comprehensive catechetically sound Catholic personal finance program, a very practical contribution to the arena of adult catechesis.

Some made the most of a rainy afternoon to visit Chicago sites. Others participated in two pre-conference offerings. Mary Therese



Bishop Richard Malone presided at Sunday's opening liturgy.

Johnson, OP, provided "Moving into the Moment," a unique transitioning workshop designed to help participants move from the busyness of their lives and activities into the conference — all in a prayerful setting. Dave Durand of ProBalance, Inc., and author of *Time Management for Catholics* offered "Time Management for Catechetical Leaders and Perpetual Motivation." In the registration area, the upbeat sounds of child and teen choirs entertained and inspired attendees gathering for the opening session.

Sunday evening's liturgy was a moving kickoff for the conference theme, "Catechesis and Culture: Challenge and Hope." Representatives of the six dioceses of the Province of Chicago led in the liturgical ministers. Each presented a symbol of the rich history of Catholicism in the local communities. Preceding each of the diocesan representatives were persons in ethnic dress — Polish, Venezuelan, African, Filipino, Indian, and Irish. These represented the diversity of cultures that comprise the local churches.

Bishop Richard Malone of Portland, Maine, presided at the liturgy, along with concelebrants Bishop Joseph Imesch of Joliet, Illinois, and Bishops Joseph Perry and Francis Kane, Auxiliary bishops for Chicago. Bishop Malone presented for those assembled an outstanding homily that tied the readings of the day and the challenges of catechetical ministry together.

GIA Publications, Inc., provided the musicians for the liturgy and the conference. Tony Alonzo led the musical presentations at the liturgy aided by instrumentation and song from Chicago area directors of religious education and the St. Terrence Parish choir. For prayer on the following days, Tony Alonzo was joined by Michael Mahler, also courtesy of GIA.

### MONDAY, MAY 1

For many of the participants, Monday was the highlight of the conference.





The day was the debut for a new format developed by the planning committee co-chaired by Lorraine DeLuca of Beaumont, Texas, and Maruja Sedano of Chicago. The day was designed to enable concentrated study and reflection on the conference theme, “Catechesis and Culture: Challenge and Hope.” Two keynoters were asked to give extended presentations during the morning and then in the afternoon continue with applications and implications of their morning talks. These afternoon sessions were followed by a panel discussion featuring the two presenters and three respondents.

Michael Paul Gallagher, SJ, spoke on “Culture: Faith’s Friend or Foe.” Fr. Gallagher is professor of fundamental theology and dean of the faculty of theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. He is author of *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*. Among his many ideas, Gallagher encouraged catechists to take time to form relationships with those being catechized, in the cultural milieu in which they reside, while presenting them with the challenges of the Gospel message and Catholic beliefs and way of life.

Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, presented “An Evangelizing Church: Seismic Shifts in Catechesis.” Fr. Deck is the president of the Loyola Institute for Spirituality in Orange, California. He is the co-founder and first president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States. Deck stated that catechesis is about relationships. It is at its best situated in the context of the faith as lived in families and communities. It is inspired, motivated, and energized by the total holistic experience of God. This holistic approach will provide a faith formation that goes beyond doctrinal literacy.

The panel discussion moderated by Black Bergen of Sadlier presented reflections and questions from panelists Sharon Horgan, Alejandro Aguilera-Tutus, and Rosalind Sanders. Fathers Gallagher

and Deck fielded those questions and then responded to questions from the audience. This process enabled attendees to appreciate the unique perspectives of the two keynoters and the common ground they both shared.

Colleges and universities took advantage of another innovation on Monday. They were invited to take tables for the whole day in the pre-function area to display programs of interest for the formation of catechetical leaders and catechists. Their representatives fielded inquiries from those interested in course work and programs for themselves and for those they serve back home.

An NCCL business meeting began the day. Slates of candidates for this year’s board elections presented their platforms to the gathered members. President Anne Comeaux and Joseph Swiss, at-large member of the Board, oriented members to the details of the election process with the distribution of ballots on Tuesday and the election itself Wednesday.

Monday ended with the fantastic Sadlier-sponsored “Taste of Chicago” with Chicago-style food and entertainment. Sister Rosa Sister Monique Peña, OP, received the F. Sadlier Dinger Award for outstanding contributions in the field of catechesis.

## TUESDAY, MAY 2

The Exhibit Hall opened, offering booths of sixty vendors of catechetical texts, goods and services. Dedicated exhibit times provided ample opportunities for conversations with exhibitors. Beyond the exhibit hall, some of the vendors also took advantage of opportunities to meet with interested parties, such as the publishers’ showcases offered during lunch on Monday and lunchtime roundtables on Tuesday.

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Two rounds of breakout sessions offered presentations on topics related to the conference theme and other areas of interest. Two more rounds were offered on Wednesday.

Among the theme-related sessions were “The Two Feet of Social Justice” by Adrienne Curry, director of Chicago’s Catholic Relief Services; “Working with Hispanic Immigrants: the Search for the Ninety-Nine Sheep” by Fr. Pat Murphy, CS, animator for Hispanic ministry for the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kansas; “Cinema Divina” by Sr. Rose Pacatte, FSP, director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies; and “Celebrating Faith with the Millennial Generation” offered by Dobie Moser, director of youth ministry for the Diocese of Cleveland.

Breakouts of general interest included “Sacraments of Initiation: Providing a Vision for the Whole Parish” by D. Todd Williamson, director of Chicago’s Office of Divine Worship; “Implementing the *National Directory for Catechesis* Locally” by Daniel Mulhall, associate secretary of catechesis and inculturation for the USCCB; and “Building a Better Brain” offered by Br. Robert Bimonte, FSC, executive director of the elementary department of the NCEA.

Directors of diocesan offices had their own “Leadership Seminar” spread over the four breakout sessions. Simone Campbell, SSS, of NETWORK in Washington, DC, offered this engaging mini-workshop.

Roundtables, which have been a feature at recent NCCL conferences, took place during Tuesday’s lunch break. This year, over sixty topics were presented to interest groups, and most were given twice so participants would have an opportunity to sit in on more than one topic.

This year, Tuesday night was designated the free evening. Some headed for Chicago destinations for food and entertainment, while others dined locally. “Club NCCL,” another innovation this year, developed to provide an evening of entertainment for those who chose to stay around the hotel, presented music and dance. The Honors Jazz Band from St. Patrick High School in Chicago performed, as did the parish dance troupe Grupo Folklorico Quetzal and two contemporary Catholic soloists sponsored by Heartbeat Records — Kara Klein and Jaime Thietten.



Dancing at the Sadlier event on Monday evening.

Newly elected officers Fr. David Loftus, Dr. Lorraine DeLuca, Mary Ann Ronan, and Janet Schaffler, OP.



### WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

The day's business meeting consisted of the election of officers. It took three votes and a special meeting of the NCCL Board to declare the winners. Officers for the next three years are Mary Ann Ronan of Phoenix, president; Rev. David Loftus of Los Angeles, vice-president; Janet Schaffler, OP, from Detroit, secretary; Lorraine DeLuca from Beaumont, Texas, treasurer.

Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago, led morning prayer and addressed the assembly. He situated catechetics in the teaching office of the church, alongside theology and apologetics. He thanked those assembled for dedicating themselves to this important ministry. Our teaching must be Christocentric, he said. All human experience must be measured in the light of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ — a difficult task at best, and much more difficult in our times.

Two more sessions of breakouts were scheduled for the day, with some again developing the conference theme of "Catechesis and Culture" and others of more general interest.

During the afternoon general session, Louise Akers, SC, presented "Diversity's Challenge, Call and Gifts." Sr. Akers is the former social concerns director for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. She is also director of the social action office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. She reminded her audience that there is

deep-rooted holiness in all cultures. This sense of the diversity of spiritualities leads to an awareness of the complexities of both interpersonal relationships and institutional policies.

The planning committee for next year's NCCL Conference made traveling to Columbus, Ohio, the more attractive by sharing travel videos about what that city has to offer for members in April, 2007.

The annual NCCL Awards Banquet took place Wednesday evening. Neil Parent, executive director of NCCL, directed the festivities. Bishop Joseph Imesch of Joliet gave the invocation. The NCCL 2006 Catechetical Award was given to Sr. Maureen Shaughnessy. Currently the general superior of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth at Convent Station, New Jersey, Sr. Shaughnessy has made countless contributions to catechetics over the years. Her passion for adult faith formation showed during her years a member of the diocesan religious education office in the diocese of Patterson, New Jersey. She brought that dedication to the years she served as assistant secretary for catechesis and leadership formation at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington. She convened the National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education (NACARE) and was largely responsible for the inception and fulfillment for the bishops' pastoral plan for adult faith forma-

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tion, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. She served, as well, on the USCC subcommittee on the implementation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. She has traveled to three continents to study and share catechesis. This award is richly deserved.

Beside the Catechetical Award, two additional awards were given. Don Kurre, Director of the Office of Religious Education of the Diocese of Grand Island, Nebraska, received the Technology Award. Always on the cutting edge, Don has been willing to share his extensive knowledge of blogs and wikis, as well as the many survival tips and techniques he has acquired over the years in harnessing the power technology offers catechetical ministry. Jack McBride, associate director of the Office of Religious Education for the Diocese of Madison, Wisconsin, was given the Distinguished Service Award. He contributed frequently to adult faith formation projects with both the Bishops Conference and the NCCL. Notably, McBride was project manager and general editor of the Leaders Guide for *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. He always could be counted on to keep adult formation issues in the forefront.

#### THURSDAY, MAY 4

David Walsh was the final keynoter. He presented “The Test for the Modern Church.” Dr. Walsh is the president and founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family based in Minneapolis. A frequent guest on network talk shows, he is a noted expert on the impact of media on children and the factors that influence school performance, literacy and violence prevention.



Sue Grenough and Richard Drabik meet at the conference.



F. Sadlier Dinger Award winner Rosa Monique Peña, OP, with William Sadlier Dinger, Sr., and Frank Sadlier Dinger.

He shared with the audience an informative explanation of the science of the developing human brain. Particularly revealing was the amount of development still going on in the brains of adolescents, particularly in the prefrontal area where decision making and judgment occur. The implication is that adolescents need both guidance and defined limits to help make up for this immaturity. Coupling an understanding of this physiology with awareness that our society is developing a culture of violence and disrespect, partly due to media influence, the church is challenged to exercise its guiding and countercultural roles.

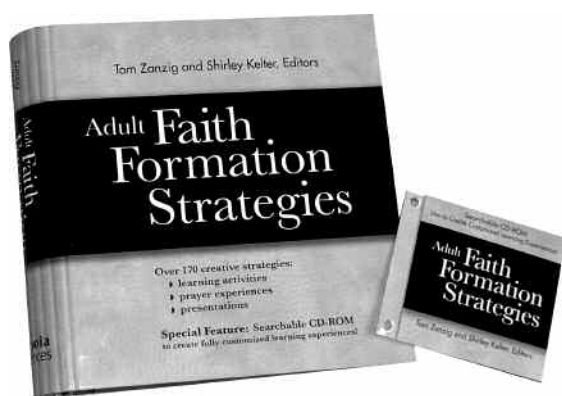
The day and the conference ended with a closing prayer and ritual sending forth presided over by Bishops Francis Kane and Joseph Perry of Chicago. The bishops and those assembled said prayers of blessing over the board members ending their terms of service and commissioned the new board with the newly elected officers as they begin their three-year terms.

Reluctantly ending these wonderful five days, participants already were anticipating next year as they greeted old friends with “See you in Columbus!” They made their way to hotel checkout, transportation for departures, and the trip back home bringing a renewed spirit to their ministries.

*Frank Koob is publications manager and marketing director in the Office for Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Chicago.*

# STRATEGIES, NOT RECIPES

*Adult Faith Formation Strategies*, Tom Zanzig and Shirley Kelter, Editors.  
Madison, Wisconsin: Metanoia Resources, 2006.



Reviewed by Cullen W. Schippe

Over the many years I have spent in catechetical publishing, the elephant in the room has always been adult faith formation. In countless surveys, adult catechesis was near the top of every wish list and near the bottom of every reality check. The advent of the RCIA movement improved the picture for candidates. The solid work of the National Association for Catholic Adult Religious Education (NACARE) kept awareness high. Whole community catechesis has also made some real adult formation strides. Yet warehouses around the country have been littered with failed programs — in print, audio, video, and even higher tech.

We have come to take for granted that adults learn differently from children. Adult learning is often need-generated, episodic, active, occasional — and not at all programmatic. We have even batted about the neologism *androgogy* to help keep us aware of the distinction between the ways children learn and the ways adults learn. However, when we get down to developing programs or materials for adults, we default to pedagogy and hope for the best.

When I began paging through the hefty binder that houses *Adult Faith Formation Strategies*, I was first struck by the title. This is not a program at all. The book does not contain systematic instruction. Quite the contrary! This resource seems to take all the banter about adult learning to heart and provides a raft of materials to support adult learning and faith formation at a parish level. There is nothing lockstep or formulaic about these materials. Instead, there is great variety, oodles of creativity, and something for everybody.

Many published materials provide recipes for learning. A three-part or five-part lesson plan confines the teachers or facilitators and narrowly guides their presentations. None of that tight formatting hampers the users of materials in this resource. Not only are there seemingly unlimited resources, but also every one of them is either reproducible as is, or (marvelously) can be customized, thanks to a searchable CD-ROM containing editable files. (What will they think of next?)

As I leafed through the seven sections (Jesus and Discipleship, Spirituality, Scripture, Catholic Life and Practice, Sacraments and Liturgy, Morality, Peace and Social Justice), I found myself saying over and over, “I could do that!” or “This will work!” It is obvious that both editors have a background in youth ministry, but they have managed to build on the techniques that are so effective in working with teens and young adults and made a healthy transition to adult learning. The editors are also aware that preparation time is at a premium, and so they have steered clear of complex and demanding preparation and background. This is a bank of quick-start resources that can turn any adult gathering in the parish into a formation opportunity.

Each strategy in the resource is clearly marked as a learning activity, a prayer experience, or a presentation. Some seem to combine elements of all three. Not every strategy in the resource is of equal value or quality. Some do miss the mark a bit. Nonetheless, every parish even remotely interested in providing quality faith formation for its fully initiated adults must have this resource. Although you will not find a complete program here (and remember that is the resource’s *strength*), you will find effective and exciting strategies that will take adult faith formation off the wish list and help you make it an effective reality in your parish!

**Cullen W. Schippe** is former publisher for *Benziger* and now is associate publisher and executive editor for *Today’s Catholic Teacher* and *CATECHIST*.

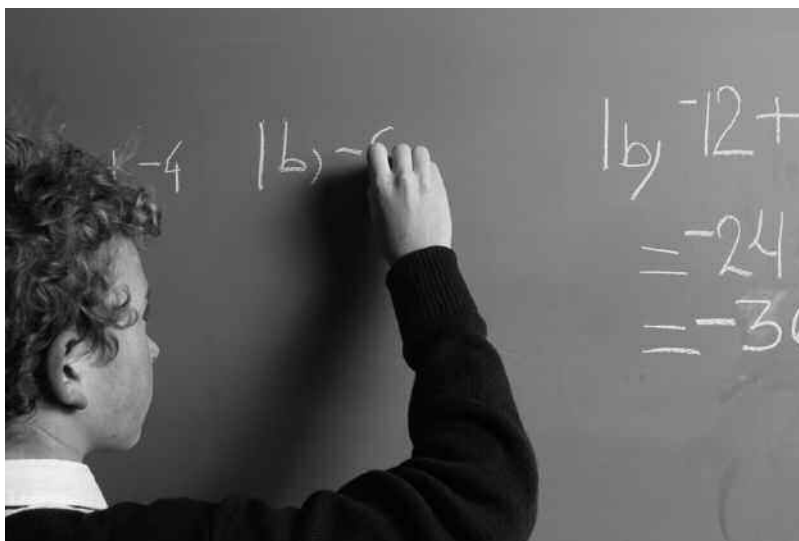
# LESSONS FROM THE CHALKBOARD

By April Dietrich

In the world of catechesis, new innovations are cropping up everywhere. In last issue's tech article I mentioned some of the wonderful technologies that have blessed (and sometimes cursed) us over the past few decades. It seems that in this decade the possibilities are emerging exponentially; it's startling how our options for transmitting the Gospel message are growing.

Affordable laptops and LCD projectors have made PowerPoint a commonly used tool. Handheld PCs are able to not only store information, but can also be adapted, with a neat little gizmo, to present a PowerPoint as well. Virtual classrooms abound, and we're only beginning to scratch the surface of on-line learning. IPODs have created a whole new language as well as method for homilists and presenters to broadcast (podcast) their messages for anyone in the world to hear! Who would have ever dreamed that you could access your parish website from your cell phone five years ago? Blogs, wikis and UTube make it possible for people to share their own experiences, ideas and opinions with the entire world. As we stand looking at the future, the possibilities are virtually limitless.

While these ideas allow us to take the Gospel message to a whole new audience, the reality of our lives as catechetical leaders is often the group of participants planted in the seats in front of us: those people waiting for us to give a presentation that will inform, inspire, and transform their very lives. Whether it be an RCIA session, faith formation class, first Eucharist parent meeting, catechist formation, or a national-level keynote, we have an opportunity to use technology to make a great presentation even better.



Remember the days of chalk and chalkboards? I do, all too well (for some reason, as a student, I was always the one asked to go outside and clean the erasers). The chalkboard allowed us as presenters to highlight main points or questions that were integral to the session: little snippets of information, not much more. We wrote on the boards the points we wanted our participants to record and remember. We could draw diagrams to clarify our ideas, and we could interact with the participants with question and answer. The limitations of the chalkboard, among them

renewability but not automatic recordability, are actually limits that are helpful to us today.

PowerPoint has become today's chalkboard. However, as the last Tech Center article pointed out, there are certain limits that presenters need to be aware of and observe when necessary. When it comes to PowerPoint, my mantra has become, "Just because I can, doesn't mean I should." The visuals we

use should be enhancements, not distractions; they also should not become the presentation. No matter how great a PowerPoint presentation is, it is no substitute for a well-informed human presenter. *Readers please note: I am talking about informational and formation-al presentations, not prayer experiences.* I've been to outstanding presentations that have used PowerPoint to guide prayer experiences with no active participation from the presenter.

One thing to keep in mind: too many bells and whistles do not enhance; they distract. In creating your visuals, be creative, yes, but be cautiously creative. Texts can and should be highlighted on screen. Slide transitions can make a presentation a little more interesting. Well-connected graphics can illuminate an idea. Beware,

*If your presentation is only flash and no meat, participants will go away hungry.*

though. Too many different transitions, too much print, too many cool but unrelated graphics, or too many moving graphics on a page can overwhelm even the most energetic of audiences, inducing a catatonic-like state. Let your preparation of the material, presenting skills, and lastly, your computer skills be the purveyor of the message, not the other way around. Too much flash and they won't be able to see through to the message. If your presentation is only flash and no meat, participants will go away hungry. PowerPoint is not a substitute for good presenting skills. Another important — no, crucial — trick to have in your bag is *practice*. Know your equipment. If you're borrowing, get there early to set up and practice. Make sure all of your gizmos are in working order and talking nicely to one another. A seamless transition from introduction to production can make a pro look even better; unprepared, even a seasoned pro can look inept.

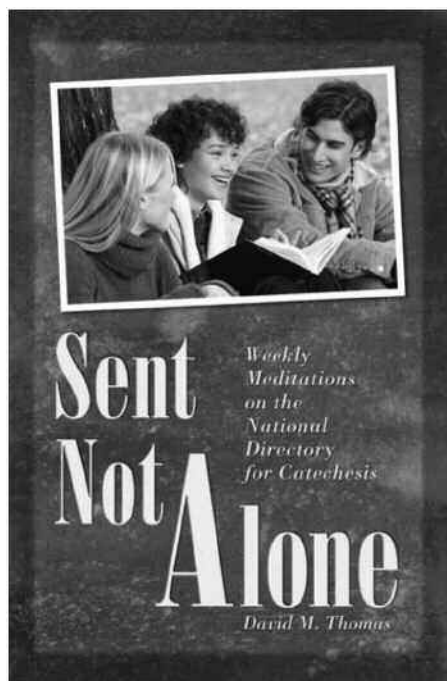
Besides PowerPoint, another innovation presenters can use in sessions are iPods. A little research and one might find not only music to enhance your presentation, but information as well. More and more people are using podcasts to get out their message. Someone out there

may have the same idea as you, put in a different way. Why not get permission and use part of the podcast in your presentation?

In any formational opportunity, follow-up can be helpful: why not record your presentation and podcast or webcast it? One can also make transcripts available on websites, or provide PowerPoint handouts online, including your notes. Information sharing has reached new heights. It's not very difficult to start a wiki, blog, or message board so that others can creatively add their insights to your own follow-up. Where you take it from there is only limited by your imagination!

The art of presenting is not that different than in the past. The mode and methods we use, however, are the future. Chalkboards themselves are still a good reminder, but they will soon be where I once was while cleaning erasers... in the dust.

*April Dietrich* is director of adult catechesis at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Frederick, Maryland and a self-professed geek in training. Please email insights, comments, and suggestions to [Adietrich@stjohn-frederick.org](mailto:Adietrich@stjohn-frederick.org)



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# THE STATE OF ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS TODAY

## A Review of the Literature

By Jeffrey Kaster

*Third in a continuing series of articles exploring facets of adolescent catechesis, following publication of the National Directory for Catechesis*

The two-fold purpose of this article is to review current literature and develop implications and conclusions regarding the state of adolescent catechesis today. The scope of this review was limited because of time and space constraints and is heavily weighted toward sociological research.

### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON ADOLESCENT CATECHESIS

#### A. SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

1. East, T., Eckert, A. M., Kurtz, D., & Singer-Towns, B. (2004). *Effective Practices for Dynamic Youth Ministry*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press.

The Center for Ministry Development and Saint Mary's Press sponsored a national symposium on effective youth ministry practices in Catholic parishes. More than four hundred youth and adults engaged in youth ministry from one hundred parishes were interviewed as part of this qualitative research. The symposium provided summaries of thirty-six key findings from youth, adult youth ministers and parish staff interviews. Five key areas of high impact were summarized, with the first described as "faith formation/adolescent catechesis that is engaging and connected to lives of youth" (p. 1).

2. Ebaugh, H. R. (2005). *Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions*. New York: Springer Science+Business Media, Inc.

This handbook is written for sociologists interested in recent studies and theoretical approaches that relate religious variables to their particular areas of interest. Three chapters especially are important to note. David Sikkink and Jonathan Hill write an in-depth review of the history and politics of education related to religion and review research on Catholic school effectiveness. W. Bradford Wilcox provides an overview of current research on the influence of the family on faith practice. Peter Benson and Pamela Ebstyn King provide one of the best summaries available on current research on youth and religion.

3. Francis, L. J., Robins, M. & Astley, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Religion, Education, and Adolescence: International Empirical Perspectives*. Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press.

A collection of twelve presentations from the 2002 International Seminar on Religious Education and Values that provide securely grounded research into adolescents' views of religion in the United Kingdom, Europe and Israel. Of particular interest are the eight key conclusions the editors identify resulting from this focused collection on adolescence, religion and education. Four of these include: Europe and Israel are not heading toward rapid secularization; religion remains a significant factor in the lives of young Europeans; young people are redefining their religious traditions; and the task of the religious educator is enriched and enabled by the discipline of empirical enquiry that listens to young people themselves (p. 11).

4. Hudson, W. (2002). *Window on Mission: A CHS 2000 Report on Academic and Co-Curricular Programs and Services and Religious Education and Formation*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association.

This report summarizes survey data from a sample of three hundred Catholic high schools. It provides important benchmark data on instructional inputs for adolescent catechesis including staffing, curriculum, assessment and formation. It reports that 88 percent of Catholic high schools require students to take four credits or 480 hours of religious instruction and, on average, perform 51 hours of service.

5. Markuly, M. S. (2002). "Being Faithful-Pursuing Success: Tools for Assessment." *The Living Light*, 38 (3). 61-77.

This text raises two very important questions: How do we really know what religious education outcomes we accomplish and, more importantly, what instructional practices most effectively help accomplish these outcomes? The author argues that pursuing





empirical research and evaluation in adolescent catechesis will set religious education on the slow but steady path of making improvements.

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### *“What is an adolescent Christian disciple?”*

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6. McCorquodale, C., Shepp, V., & Sterten, L. (2004). National Study of Youth and Religion: Analysis of the Population of Catholic Teenagers and Their Parents. A Research Report Produced for the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. Washington, DC: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry.

This research report further analyzes the Catholic-related data from the National Study of Youth and Religion. The study found that many Catholic young people are not served or reached by the church. It also found that participation in parish programming, regular Mass attendance and Catholic school attendance reduces at-risk behaviors in youth and that youth need an evangelizing and a welcoming community.

7. Mitchell, J. & Marriage, S. (eds.). (2003). *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion, and Culture*. New York: T & T Clark.

This text resulted from presentations and conversations at the Third International Conference on Media, Religion and Culture hosted by the University of Edinburgh in July 1999. It explores empirically how religious identity is formed in the current media culture. This text includes helpful annotated bibliographies on media ethics, new media and religion, film and religion and communication and theology. Of particular relevance is Mary E. Hess's chapter on media culture and how to engage media culture in religious education.

8. Roehlkepartain, E., Ebstyne King, P., Wagener, L., & Benson, P. (Eds.). (2006). *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This reference handbook by leading scholars from multiple disciplines (psychology, sociology, medicine, anthropology and education) provides a comprehensive review of current scientific knowledge of adolescent spiritual development. Rev. Dean Borgman asks important questions: “Why aren't congregations having a more profound effect on their children and surrounding communities? How can we get our latest studies and findings into the trenches?” (p. 435). He argues for bringing youth workers and catechetical leaders into dialogue with current research on the spiritual development of adolescents. This text is an excellent resource around which academics, researchers and serious practitioners of adolescent catechesis might engage such a dialogue.

9. Search Institute. (1990, March). *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations. A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life*. Minneapolis, MN: Benson, P. L. & Eklin, C.H.

This 1990 report (available at [www.search-institute.org/downloads](http://www.search-institute.org/downloads)) remains one of the few congregational studies on effective Christian education in the United States. In relation to faith growth and congregational loyalty for both youth and adults, the report concludes, “nothing matters more than effective Christian education” (p. 2).

10. Smith, C. & Lundquist Denton, M. (2005) *Soul Searching. The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teens*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This seminal text reports the comprehensive research findings from the National Study of Youth and Religion ([www.youthandreligion.org/](http://www.youthandreligion.org/)) conducted from July 2002 to March 2003. This study is unique because it utilized random telephone sampling procedures (sample size 3,290) that appear to accurately estimate the population of U.S. teens ages 13-17 and their parents.

The authors note that Catholic youth scored significantly lower than their conservative, mainline or black Protestant peers on

*continued on page 26*



many aspects of religiosity. The authors devote an entire chapter to analyzing Catholic data. They offer five explanations for Catholic teenage religious laxity: 1) demographic differences (Catholics congregate in regions of the country that are less religious); 2) low levels of Catholic parent religiosity; 3) lack of institutional commitment of resources; 4) changes in Catholic schools and CCD; and 5) upward mobility and acculturation (pp. 207-215).

The data on Catholic Hispanic teens suggest a wide disparity exists economically, socially and educationally between Hispanic and white Catholics. Hispanic teens reported a greater frequency of family religious practices, but were less likely than white teens to participate in parish and Catholic school-based religious programs and activities. Instituto Fe y Vida recently published a report analyzing this data, which is available online at [www.feyvida.org](http://www.feyvida.org).

## B. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### *“What adolescent catechetical efforts actually form Christian disciples?”*

1. Duggan, R. D. (2001). The New Constellation of Catechesis. *The Living Light*, 37(4).

Any serious discussion of adolescent catechesis would demand an overall understanding of the theology of catechesis. Mr. Duggan's article outlines five elements in the new paradigm of Catholic catechesis: 1) evangelization as the context in which catechesis is situated; 2) the catechumenate as model for all catechesis; 3) the role of Christian community; 4) the primacy of adult catechesis; and 5) inculturation.

- 2.



Cook, T. J. (2001). *Architects of Catholic Culture: Designing & Building Catholic Culture in Catholic Schools*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association.

Addressing the shift in Catholic schools to lay leadership, this NCEA monograph offers Catholic school principals practical ways to conceptualize their role in building Catholic school culture. It concludes with seven helpful norms for building Catholic culture in schools.

3. Hagarty, M T. & Hagarty, M. J. (2002). “Evangelizing Catechesis and Comprehensive Youth Ministry,” *The Living Light*, 38 (3), 6-20.

The importance of this article rests in that it was the only source found that identifies definitional and conceptual differences in the *General Directory for Catechesis* and *Renewing the Vision*.

4. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. (1997). *General Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* is the official theological reference for catechesis in the Catholic Church. The use of the term “general” in the title is important because it functions as a general point of reference for catechetical content, pedagogy and methodology. It is to be used as a reference tool for creating national catechetical directories that adapt these principles to unique cultural situations. A main point of the document lies in its situating catechesis within the Catholic Church's mission of evangelization.

5. McCarty, R. (ed.) (2005). *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry. Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press.

Utilizing *Renewing the Vision* as its theoretical base, this text compiles a review of current thinking on Catholic youth ministry. Sean Reynolds provides a clear link between leadership for Catholic youth ministry (chapter 17) and the national certification standards for lay ecclesial ministers.

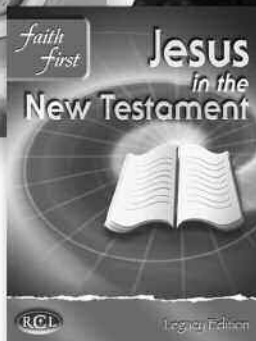
6. National Conference of Catholic Bishops. (1997). *Renewing the Vision. A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*. Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

*Renewing the Vision (RTV)*, the first youth ministry document to be endorsed officially by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, provides the operational vision and goals for youth ministry in the Catholic Church in the United States. It provides a vision for Catholic youth ministry that includes three goals set in a framework called “comprehensive ministry with adolescents.” This framework asserts that it takes a whole church community to accomplish these goals. *RTV* situates adolescent catechesis and evangelization as two of these eight components in its comprehensive framework.

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7. Rolheiser, R. (2004). "Creating an Evangelizing Spirituality Beyond Ecclesial and Theological Maintenance: The Search for a New Missiology within a Secularized Culture." In *Ministry Through the Lens of Evangelization* (pp. 123-135). Washington DC: Secretariat for Evangelization, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

This talk was a major presentation at the North American Institute for Catholic Evangelization, July 9-12, 2003, in Portland, Oregon. Father Rolheiser suggests the problem is not with the programming we do with people who are coming through the church doors, but rather in getting people who have been away for a while to enter the doors. He suggests we need a new paradigm of mission in our parishes concerning evangelization to those not filling the pews currently.

8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2005). *National Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)* applies universal church teaching on evangelization and catechesis as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis* to the contextual setting within the United States. Its three basic purposes are to: 1) provide fundamental theological and pastoral principles; 2) offer guidelines for application in this country; and 3) set forth the nature, purpose, object, tasks, content and methodology of catechesis (p. 17). Chapter 7 includes a section on catechesis of adolescents where it states "effective catechetical programs for adolescents are integrated into a comprehensive program of pastoral ministry for youth" (p. 201).

9. Warren, M. (2002). "Youth Ministry in an Inconvenient Church" and "Cultural Resistance in Youth: Problems and Possibilities." The Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church and Culture, Princeton Theological Seminary Institute for Youth Ministry. Found on the web at: <http://www.ptsem.edu/iym/research/lectures/lectures02.htm>.

Michael Warren gave two challenging lectures in 2002 at the Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church and Culture. In "Youth Ministry in an Inconvenient Church" he challenges youth ministry to think seriously about the meaning of forming adolescent Christian disciples. In "Cultural Resistance in Youth: Problems and Possibilities" Warren addresses how the contexts of peer groups, family and church shape the hearts of young people and questions if youth can find adult faith-filled communities to teach them.

### C. FAITH PRACTICES

1. Bass, D. & Richter, D. (Eds.). (2002). *A Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens* Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books.

"A Way to Live" is a collaborative effort by eighteen adult and eighteen teen authors, written for teens using language and

imagery they can understand easily. Each of the 19 chapters portrays a particular practice in depth and complexity. A free leader's guide is available at <http://www.waytolive.org/>.

2. White, D. F. (2005). *Practicing Discernment with Youth*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press.

David White draws from his research experience at the Youth Theological Initiative to explore a serious new approach to youth ministry involving the faith practice of discernment. White argues that congregations should engage teens in practices that resemble the discernment practiced by Christian communities throughout history.

3. Van Engen, J. (2004). *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans Publishing.

This significant text describes historically how Jews and Christians have been formed in their faith. The authors all use the notion of "practices" as they explore religious formation in catechesis, the study of scripture, rituals, preaching and the ordinary choices of daily life.

### D. FAMILY & ADULT CATECHESIS

1. Regan, J. E. (2002). *Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation*. Chicago: Loyola Press.

This text proposes to move beyond the present configuration of religious education with its focus on children and youth to "reimagine the religious education endeavor from the perspective of the faith formation of the adult community and, in light of that, the formation of children and youth" (p. 12). Ms. Regan argues that to be church in the twenty-first century, dedication to fostering mature, committed adult communities of faith is essential.

2. Cook Everist, N. (2002) *The Church as Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

The purpose of this text is 1) to put forth a vision of the entire parish as a learning community; 2) to help faith communities create and maintain learning environments that facilitate us being different together in a pluralistic world; and 3) to provide a comprehensive guide for religious educators leading a congregation toward fully becoming a learning community.

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*"How might parishes and schools effectively engage and support parents in fostering Christian discipleship practices in their homes?"*

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3. Strommen, M P. & Hardel, R. A. (2000). *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press.

This text, co-authored by one of the deans of youth ministry, Dr. Merton Strommen, proposes a partnership between parents and congregations for faith development in teens. It proposes a new model integrating youth and family ministry.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

One definition of *implication* is the involvement or entanglement of somebody in something. This review of the literature of adolescent catechesis clearly suggests that the current state of adolescent catechesis is an entanglement in negative cultural trends not supporting family religious practices or parish or school catechesis. Adolescent

### *“Is Catholic youth ministry by definition adolescent evangelization and catechesis?”*

catechesis is likewise knotted in competing visions and seriously entangled by a lack of research and assessment of effective practice.

It is important to acknowledge that the literature directly related to adolescent catechesis is sparse. This literature review has been weighted toward social science research into adolescent religious development because much of the outstanding insight is coming from this field of study. Much work and research will be required in the future if adolescent catechesis is to move forward in a serious fashion.

From this literature review, four conclusions can be drawn:

**Conclusion 1: Adolescent catechetical leaders should engage social science data and theory to inform their practice and, specifically, gain competence in effective evaluation of student and parent learning.**

Social science traditionally has paid limited attention to adolescent religious and spiritual development. However, in the last few years there has been a significant increase in social science scholarship related to adolescent religious and spiritual development. A number of new literature reviews in child and adolescent religious and spiritual development provide access to knowledge across disciplines (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006, p. 3). The recent publications of the two major handbooks, “Religion and Social Institutions” (2005) and “Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence” (2006), help move the study of religion and adolescence into the mainstream of social science research. A common concern expressed in this literature is the general lack of knowledge and involvement in social science research and program assessment by practitioners of adolescent catechesis.



Catholic schools have done a much better job of research and program assessment than parishes (Hudson, 2002), but even Catholic school research has focused primarily on academic achievement or benchmarking catechetical inputs. It's important to highlight the significant lack of published research evaluating the effectiveness of adolescent catechetical programming or processes in forming Christian disciples. This literature review leaves unanswered the essential question facing adolescent catechesis: “What is working?”

**Conclusion 2: Adolescent catechesis should more effectively communicate to parents and teens the empirical data demonstrating positive outcomes associated with adolescent engagement in religious practices.**

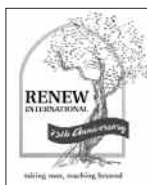
There is a growing body of sociological literature that establishes positive outcomes of religious practice for youth. Religious involvement is associated positively with overall well-being; positive life attitudes and hope for the future, altruism and service, resources that assist risk reduction, well-being, thriving, resiliency and coping, school success (particularly in Catholic schools), physical health and positive identity formation.

Religious practice is negatively associated with alcohol and drug use, crime, violence and delinquency, depression, danger seeking and risk-taking, and early sexual activity (“Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions,” p. 134).

The good news is that much social science research has established empirically great benefits associated with adolescent participation in faith practices in their families, schools and parishes.

*continued on page 31*

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## CATECHETICAL LEADER

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**Conclusion 3: Adolescent catechetical efforts should have a primary focus on engaging parents in faith practices.**

The catechetical alarm bell started ringing when the data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (Smith, 2005) indicated Catholic teens “stand out among the U.S. Christian teenagers as consistently scoring lower on most measures of religiosity” and that Catholic youths scored “5 to 25 percentage points lower than their conservative, mainline, and black Protestant peers on many of a variety of religious beliefs, practices, experiences, commitments, and evaluations” (p. 194). Mr. Smith concludes that Catholic teens are faring rather badly when compared to other Christian teens. He argues that the majority of U.S. teenagers “tend to be quite like their parents when it comes to religion” (p. 68).

Chris Boyatzis, David Dollahite and Loren Marks review family research in the “Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence” (2006). They conclude, with numerous other researcher, that: “The family is probably the most potent influence — for better or worse — on children’s spiritual and religious development” (p. 305). They identified ten central processes families use to facilitate religious and spiritual development among family members:

Relying on God for support and guidance; living religion at home; resolving conflict with prayer, repentance, and forgiveness; loving and serving others in the family, faith community and larger community; overcoming challenges through shared faith; abstaining from proscribed activities and substances; sacrificing time, money, comfort and convenience for religious/spiritual reasons; nurturing spiritual observance and growth in family members through teaching, example and discussion; obeying God; and putting faith or family ahead of personal interests. (p. 299)

The social science research indicates that the most significant factor in the religious development of adolescents is the religiosity of their parents. The need to actively engage parents in adolescent catechesis is one of the most significant conclusions of this literature review.

**Conclusion 4: Catholic youth ministry should revise its vision to align it with the vision of evangelization and catechesis outlined in the GDC and NDC.**

Church documents agree that adolescent catechesis seeks to form adolescent Christian disciples. But nowhere in these documents is a clear profile of adolescent Christian discipleship defined. Perhaps this lack of definitional clarity fuels confusion about the distinctive roles religious education, youth ministry and Catholic schools play in adolescent catechesis. Confusion also exists in the definitions of the terms catechesis and evangelization.

The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* designates evangelization as the church’s essential mission in the world and situates catechesis as one function within it. *Renewing the Vision (RTV)*, which was published prior to the *GDC*, does not define evangelization and catechesis this way. It locates evangelization and catechesis



as two of eight components within the framework of comprehensive youth ministry. The theoretical problem is that *RTV* does not define comprehensive Catholic youth ministry within the context of the church’s mission of evangelization and catechesis. The *National Directory for Catechesis (NDC)*, published after both *RTV* and the *GDC*, acknowledges the role of comprehensive youth ministry in adolescent catechesis, but it does not resolve the confusion highlighted above. With such a clear emphasis on catechesis situated within the context of evangelization in both the *GDC* and *NDC*, it may well be time for an alignment of vision for youth ministry.

**REMAINING QUESTIONS**

Challenging questions remain. What is an adolescent Christian disciple? What adolescent catechetical efforts actually form Christian disciples? How might parishes and schools effectively engage and support parents in fostering Christian discipleship practices in their homes? What impact does the instruction provided by Catholic schools or parish programs have on forming adolescent Christian disciples? Is Catholic youth ministry by definition adolescent evangelization and catechesis?

This literature review of adolescent catechesis did not untangle adequate responses to these questions, but it may provide an agenda for the future. Perhaps a fitting conclusion concerning the state of adolescent catechesis in the United States comes from the European research of Rev. Leslie Francis, Dr. Mandy Robins, and Jeff Astley (2005). They conclude that religion remains a significant factor in the lives of European teens. They further suggest that adolescent catechesis will be enriched by the discipline of empirical study that listens to young people themselves.

*Jeffrey Kaster is director of Youth in Theology and Ministry, Saint John’s University School of Theology-Seminary, Collegeville, Minnesota (email).*

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*“How might parishes and schools effectively engage and support parents in fostering Christian discipleship practices in their homes?”*

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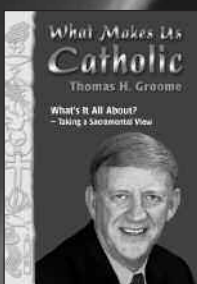


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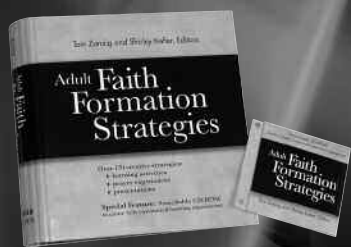
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# BEING, KNOWING, AND SAVOIR-FAIRE

by Jo Rotunno

The *General Directory for Catechesis* reminds us of the three most important aspects of good catechist formation: being, knowing, and *savoir-faire* (no. 238). These three qualities are reflected in the new *National Directory for Catechesis* in the criteria it lists for the initial formation of catechists (p. 237). *Echoes of Faith* intentionally attends to all three of these important aspects of formation. The *Echoes* project is divided into these same three categories: The Catechist (being), Theology (knowing), and Methodology (*savoir-faire*). These categories are being retained in the new *Echoes of Faith Plus*.

**Being** refers to who we are as catechists — persons intimately related to God, empowered by the Spirit to give witness to the Gospel of his son, Jesus Christ. Accordingly, those of us charged with the formation of catechists know that our first responsibility is to nurture their spiritual formation. *Roles of the Catechist* and *The Person*

*of the Catechist* deal directly with this formation. *Getting Started as a Catechist*, while a more practical jump-start for beginning catechists, includes the witness of several lifetime catechists and reveals their respect for and dedication to their learners.

**Knowing** describes the importance of being well-informed about our Catholic faith — its Scriptures and tradition — and about the needs of the audience we serve. The five theology modules do this beautifully. There is a module for each pillar of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and one introducing the catechist to sacred Scripture. A module called *Introduction to the Learner* informs catechists of the developmental needs of those they will catechize.

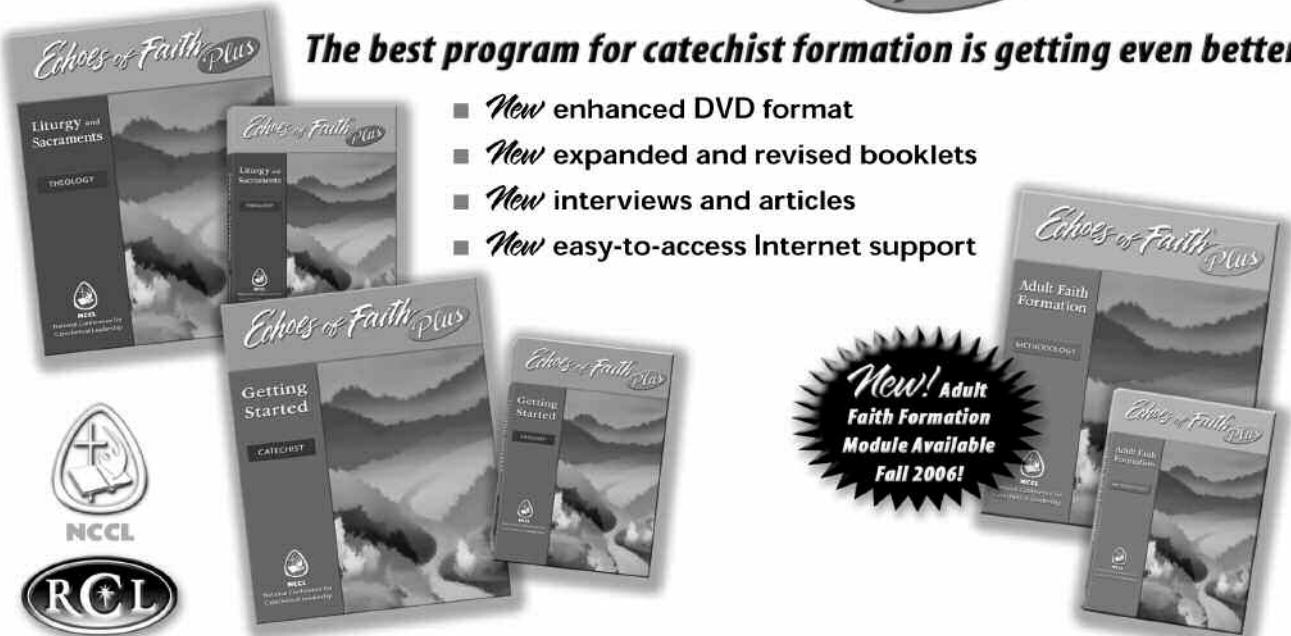
**Savoir-faire** describes the “how-to” of catechesis. Sometimes these nuts and bolts are what the catechist wants to know first. Yet good catechists know that practical skills may fall flat when if are not

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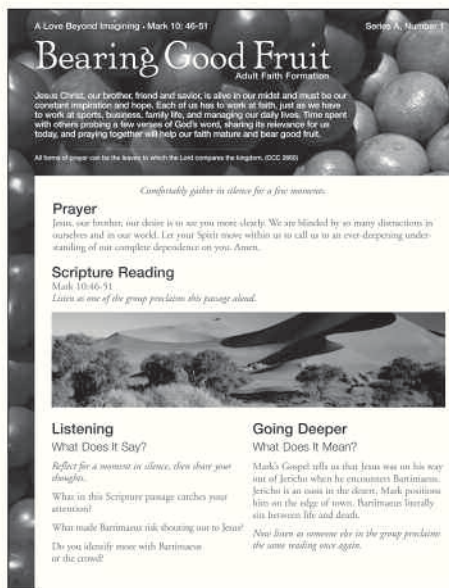
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ECHOES OF FAITH *continued from page 32*

rooted in a strong personal faith reflection and knowledge of the needs of one's learners. There are currently four methodology modules addressing effective strategies for various elementary and junior high grade levels. This fall we will add a fifth module to this series when we introduce *Methods for Adult Faith Formation, the first module of the new Echoes of Faith Plus*.

Now is a good time to begin your planning for next year's catechist formation. Don't yield to the temptation to settle for less than the best in your catechists because you don't think they have the time for formation, or won't respond if you call them forth. Where would we be today if Jesus had done the same? Ask your catechists to reflect on who they would be today if the disciples of Jesus had not said "Yes." If you are new to catechetical leadership or simply haven't looked at *Echoes of Faith* for a while, consider this resource to help to make them the best that they can be.

**Jo Rotunno** is Director of Creative Development at RCL – Resources for Christian Living, which produced the *Echoes of Faith* project for NCCL. She has worked in catechist formation for the past twenty-five years. Her column on catechist formation using *Echoes of Faith* will appear in coming issues of *Catechetical Leader*.



## TOGETHER AS EQUALS *continued from page 9*

At each visit to Gracias, a variety of parish organizations, including the parish council, met with the Northern visitors. In addition to the variety of prayer groups, family groups, choirs, and catechetical opportunities that the Northern parish was familiar with from its own experience, the Southern parish introduced us to other ways to minister.

The Honduran parish organized groups that visited each family in each of the 107 communities up to ten times to invite their participation in a variety of ways: There were outreach groups to the local prison where meals were taken each Sunday during visiting hours. Baptism teams shared their stories of catechizing families before their children could be baptized. Literacy teams were organized so that the newly educated shared their skills with those who had not yet learned to read and write. There were road crews who organized up to four hundred volunteers at a time to clear fallen rocks from dirt roads and fill in potholes because the government could or would not do needed roadwork.

The parish trained catechists to visit each community. Those catechists with the most training were given geographical areas to visit on a regular basis. To counter a culture of “machismo” in South and Central America, special emphasis was given to women and their empowerment. Women were trained to work with women to help them understand the workings of their bodies and the importance of their voices in the community. “In a true community each voice must be heard,” the young pastor said.

We prized each of these experiences and tucked each away in our hearts. We invited a team from Gracias to come north to participate in the faith life of our parish and to visit each ministry and share their stories and lives with us.

### WELCOMING HONDURAN VISITORS

The return visits were not easy to organize. The first hurdle was to get a team into the United States. Because many of the Honduran parishioners were subsistence farmers without land or steady jobs, it was up to the Northern community to ensure that the visitors would return home. We had to get help from our local congressman and his staff. Each visit became easier as it became clear that the delegates did indeed return home.

We found hosts for the visitors, often among our Spanish-speaking parishioners, and prepared each ministry for a visit. The delegation from the South challenged the Northern parish: “Where are your poor?” “Why don’t your families sit down for meals together?” “Doesn’t anyone walk?” But they also saw what we often overlooked in the everyday of our own community: the number and variety of ministries, the meaningful liturgies, the participation and willingness to give, the beauty of the children, the opportunities for education, the availability of health care.

### GIFTS GO BOTH WAYS

It is difficult for two communities to come together in faith, to share with each other on a level deeper than that of one party giving and the other receiving. If we are truly to understand the universality of the church, we must know that we are responsible not only for our actions here with those around us but also those actions that impact the lives of our brothers and sisters throughout the globe. To come together with a community in the developing world can be a step in learning about ourselves, our God, how faith is lived in other places, and some of the workings of the world.

“The relationship allows us to see beyond ourselves and enables us to learn from them for our own growth and development as a faith community,” our pastor said after returning from the first trip to Honduras.

The faces of real people impacted by international debt will spur us to learn about its history and current reality. The struggles of our

friends — brothers and sisters in Christ — can help us see beyond our own gain in trade agreements to how do those agreements impact the poor of the world. The questions of who benefits and who pays lead us to unravel seemingly complicated issues when we know real people who pay each day with their lives for the benefits we take for granted. For it is only when we see that we can change and only when we open our eyes that we can see.

We need to want to open our eyes. Through relationships with those who are poor, we are encouraged to keep our eyes open and to continue to ask questions both simple and difficult as we live lives that are forever changed.

*Susan Thompson works for the Medical Mission Sisters, Alliance for Justice, in Washington, DC. She has been involved in work for global mission for more than twenty years. Contact her at [susanstarrstompson@juno.com](mailto:susanstarrstompson@juno.com).*

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## WHOLE PARISH INVOLVEMENT

Having the participation of these varied organizations added a depth and richness to the project as well as made it a parish project rather than a charity. Each ministry approached the project in its own style with its own particular gifts.

### SOCIAL CONCERNS

The social concerns committee looked at the social and economic issues in the sister parish and explored them back home through educational programs that sought to understand the issues of debt and trade that impacted the sister parish, its members, and its community and country.

### SCHOOL

In the school, maps of the sister parish were hung as a reminder of the connection to another place on the globe. The Spanish classes put together programs for visitors from the sister parish and initiated Christmas card writing to the children in Honduras. The various delegations from and to the sister parish visited the school and gave reports, sometimes during assemblies and sometimes by visiting each classroom, which allowed for discussion and questions.

### RELIGIOUS ED

Some children from the religious education classes shared their own South and Central American roots and acted as translators for small groups of visitors from the sister community. Confirmation classes helped the baptism ministry sew hundreds of “white garments” sent to the sister parish as a gift to symbolize our filial relationship through baptism.

### PRAYER GROUPS

Some prayer groups prayed for delegations coming and going and others made rosaries to be sent as gifts to the sister parish. All the groups opened their doors and hearts to the various delegations.

### CHOIRS

Our choirs learned Spanish hymns to welcome the visitors and invite their participation in the sung prayer of the community. Our visitors brought their own songbooks and invited the choirs to join them as they taught simple songs to the groups. These visits gave each choir an opportunity to host small receptions — food and drink — and stories to share.

### SPANISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

One of our goals in choosing a sister parish in Honduras was to connect with the Spanish speaking community in our own parish. When the visitors came from the South they were often housed in homes of immigrants who were able to speak their language. They attended events in the Spanish speaking community, and between visits members of both the Spanish and English speaking communities would get together to make plans for future visits and to find ways of working together on issues that impact the entire community. *Despedias* — farewell parties — were planned by both communities with singing, dancing, and Central American food brought by those most familiar with it. One year an Archbishop Oscar Romero week was held during Lent. The communities came together to see and discuss the film *Romero*, to do a bi-lingual Way of the Cross or *Via Dolorosa*, and to gather to share a simple meal and to hear a talk about the life of Archbishop Romero.

*Out of the dynamics of interaction and dialogue between contexts and Judeo-Christian tradition that we envision Christian faith formation.*

acting that is faith-filled and theologically sound within a particular context. This was, I believe, the intention of Pope John Paul II when he embraced the statement of the Extraordinary Synod the Bishops in 1985. The bishops, raising the need to have a compendium of doctrines regarding both faith and morals that will become “a point of reference” for catechism in the different regions, said, “The presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine *suited to the present life of Christians (emphasis mine).*”

“Suited to the present life of Christians” is an important phrase to underscore. The phrase points to a certain trajectory and orientation. It highlights the importance of engaging the present context(s) in the whole dynamic process of catechesis.

Context plays a vital role in Christian faith formation. It is the lens through which we view and re-view the teachings of our faith. It is out of the dynamics of interaction and dialogue between contexts and Judeo-Christian tradition that we envision Christian faith formation. That is the place where Christianity needs to live and breathe its message. Tradition and contexts are essential dialogue partners as we articulate the teachings of our faith in our times and to the people we journey with. Tradition and contexts become the

pillars on which Christian faith formation stands.

As we have seen, our context is a globalized one. It is within this globalized context that we find our selves responding to the challenges of Christian faith formation. Any catechesis that does not engage the contexts in which we live will end up simply transmitting abstracts of faith to be memorized with no effect whatsoever on the daily living of such faith. As Terrence Tilley said in *Inventing Catholic Tradition*, “If Christianity is to be the living faith of the dead and not the dead faith of the living, to paraphrase Chesterton, its practices and the doctrines that are the grammar of its practices will change in response to internal and external changes.”

**MISSION IN GLOBAL CONTEXT**

If a globalized context affects the way we look and approach catechesis, this same globalized context is a crucial aspect in our understanding and responding to God’s mission. The United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA), an association of lay and religious members involved in mission, takes seriously the role of contexts as we unite and support people committed to the cross-cultural and global mission of Jesus Christ in service to church and world: “Globalization challenges the Church to be more missionary than ever before in its history. At this time of dramatic changes, U.S. Catholics face special responsibilities and opportunities for Christian leadership. As Catholics, we are called to live in solidarity and justice with the people of the world, particularly the poor and marginalized. Missioners serve in a unique way to move humanity toward community.”

These words are addressed not only to members, but to all. Globalization becomes for us the context as we respond to God’s mission. Mission is not a monopoly of professional missionaries. USCMA may mean an association of all baptized Catholics in the US.

Mission defines the church. It permeates its very being. It informs, forms, and reforms its very actions. In the words of the U.S. bishops, in their Pastoral Statement on World Mission, “To say ‘Church’ is to say ‘Mission.’” (*To the Ends of the Earth, no.16*). Or in the words of the Second Vatican Council, “The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (*Ad Gentes, no.2*).

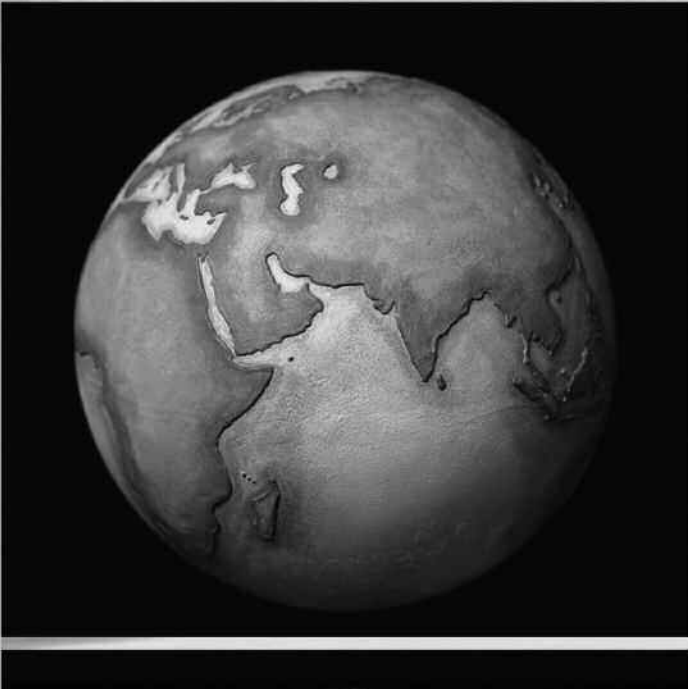
As John Paul II has stated “The Church is either missionary or she is not faithful to the Gospel.” (May 1986, National Directors of The Propagation of the Faith). However, to proclaim in words that which defines our identity and nature does not automatically translate it to reality. Hispanic wisdom tells us *del dicho y hecho hay mucho trecho* — there is a big gap between words and actions.

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## TRANSLATING WORDS TO DEEDS

USCMA works to deepen the dialogue that exists on mission. In the context of globalization, we have seen an increase in mission activities among dioceses, schools, hospitals, and other lay groups who want to respond to their baptismal call to mission. Different questions have been asked in the recent years: Is mission limited by the length of time that one stays in a particular place? Is it determined by geographical limits? Who determines the terms out of which we engage in mission? Who is a missionary? Am I a missionary?

With the increasing number of short term missionaries and active involvement of the lay people, USCMA decided to devote its upcoming 25th Anniversary Annual Mission Conference on October 1-3, 2006 at Notre Dame, Indiana on the topic of short term mission: “Celebrating and Integrating Our Mission Perspectives: Short Term, Long Term, On Whose Terms?” Dialogue opportunities and conferences like that of the USCMA are tools that can help us to articulate not only in words, but also in actions, our identity and nature as a missionary church. And if catechesis is about the total Christian faith formation leading to faithfulness to the Gospel, then mission is an essential component of that formation.

The USCCB through its Committee on World Missions published in 2005 “Teaching the Spirit of Mission Ad Gentes: Continuing Pentecost Today.” The title itself tells the motive for the writing. Aside from the foundational statements about mission, the bishops also chose to bring to our attention “best practices” that are replic-

able in different settings. Catechists, lay leaders, and religious people are encouraged to read the document to find inspiration and creative approaches to highlighting the church’s identity and nature as missionary.

Catechesis and mission include the whole Christian community. If catechesis is about a holistic approach to Christian faith formation, and if mission is integral to our identity and nature as a church, then both the privilege and responsibility for both belongs to the whole community.

Still there is the challenge of *Redemptoris Missio*, which says that catechists are specialists, direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers representing the basic strength of Christian communities. As specialists, we need to increase our cultural sensitivity and global awareness. As direct witnesses, we need to keep asking “What do I witness to?” and “How is my witnessing culturally bound?” As irreplaceable evangelizers, we need to go beyond the “blueprint mentality” that only considers the tried and tested ways, and instead explore new avenues to present the Good News in a context that has become globalized.

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# A GLOBAL MISSION

by Megan Anecharico

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