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CATECHETICAL
LEADER

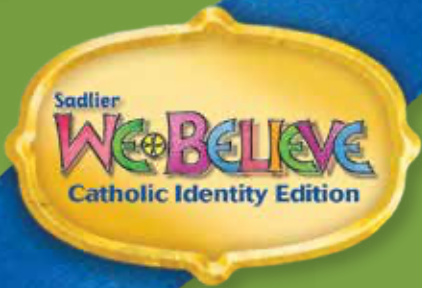
Responding to God's Call

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Youth Ministry is Everyone's Ministry

Who Will Fill These Shoes?

How Mary Taught Jesus
to Bring Peace to Relationships



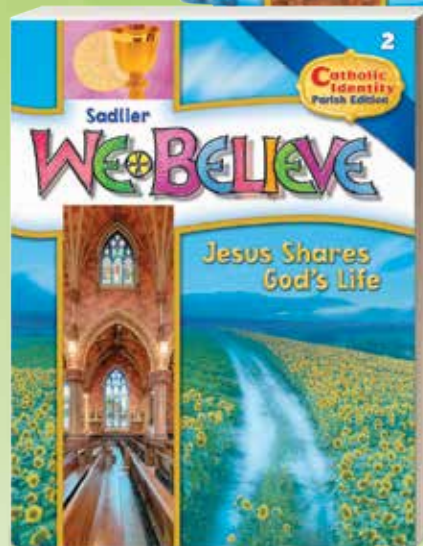
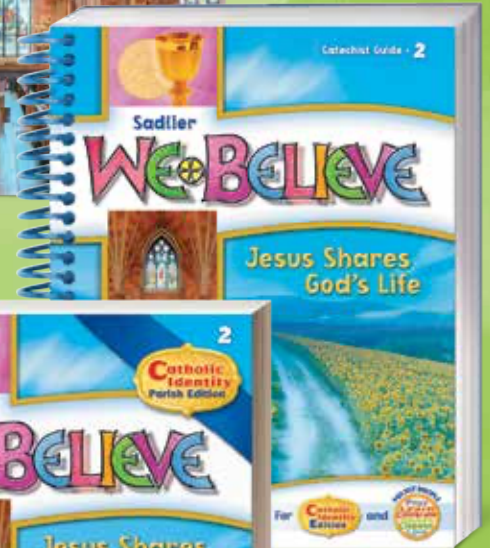
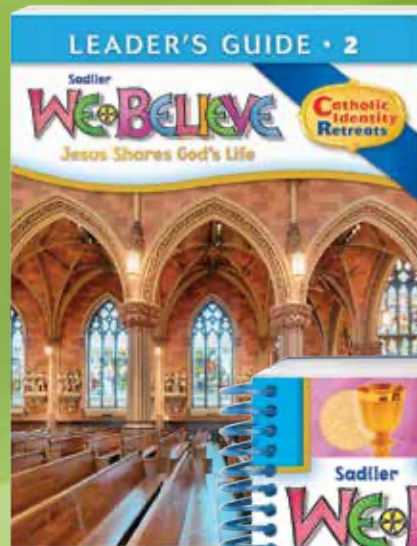
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THE PASCHAL MYSTERY... EVER ANCIENT, EVER NEW!

Bill Miller



National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



As you read this, we approach the one-year anniversary of the passing of our beloved Executive Director, Lee Nagel.

What a year it has been! There was (and continues to be) considerable grieving to be done for the loss that we endured, both personally and professionally. Beyond that, there is grieving for the organization that must journey on without Lee's many gifts to assist us — his knowledge, pastoral sensitivity, and his marvelous laugh, to name just a few.

The day after his passing, your Board of Directors set out upon a journey into the unknown, a journey that none of us could have foreseen and for which none of us could have fully prepared. As we "lifted off the runway" on that crisp spring day in late May, we travelled with three new board members who had been in place for only a few days. From the silence deep within each of their hearts, I imagined I heard the following questions wafting into the air around us: "What did I get myself into? What happens next? Is it too late to change my mind and resign from the board?"

Indeed, I think we (the members of the board) were all feeling some of those same sentiments. For my part as president, I had left our annual conference in St. Louis, just a few days before, with a renewed spring in my step. There were things to be done — we had our "marching orders" from the Representative Council, we had a number of committees doing exciting and innovative ministry, and I had my "to do" list...the list of things I wanted to accomplish before leaving office in 2015. In a moment of ego indulgence (which is a dangerous, self-centered practice), I found myself thinking: "Now it is time to plan and orchestrate a legacy...what I and my NCCL presidency will be known for having accomplished." Ego, you are but a folly! (In the words of cartoonist Allen Saunders, "Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans.")

The past 12 months have been very difficult at times. There has been much to do in order to keep the organization functioning efficiently and at a professional level. However, in the midst of the daily demands for time and

energy, I have also felt the Spirit pulling us forward — not against our will, but in accordance with our prayers and the prayers of so many who have lighted prayer candles for NCCL, literally and figuratively, over these past months. The story of NCCL, and indeed each of our stories, has been changed forever.

We must each come to terms with our stories if we are to learn from them and move on. This involves savoring the good times and learning to deal with the bad times, celebrating joy and growing through our suffering. In the process, if we take the time to pray and reflect intentionally on all of this, we learn when and where to die to self, and how to surrender all to God. Only then can we fully appreciate the joy and the new life that we can experience in the process of resurrection.

Today is a new day. As I think about giving the "presidential gavel" to my successor in a few weeks, I believe that, as a board and as an organization, we are now in "resurrection mode." Our courageous board has completed the process of selecting a new Executive Director. We are very excited about the many gifts that Margaret brings to this position, and we are even more excited about who she is and how she will represent us moving forward.

As far as my dreams for the future of NCCL, which include a growing membership base and a smart "tech-savvy" approach for advertising and distributing our catechetical gifts of talent, time and treasure? I am delighted to place these and all of our collective hopes for NCCL into the capable hands of Margaret and the next board, which will include a number of members from our current board as well as the four new members of the Executive Committee, all of whom will bring energy, vision, and creativity to the tasks at hand.

Once again this year, I am reminded that God's combination of saving grace and unconditional love is a sure prescription for survival and growth — in life, in death, and in the life that is to come. Together, we are a resurrection people, moving forward in a world that is ever ancient, ever new. ■

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THE JOURNEY THROUGH EASTER

Margaret Matijasevic



The gospel stories of the Easter season echo the realities of our lives as catechists. Our call is to respond to that echo by telling our own story, and companionship others in their sacred stories.

MARY MAGDALA: THE FIRST AT THE

TOMB

Mary Magdala is the first to discover the emptiness. Often times, as catechists, we are called to sit with others in those moments, whether joyful or painful, when they discover that life is going to be dramatically different. In those moments, we initiate a fuller awareness of the unexpected beauty in how God works. We do such with a consistently loving presence through a bountiful giving of our time and friendship. The rising from the dead, the emptiness, the unknown, is not just the destiny of the one before us, but it is our own as well.

THOMAS: THE DOUBTER

There are experiences in all our lives where we could have never imagined how God would encourage us to come into relationship. We too bear the wounds of the journey of its discovery. Doubting Thomas displays the reluctance to believe in hope, despite its persistent desire to enter our lives and hearts. As catechists, our woundedness demonstrates this relentless hope of the gospel, as we are well aware of its fortitude consuming us and gently offering healing over and over again. Often it is the call of the catechist to be vulnerable, to share the healing of wounds, especially to those who seek that very healing themselves but might not know where to turn for it. We encourage others to “believe” by touching the untouchable within our very selves.

THE TWO ON THE ROAD

While we constantly recognize Christ among us, we are startled every time the experience occurs. As catechists, our openness to that constant discovery of Christ’s dwelling among us is our vocation. It is the sacred pausing and living into the various moments of encountering Christ, and our intentional responding to that encounter that makes us catechists. Just like the two on the road to Emmaus, our continued experience of Christ invites us to a deeper awareness and relationship with him. It challenges us to a profound sincerity in our response. Like the two with “troubled hearts,” often the recognition of Christ in our life stirs our deepest

core, and it is our constant call to live, without inhibition, into that mystery.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE LOST SHEEP

Our challenge is to embrace the lost, despite a culture that may prefer to abandon them. We succumb to culture when we exclude others who aren’t as well-prepared for sacraments, or perhaps, as we use a language that isolates, rather than extends mercy and compassion. As catechists, we are often on the front line of that experience. We are the face of the church that has the potential of welcoming people in all phases of the journey; escorting them to a profound experience of joy, as they come to learn the faith more deeply in our company and care. Catechists are seeking out those who need our embrace and care, and we hold them in the genuineness of their lived experiences. Catechists have a keen awareness that the sacred stories of being lost are not few, but ring true of all of us as at some point in the journey. It is in our connectedness to that truth that enables us to hold others tenderly in the very sacredness of being lost.

THE LOVERS

The greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself, and the role of the catechist is to be that profound lover of other. The most thriving catechetical programs have the authentic catechetical leaders that extend love beyond measure. Every person that has said “yes” to the vocational call of the catechist has experienced that tremendous love from another along the way — the person that showed them the meaning of this greatest commandment through their presence, mercy, care, and listening. Catechists are lovers of others because they have come into a prayer life that knows God’s love of them. They have surrendered themselves to fully receiving such a love, and in turn, they now give it to others.

The journey through Easter is a beautiful one, and taking time during each liturgical season to listen to your vocational story being told in Scripture is essential to nurturing your personal call. Our “yes” today is an ancient story that echoes again in our lived experiences, which engulfs our very being when we hear the Scriptures proclaimed. Echo the truth of whose you are... and generously share your own sacred story. ■

God's Gift of Forgiveness

Terrie Baldwin



God's gift of forgiveness is a gift of love offered to everyone. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him" (1 Jn 4:16). God's love is lived out in people's daily lives as forgiveness is offered to one another. Forgiveness is part of the missionary outreach of the church. "It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ" (LG 42). "The church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly taking the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast" (EG 26). To do this is to participate in the healing ministry of the church.

The idea of being disciples who spread the Good News has come to the church from the evangelization documents beginning with The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. The Second Vatican Council desired "to sketch the principles of missionary activity and to rally the forces of all the faithful in order that the people of God, marching along the narrow way of the Cross, may spread everywhere the reign of Christ, Lord and overseer of the ages (cf. Ecc. 36:19), and may prepare the way for his coming" (AG 1) to the *Joy of the Gospel* wishing "to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come" (EG 1).

God's gift of forgiveness and the witness of Jesus to one woman and the conversion of a whole town are evident in the Scripture story of the woman at the well (Jn 4 1-42).

We see in this story the gift of God's forgiveness given to the woman through Jesus. He acknowledges her sin, provides the gift of mercy, shares the gift of God's love, and is a witness. Thus, she is healed and becomes a missionary disciple who goes forth to evangelize her town.

Jesus provides a simple witness of faith, starting with her questions and leads her in an analogy of providing living water instead of water from the well. He shares what he has experi-

enced in explaining how to worship in spirit and truth. Jesus offers her the gift of God's love.

Jesus tells her that he is the Messiah, and she is moved by his testimony so much that she drops the bucket she came with for water from the well and goes on to tell others. In *Lumen Gentium*, "those who approach the sacrament of penance obtain pardon from the mercy of God for the offence committed against him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example, and prayer seeks their conversion" (11). "Forgiveness of sins brings reconciliation with God, but also with the Church" (CCC 1461). Jesus offers the woman at the well the gift of being a reconciled part of her community — an opportunity for conversion in being a witness for others.

Pope Francis shared his thoughts about the parish community in *The Joy of the Gospel*. "The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a center of constant missionary outreach" (28).

RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR PENANCE

In September 2012, Diocese of Cleveland Bishop Richard Lennon wrote a pastoral letter focused on the Year of Faith and recognized, "Most of us would have to agree with Pope Benedict that there is at this time 'a profound crisis' of faith that has affected many people. We all know loved ones who are away from the Church for a variety of reasons, and we long for their return." Also as a part of his letter he put forth the vision to "underscore the place of the Sacrament of Penance in our Catholic lives by giving great witness to this gift that Jesus has left his Church. There is nothing that can help us know and experience the greatness of God's mercy like the Sacrament of Penance. 'Repent and believe,' Jesus said at the beginning of his ministry. The rediscovery of reconciliation can do so much for the renewal of faith in the lives of the Faithful."

Using these two visionary pieces of the pastoral letter, the plan for a diocesan-wide celebration of the sacrament of penance



was decided upon by the Bishop's Committee for the Year of Faith, complete with a multi-media promotional campaign specifically designed to not only offer an opportunity for the sacrament, but to renew the faith of the parishioners in the pews to enable them to feel confident enough to go out and witness their loving relationship with Jesus Christ to those who had been away, and welcome them back to his love.

The committee realized, in order for this to be a fruitful endeavor, communication at the parish level needed to be central and not only through mass media. Holistic resources were created to assist parishes and consequently touch the lives of the faithful to be renewed themselves and to reach out to those whom they love to return to a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and the church.

The Diocese of Cleveland produced a promotional piece for television and radio with the witness of a woman who had been away from the church. The diocese hired a consultant who concluded in the market research, "The lapsed Catholic includes a broad demographic range in age, gender, and income. Research suggests that women are the 'faith decision makers' in the household. Fifty-three is the median age and it is women who have the ability to influence their children and possibly grandchildren. The conclusion of the demographic strategy determined the primary target would be women aged 25-64 and the secondary target would be adults aged 25-64."

The consultant also laid out a tactical strategy. "Many people feel that their lives are not satisfying or meaningful. A creative message that taps into the notion of life having a larger purpose is appealing to most people, as is the idea of using faith as a way to find a satisfying path in life, including in careers and family choices. Creatively, the campaign should elicit a high level of emotion to connect with our target audience. Given the significant reasons for leaving the Church, an emotional, possibly a testimonial message may be successful. 'I left the Church and returned two years ago...I have gained...and given...' This needs to be a highly personal campaign. Campaign should also broadly describe the 'new' Church to appeal to naysayers."

With the advice of the consultant, and the help of a parish priest who identified a female parishioner, the promotional piece for television was created using the image and words spoken by this woman and an unidentified male voice, along with pictures of various churches. The spoken words were pulled from the television promotion and also used for the radio pieces. Following are the words used for the promotions:

"When I left it was kind of under stress and duress."
(female voice)

"It doesn't matter why you left."
(male voice)

"It was kind of like I was hanging on with my fingernails."
(female voice)

"It doesn't matter how long you've been gone."
(male voice)

"My faith is about Christ, and the Catholic Church is his vehicle."
(female voice)

"We welcome you back with open arms."
(male voice)

"The Catholic Church today is so fulfilling because I have that straight."
(female voice)

"Join us for an evening of confession Wednesday, March 12th at your local Catholic church."
(male voice)

Additionally, a micro website was created, welcometocatholics.com, in order to have a place to direct people who had seen or heard these ads for more information about where to find a local church, and resources on how to go to confession.

MULTIPLE PARISH RESOURCES

The committee knew that the promotions could not stand alone; the woman in the promotion was one witness but more were needed. So parish resources were created to assist pastors and parish priests in renewing the faith of the people in the pews and to assist them in finding the love and courage to reach out to others. These resources included:

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Bulletin inserts focused on the multifaceted dimensions of the Sacrament of Penance using each Sunday's gospels for the four weeks preceding the date of the event:

"An Invitation to Celebrate" as an invitation to experience God's love and mercy and to invite a friend who has been away from the church to this experience.

"An encounter with Christ" to explain the process of the sacrament with the priest acting in the person of Christ.

"An Opportunity for Forgiveness and Love" explaining that the gift of God's forgiveness is always there for us, no matter how many times we fail.

"A Journey of Holiness and Peace" expressing the communal aspect of sin and forgiveness through the church.

Bookmarks and Postcards were created to be sent to the homes of parishioners, placed in pews, or taken home and used by parishioners to invite those they love to "Come Home this Lent" as the picture and logo showed.

Pastors were asked to encourage parishioners to pray for those who may be considering the return to the church and asked to encourage those who come for prayer at the church or times of adoration to include the intention for returning Catholics to their prayer lives.

Priests were asked to include the topic of the sacrament of penance as a part of a homily.

Parishes were requested to include a general intercession for the return of Catholics whom we care about.

For the date of the event, pastors were encouraged to create a welcoming presence with greeters, pleasant atmosphere, and resources for those who were to come at confession as well as pamphlets on annulments or other topics related to confession.

During the time preceding "An Evening of Confession" people in the pews were asked to be missionary disciples; those in the pews who knew God's love for them were asked to take the first step and be involved and supportive to those outside of the church. The event was attempting to create an evangelizing community who "can move forward, boldly taking the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away and stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast" (EG 24).

While this was a diocesan-wide event, the work was truly done in each parish, each to the best of their abilities. Minus the paid television promotions, the remainder of the process could be done in any church by using the gifts of its members as an opportunity to develop itself into an evangelizing community: For the priest, the gift of preaching about the sacrament of penance and the encouragement to parishioners to missionary discipleship; for those with a gift of writing, the bulletin inserts; for those gifted in liturgy, the intercessions; for those with a gift of pastoral ministry, an offer of counseling and

support; for those with a gift of teaching, to offer resources or a refresher course on the process for confession; for those with the gift of technology, postings on blogs, websites, and social media; for those with the gift of evangelization, to be the welcoming committee on the day of the event; for everyone, the gift of the Holy Spirit to go forth to be a missionary disciple.

For the Diocese of Cleveland, "An Evening of Confession" during the Year of Faith and the following year was thought to be a success because the stories of people who came back to the church were plentiful; one man came back who was gone for 50 years. The story of the lost sheep had come to fruition in every county in the diocese and as an evangelizing community, there was much reason to rejoice. "An evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization" (EG 24).

This joy is a sign that the Gospel has been proclaimed and is bearing fruit. Yet the drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in our sowing of the good seed, remains ever present. The Lord says: 'Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out' (Mk 1:38). Once the seed has been sown in one place, Jesus does not stay behind to explain things or to perform more signs; the Spirit moves him to go forth to other towns. (EG 21)

The Diocese of Cleveland was so moved and has repeated the event again in the post-year of faith with new vigor, new resources including homily hints, intercessions, Mass announcements, website, social media connections, and catechetical follow-up, continuing to bring forth new gifts and learning from one another how to be missionary disciples and evangelizing communities.

From the vision shared in Bishop Lennon's Year of Faith Pastoral letter:

As we renew our faith we will be able to share it with others in a more profound way. Each of us is sent to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. In the Holy Father's letter, *Porta Fidei*, it states well, 'What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord and capable of opening the minds and hearts of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.' As members of the Church we are obliged to witness to our faith. Each one of us is sent into the world to joyfully witness to God's love and our relationship with Jesus Christ. ■

Terrie Baldwin is the Director of Evangelization for the Diocese of Cleveland. Contact her at tbaldwin@dioceseofcleveland.org.

Youth Ministry is Everyone's Ministry

Shannon Kelly



Fellow youth ministers and I often joke that we can do anything. . . drive a bus, administer first aid, run a conference, lead a group at the drop of a hat, counsel people, fix toilets, create a meal out of nothing, and more. We are administrators, spiritual guides, fellow explorers, worship leaders, adventurers,

boundary setters, retreat leaders, empowerers, listeners, cultural translators, and mentors. To sum it up, using the words of Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, we are “Godbearers.” We are people who juggle all these hats and have learned how to do all these things so that we can be truly present bearers of God’s presence in people’s lives. It is not about being able to “do” all these things, but about being in ministry with youth.

When you are called to serve as a youth minister, you are called to an important ministry that could shape the life of a teen, a parent, the community, and the congregation. Even though youth ministry is often seen as only fun and games, it is much more. You have the potential to be a significant mentor, leader, advocate, and minister in many people’s lives.

Young people in every generation have needed adults who can help them become who they are called to be. Today, the stakes are higher and the need for trusted adults is much greater. Today, adults are working more and more to make ends meet; they travel more for work; they can be unsure of how to connect with today’s culture; they may not understand all the things youth are “into;” and they may not feel equipped to minister to teenagers.

Youth ministers have a unique and powerful role in the lives of young people. You are often the adults who youth turn to for advice or for a shoulder to cry on. Youth ministry and the church community can be the place they turn when they are in trouble and teach them about healthy boundaries. It can be the place where they ask questions about life, faith, and relationships in a safe environment. It can be a place where we model responsible, caring, and honest interactions with others.

Ministering to and with youth is not about knowing their culture or knowing all the cool songs. It’s about showing an interest in them, their struggles and joys, their needs and wants, and their world. It’s not about solving their problems for them, but about being a guide, mentor, and a good listener for them to turn to in times of need. You don’t need to go to the latest and greatest conference that will tell you all about

youth, their culture, and how to reach them (though training might help you feel more equipped). It’s about showing up, and being real with them and yourself. It’s about being honest that you may not understand where they are coming from, but that you care about them and you want to learn. Ministering to youth means being relational with them. Andrew Root writes, “Ministry is about connection, one to another, about sharing in suffering and joy, about persons meeting persons with no pretense or secret motives.”

SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING YOUTH

When we connect with young people in a variety of ways, we show them they are valued and a part of our community. As adults in their lives, we have a vital role in equipping them with resources to prepare them for their future. In the same way we plan for the future by looking at financial and educational resources, we also need to equip ourselves and others with our emotional and relational resources. Looking at the Developmental Assets from the Search Institute we can see that there are many ways in which we can support and empower young people. We can help them set healthy boundaries and expectations, and help them understand how to make constructive use of their time. We can demonstrate and encourage a commitment to learning, positive values, social skills, and positive identity. Regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, or geographic location, all youth need people in their lives who can help them attain these assets.

40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS (SEARCH INSTITUTE)

External Assets: Support

1. **Family Support.** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive Family Communication.** Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. **Other Adult Relationships.** Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. **Caring Neighborhood.** Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring School Climate.** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling.** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.



Photo by Moyan Brenn

External Assets: Empowerment

7. **Community Values Youth.** Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as Resources.** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to Others.** Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety.** Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

External Assets: Boundaries & Expectations

11. **Family Boundaries.** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School Boundaries.** School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood Boundaries.** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult Role Models.** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive Peer Influence.** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High Expectations.** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

External Assets: Constructive Use of Time

17. **Creative Activities.** Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. **Youth Programs.** Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
19. **Religious Community.** Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at Home.** Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Internal Assets: Commitment to Learning

21. **Achievement Motivation.** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School Engagement.** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework.** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to School.** Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure.** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Internal Assets: Positive Values

- 26. **Caring.** Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27. **Equality and Social Justice.** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. **Integrity.** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. **Honesty.** Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
- 30. **Responsibility.** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. **Restraint.** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Internal Assets: Social Competencies

- 32. **Planning and Decision Making.** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. **Interpersonal Competence.** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. **Cultural Competence.** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. **Resistance Skills.** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution.** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Internal Assets: Positive Identity

- 37. **Personal Power.** Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”

- 38. **Self-Esteem.** Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- 39. **Sense of Purpose.** Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”
- 40. **Positive View of Personal Future.** Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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These developmental assets help us think about how we might help youth find the resources, provide the resources, and point them toward resources they will need. The more assets they have, the more likely they are to stay in school, be healthy, and be a good citizen in the community. We have an opportunity to help build these assets each day

Youth ministers have a unique and powerful role in the lives of the church and community as someone who can empower adults and train them to be Godbearers and people who will intentionally be asset-builders. When adults in our churches and communities understand the assets and their role in promoting them, our youth and our communities will both benefit.

ENGAGE THOSE AROUND YOU

Share the list of assets with the staff and volunteers who work with youth. They need to understand the importance of what they are doing. Some may think what we do is just fun and games (and yes, we do that) but more than that, we are important mentors and guides for the young person. This is true for the pastor, staff, volunteer youth ministry leaders, and all the adults in the community with whom youth come in contact. This is true for the adult who never sets foot in the youth room, but knows the names of the teenagers and says hello to them. It is not the youth minister’s job to “deal with



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the youth,” but to be an advocate for the youth, to mentor youth, and to raise awareness of how each person can impact a teenager’s life. Being a Godbearer for a young person is not only about teaching them and equipping them to be a good person, but also to be a person of faith.

Exercise: How Can You Be an Asset-Builder?

- * Think back to your own childhood and adolescence. Name all the adults you can think of that were meaningful to you. Why they were meaningful? How did they impact your life?
- * If you didn’t have that many meaningful adults in your life, create a list of what you wished you had in adult leadership as you grew up? How can you be there for youth, knowing how important it is?
- * Now, think of all the children and youth that you know. How can you serve them as those adults served you?
- * What is your part in raising healthy, loving, empowered, strong, passionate, prayerful youth?

WHAT IS YOUR PART?

Everyone in a church, community, and ministry can make a difference in the lives of children and youth. Even if you don’t feel equipped or ready to deal with the big issues that youth face today, you can make a difference simply by being a caring person for them. Jolene L. Roehlkepartain has created a list of “150 Ways to Show Kids You Care,” which is a great place to start when getting people involved. Here are my top 26 from that list:

1. Notice and acknowledge them.
2. Learn their names.
3. Ask them about themselves.
4. Listen to them and look in their eyes when you talk to them.
5. Be honest.
6. Be yourself.
7. Play and have fun together.
8. Follow them when they lead.
9. Learn what they have to teach.
10. Show up at their concerts, games, and events.
11. Listen to their favorite music with them.
12. Thank them.
13. Include them in conversations and ask for their opinion.
14. Help them become an expert at something or learn something new.
15. Praise more; criticize less.
16. Be consistent.
17. Applaud their successes.
18. Delight in their uniqueness.
19. Respect them.
20. Create a safe, open environment.
21. Be available.
22. Help them take a stand and stand with them.
23. Expect their best; don’t expect perfection.
24. Empower them to help and be themselves.
25. Love them, no matter what.
26. Begin today

All of us have a role in engaging, equipping, and guiding young people. We can all build assets. Begin the conversation with those around you. Remember that relationships are key and that asset-building is an ongoing ministry. It is something that needs to be woven into the fabric of the church community so everyone sees their part in helping young people grow and develop. Invite a group of people to look at the Developmental Assets with you and identify where your ministry might begin. Talk to other youth ministers and youth agencies in your community to discover how you might work together. Offer to lead a visioning exercise at your next staff meeting; invite everyone to think about how they can engage youth and about their role in ministry with young people. Find your role, claim it, and encourage others to do likewise. |

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Church Authority and Assent: Clarifications Ahead of Pope Francis' Encyclical

Daniel R. DiLeo



The church has known for some time that Pope Francis is working on an encyclical about ecology. Until recently, this awareness has generally only been discussed by those who regularly work on environmental justice in the Catholic tradition. On December 27, 2014, however, the *Guardian* published an

article about the forthcoming document that has sparked passionate—and sometimes uncharitably acerbic—interest from people who are opposed to climate change mitigation and/or fear that Francis will inappropriately address the topic in his encyclical. In many such instances, those who express anxiety about Francis' encyclical raise questions about church authority and either deny that Francis can speak authoritatively on climate change or suggest that Catholics are free to quickly (even preemptively) dismiss such teaching.

In light of these recent debates, it is important to correctly understand the various levels of church teaching authority, identify the level of potential encyclical teachings and appreciate the corresponding response to which Catholics are called by the church. This is especially true for political theologians, since Francis is likely in his encyclical to build on the support for an international climate treaty offered by Pope Benedict XVI, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations, and Francis himself. As such, I here review levels of church authority and locate likely encyclical teachings in the hopes of providing prescient clarifications to political questions regarding Francis' encyclical.

LEVELS OF CHURCH AUTHORITY AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

In his chapter “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Modern Catholic Social Teaching” (*Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries & Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes), Richard Gaillardetz describes Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as “the normative articulation of official church positions regarding social questions” (87). In addition, Gaillardetz points out that the church recognizes three levels of authority in CST. The highest level is “universal moral teaching.” These are dogmatic teachings that are divinely revealed, infallibly taught, and “call forth from the believer an assent of faith” (88-89). Examples include “the law of love, the dignity of the human

person, respect for human life, and obligation to care for the environment” (89).

The next level of moral teaching include those “specific moral principles” that have the status of *authoritative doctrine*, i.e., are principles “that have been taught authoritatively but not infallibly by the magisterium” through reflection on Scripture, tradition, and experience (89). Examples include the church's teaching about the necessary conditions to support capital punishment or the prohibitions against the direct taking of innocent human life. The church calls Catholics to “treat these teachings as more than mere opinions or pious exhortations but as normative church teaching that they must strive to integrate into their religious outlook” (90; Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 25).

Finally, the lowest level of authoritative church teaching is the prudential “application of specific moral principles” to concrete situations in light of “changing contexts and contingent empirical data” (89-90). The virtue of prudence is classically understood as “right reason applied to action” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, 47.8), and in the case of climate change prudential judgment entails right reason about the assessment of empirical data and application of Catholic moral principles. Gaillardetz points out that an example of such an authoritative teaching is the U.S. bishops' “no first nuclear use” exhortation in *The Challenge of Peace*. Additionally, Gaillardetz notes that while Catholics can differ with these judgments for well-founded reasons after deep reflection, such teachings are, according to the bishops, “to be given serious attention and consideration by Catholics as they determine whether their moral judgments are consistent with the Gospel” (*The Challenge of Peace*, 10). In other words, the church calls Catholics to deeply and prayerfully consider any/all magisterial prudential judgments in a way that precludes their dismissal in good conscience without due consideration (and, by definition, before they have been promulgated).

AUTHORITY AND POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL

In light of this developed taxonomy of church teaching authority, I believe it possible to anticipate teachings that Francis is likely to make in his encyclical and situate them within the abovementioned framework. These projections are firmly rooted in CST and church precedent regarding climate change, and this exercise can, I think, provide a template to

better structure discussions about the encyclical. First, Francis will presumably affirm the prudential judgment about the reality of anthropogenic climate change that he has already made and which was repeatedly asserted by Pope John Paul II (1990 *World Day of Peace Message*, 6; 1999 *World Day of Peace Message*, 10), Pope Benedict XVI (2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 50; 2010 *World Day of Peace Message*, 4, 7, 10; etc.), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and international bishops and episcopal conferences.

In addition to this assessment of anthropogenic climate change, Francis will likely apply the CST principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, and Solidarity to his understanding of the issue and, like the church has repeatedly done, prudentially judge climate change to be a moral issue. Finally, Francis will likely apply the CST principle of subsidiarity to his understanding of climate change and call for an international climate change accord in keeping with the precedent established by Pope Benedict XVI (2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 50; message to the 2009 U.N. Climate Change Summit; 2010 Address to the Diplomatic Corps; 2012 Address to the Diplomatic Corps), the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations (September 2014; October 2014), and his own previous remarks (December 2014 message to the U.N.; January 12 message to the Diplomatic Corps; January 15 remarks en route to the Philippines).

Francis' probable encyclical teachings about climate change and an international climate treaty are what seem likely (and have already proven) to be areas of the document most ripe for contentious debate. In particular, some appear to believe that prudential teachings made through the ordinary papal magisterium about climate change possess no authority whatsoever, are in no way normative for the church, and, as such, can be quickly discarded by Catholics without due consideration. As has been shown, however, none of these positions are correct within the framework of church teaching on authority and assent. Catholics are free to ultimately disagree (in charity) with prudential magisterial judgments, but can only do so in good conscience after thoughtful consideration marked by sincere openness and deep prayer.

Presuming that Francis thus accepts the reality of human-forced climate change in his encyclical and calls for an international climate agreement, Catholics will only be able to disagree with him in good conscience after serious reflection and the determination that the pope has reasoned incorrectly, i.e., imprudently, about the findings/appropriation of mainstream climate science and/or application of Catholic moral principles. This strikes me as an exceedingly high burden of proof to satisfy given the widespread international agreement about the reality of human-forced climate change and precedent Catholic teaching on the issue. Thus, while Catholics may disagree with Francis' prudential judgments on climate change in his encyclical *after due consideration*, my own feeling is that such disagreement is likely to itself be

imprudent. Nevertheless I, like everyone, will need to wait for the encyclical's publication in order to properly consider Francis' encyclical judgments on climate change and/or assess those subsequently made by other Catholics about the teaching.

CONCLUSION

The Vatican recently indicated that Francis' encyclical on ecology will likely be published before the summer. *Crux* observes that already "Pope Francis' stance on climate change is the latest battleground for US Catholics" and, unfortunately, this battle seems likely to intensify rather than abate between now and the encyclical's release. Nevertheless, political theologians can make substantive contributions to present and future encyclical conversations by reminding Catholics about the correct assent owed to various levels of church teaching. This would ensure that Francis' encyclical is received with the utmost amount of genuine openness and humility, and as such would be a great service to the church and to the world. |

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Pope Francis on the ecology

Faith, on the other hand, by revealing the love of God the Creator, enables us to respect nature all the more, and to discern in it a grammar written by the hand of God and a dwelling place entrusted to our protection and care (*Lumen Fidei*, 55).

St. Francis of Assisi bears witness to the need to respect all that God has created and as he created it, without manipulating and destroying creation; rather to help it grow, to become more beautiful and more like what God created it to be. And above all, St. Francis witnesses to respect for everyone, he testifies that each of us is called to protect our neighbor, that the human person is at the center of creation, at the place where God — our creator — willed that we should be. Not at the mercy of the idols we have created! (Homily during visit to Assisi)

We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 215).

Who Will Fill These Shoes?

Sarah Jarzembowski



Who will fill these shoes? This is an anxiety-ridden question for many who currently work in the church. With so many of our church workers at or beyond retirement age, and so many young adults coming of age, the question becomes, are the younger generations of church leaders really ready to

step up?

Well the answer is yes, no, and maybe. Ultimately, that is not really for us to decide. It's the Lord himself who calls us to a life of service in the church. From whatever pathway, experience, or education we have had, God calls us to serve his people wherever the need arises.

The world of church work has changed drastically since I began volunteering when I was in high school. In the 1990s, I began by working in my parish's religious education office tracking attendance into the permanent records. I smiled at the students as they entered the school building, directing them to their classrooms or the bathroom, and getting them to slow down in the hallways as the inevitable latecomer raced to his or her class. This was the beginning of my path.

My pathway to ministry wound around quite a bit and my conversations with God were rather tumultuous. Through prayer, I understood that he was inviting me to experience him through retreat and volunteer experiences throughout high school, college, and into young adulthood. God kept challenging me to try something more — learn more...experience more...live more.

I found my way into a youth ministry position that today, 15 years later, I'm not sure I was qualified to have. The young adults entering into ministry today are much more educated than I ever was in theology, Christology, ecclesiology, etc. Young adults entering into ministry are receiving certifications, undergraduate degrees, and master's degrees (even doctorates) before they begin their first day of work in the church.

This could be a depressing statistic for me, but as I look back on my ministry life, God has gifted me with many grace-filled memories. I have journeyed with many youth who now, as young adults, are sharing their gifts and talents in ways I could

never have seen. I have had the chance to see young adults in my ministry who now love their wives, husbands, and children in ways that I could not possibly have taught them. And today, I received word that another young person that I had the privilege of journeying with has been accepted into seminary. God has shown me that he can take a willing (and sometimes not so willing) young adult like myself with little schooling or prior experience and do great things with them for the greater glory of God.

So, who will fill these shoes? Probably someone imperfect, and most likely, someone who will do things very differently than you or me. Maybe even someone with more or less schooling than you or I ever had. Young adults enter into the church workplace with wonderful ideals, energy, and spirit. I have had the opportunity to listen to young adults ministers talk about the shoes they are filling and the roadblocks they come across in filling those shoes.

There were four questions posed to the young leaders. Some answers were familiar, and others were new and invigorating perspectives that both excited and challenged me. Here I will share with you what was uncovered.

CHALLENGES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR LAY LEADERS

The first question asked: What is the top challenge to bringing young adults into professional ministry?

One of the first things that came up was upward mobility, or lack thereof. This all stems from either a lack of funds from the parish, diocese, or organization to pay a salary, or a lack of education on the part of the young adults due to lack of funds for advanced degrees. However, the education piece is also interesting because some that have the education (and student debt to go with it) are not being hired because the organization can't afford them due to their educational credentials. While this may remain a "catch-22" for awhile, it is important for church leaders to be aware of this conundrum.

Another issue was having a family or wanting a family; this was seen as a potential deterrent to working for the church. While the church promotes young married couples starting families, many ministry positions don't offer adequate support or benefits to support such a lifestyle such as paid maternity or paternity leave, affordable family health care, fair wages, or



Photo by Zach Dischner

child care necessary for young parents. On the same token, it was also voiced that young, single employees should have access to paid leave, health care, and flexible schedules. Not paying attention to this issue has led to other difficulties including high costs for day care, and the increased stress of working multiple jobs, which often leads can lead to health issues and general burn out.

It was generally understood that money is a difficult issue with the church being funded by weekly donations; furthermore, the young people assumed that, if the collections were higher, they might be paid better. However, some alternate ideas of compensation came in the form of free spiritual direction, telecommuting one or two days a week, and discounts on day care and health care opportunities.

The second question that was asked of the young adults: What is a grace or challenge that you have experienced when communicating with someone in a generation other than yours?

A major obstacle in ministry work for young adult church workers was being heard and being spoken to in a respectful and equitable manner by older generations in the workplace. The young adults wanted the veterans in ministry to know that, despite their youthful age, they are still competent, responsible, and committed church leaders (and in many cases, very educated and experienced ones as well). They want support and cultivation of their spiritual gifts, charisms, and personalities within their ministry; they desire aspects of their personality and specific charisms necessary for ministry supported and cultivated, not criticized and diminished.

Young adults want their workplace to be one that reflects community and appropriate relationships, which includes respect and equal treatment whether or not others in the parish, diocese, or organization agree with their style of spirituality, or political standings, or ecclesial perspective. Young adults want to share their knowledge and have knowledge shared with them. They desire mentorship and collaboration. They recognize that all experiences are different, but sharing these different experiences and narratives are the key to positive mentorship and impactful ministry.

WHAT YOUNG ADULT MINISTERS NEED FOR SUPPORT

Finally: What are some ideas for how the church could better provide practical support to young adults working in ministry?

CATECHETICAL LEADER

This was a wonderfully energizing part of the conversation. Looking at all the possibilities of support out there, we could have talked for hours. Here is a brief summary of their answers.

Young adults recognize that ministry is not the career to enter if they want large amounts of cash. However, they also recognize that their work has high value and that their dignity is respected and valuable to the community. The young adults talked about a thirst for knowledge and life-skills. Organizations and institutions can support young church workers by supporting higher education (for instance, through grant assistance and recommendations). Continuing education in the areas of personal finance management, taxes, and retirement are also valuable to young adults.

Clearly, these young people were on fire for their faith and work within the Catholic Church. This passion and drive were evident in their dedication to their ministry despite any obstacles or frustrations along the way.

In no uncertain terms, they shared that if a young adult is hired to do a specific job that calls them to be innovative, they hope that their supervisors will allow such creativity and support them in their innovation. And when this innovation and fire are cultivated and maintained by celebrating regular, daily Mass, annual retreats, and spiritual direction (without penalty of using time-off or their limited salaries), they felt they could go even farther in their work. Finally, they expressed their hope that all employees in the church, not just young adults, would be encouraged to invest in continued formation, education, and most especially, the opportunity to recuperate and recharge for the work ahead.

This was a fascinating conversation. These young adults are so alive in their faith. The parishes, dioceses, and organizations where they work are blessed to have them. They are beginning to fill these shoes — and in the places where older pastoral leaders are allowing these young adults to use their gifts to benefit the church, great things are happening. ■

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How Mary Taught Jesus to Bring Peace to Relationships

Richard C. Brown



The catechetical leaders of today's Catholic Church ministries want to respond to his Holiness Pope Francis' call to "preserve and foster love within the family." His October 2014 Synod on Marriage and Family, and the follow-up Synod in 2015, provide him with the vehicle toward that goal. The intent

of this article is to present Mary, mother of Jesus, as the principal human source who taught Jesus how to deal with personal relationship stress.

The document, *Instrumentum Laboris*, (Vatican, June, 2014) summarized international grassroots responses to questions on marriage and family that were to prepare for the Synods. In its short preface, "The Holy Father encouraged everyone to look with hope to the future and recommended a manner of acting which preserves and fosters love within the family, namely, by saying 'Can I?' 'May I?' 'Thank you' and 'I'm sorry!'"

This "manner of acting" described by Pope Francis provides an extraordinary summary of both psychological and spiritual behaviors that can bring love and peace to marriage and family life. On ten different occasions of relationship stress, Jesus used four behaviors very similar to those the Holy Father's suggests. How do those four behaviors of Jesus and Mary correspond to the four questions of Pope Francis' "manner of acting"? The acronym SAFE summarizes Jesus' and Mary's behaviors.

Jesus' and Mary's behaviors (SAFE)

1. See others' needs and try to respond.
2. Ask questions to get at the truth.
3. Forgive by way of positive response.
4. Express one's own and the other's needs.

Pope Francis' "manner of acting" questions

1. "May I?" can be "May I be of help to you?"
2. "May I?" and "Can I?" are questions to get at possible solutions to the relationship problem.
3. "I'm sorry" relates to forgiveness.
4. "Can I?" expresses a need and "Thank you" responds to a need that has been met.

Now, we turn to how Mary may have taught Jesus these four SAFE behaviors he used on ten occasions, to "preserve and foster love" and bring peace to relationship stress. In fact, the mother of Jesus used these behaviors in her own major stress encounter with the Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation, when Jesus was conceived. The cultural and spiritual role of a Jewish mother of her time was to be the primary teacher and spiritual guide for her children. The Annunciation, then, provides us with an insightful description of Mary's own beliefs and behaviors in dealing with relationship stress.

We will also see how both Mary and Jesus used the SAFE behaviors with each other at the Temple (Jesus at age 12) and at the marriage feast of Cana. And we will conclude with four simple SAFE exercises that today's ministry leaders can use with all the participants in all their varied ministries. By applying what they learn, leaders can carry on Mary's God-given teaching role in today's world to bring peace and love, also meeting the challenge of Pope Francis to "preserve and foster love."

Today's mothers need to teach their children ways to live safely. "Look both ways before crossing the street." "Walk away from bullies." "Never start using drugs." "When in conflict, work toward peace." In the days of Jesus and Mary, life may have been simpler. That last word of wisdom, "When in conflict, work toward peace," was then and is now so very important. Human relationships remain the major source of not only enjoyment and productivity, but also stress and conflict.

In the Annunciation (Lk 1: 26-40), how did Mary respond to a strange man, in reality the Archangel Gabriel, suddenly appearing in her home? "But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be." Let's examine how she used the SAFE behaviors in her response. Gabriel first spoke to calm Mary. Then, he let her know that God considered her special. "And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will name him Jesus." As to the S behavior ("See others needs and respond"), Mary was hearing God's need with her and responded by saying, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Mary demonstrated the second behavior when she questioned the angel to get to the truth of her conception by asking, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Her uncertainty



Photo by Jonathan Leung

continued until she could get more information. The angel answered: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born of you will be holy; he will be called Son of God.”

The next behavior, “Forgive by way of positive action,” revealed itself in Mary’s final statement to Gabriel, summing up the resolution of her stressful relationship with him, “Here am I, a servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your [Gabriel’s] word.” Mary forgave Gabriel for frightening her by his sudden appearance and strange conversation about conceiving “now.” Her positive final response (“Let it be with me according to your word”) rebuilt a positive, peaceful relationship with the Lord’s messenger.

In addition, Mary responded in another positive way to Gabriel, who reported that her cousin Elizabeth was six months pregnant. Mary went “with haste” to be of help.

Finally, we see the fourth SAFE behavior, “Express one’s own and the other’s needs.” The angel had said, “And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son.” Mary did not miss those key words, “And now!” Her brightness and fear of this strange man easily contributed to expressing her need for clarification: “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

In conclusion, Mary was a practitioner of the four SAFE behaviors. Dealing with relationship stress or conflict is the key to a safe, peaceful, and loving life. We can easily assume that Mary had taught those behaviors to Jesus.

In modern terms, were these four SAFE behaviors psychologically and spiritually correct? As established in my book, *When Ministry Is Messy: Practical Solutions to Difficult Problems* (St. Anthony, 2006), these behaviors fully meet the requirement

for psychological and spiritual correctness. For example, asking questions psychologically forces the intellect to carry out its God-given ability to arrive at truth. St. John of the Cross, a spiritual doctor of the church, describes human intellect as the faculty God normally intends for us to use in solving the problems of our life, rather than waiting for a voice answer from God (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book 2, Chap.22, para. 13, in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, *Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*).

Next, let us take a look at these four relationship stress behaviors of Jesus and Mary as they appear in their first two detailed relationship events related in the gospels. One event was Jesus disappearing from his folks for three days. The 12-year-old stayed behind for question and answer discussions with the religious leaders of the temple. The second event was the marriage celebration at Cana. On both occasions, Mary and Jesus both used the four relationship stress behaviors, the SAFE process, in their mother-son conflicts.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE AT AGE 12 (Lk 2: 41-52):

1. See the other’s needs and respond:

Mary: Concern for Jesus’ welfare: “Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Jesus: “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” Though “they did not understand what he said to them,” his need for food and sleep and safety, here among the temple religious teachers, was met.

2. Ask questions to get at the truth of the conflict situation:

Mary: “Child, why have you treated us like this?”

Jesus: “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father’s house?”

3. Forgive by way of positive response to restore peace to the relationship:

Mary: “They did not understand what he said to them” (about his Father’s house) But, “His mother treasured all these things in her heart.”

Jesus: “Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them” to maintain their relationship in love and peace for the next 18 years.

4. Express one’s own and the other’s needs:

Mary: “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Jesus: “Did you not know I must be in my Father’s house?” (which was my need!)

THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA (JN 2: 1-12)

1. See the other’s needs and respond:

Mary: “When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine.’”

Jesus: “Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’”

2. Ask questions to get at the truth:

Mary: “Do whatever he tells you.” (Mary’s solution to her own interior question, “What shall I do in response to my son’s ‘Woman, what concern is that to you or to me?’”)

Jesus: “Woman, what concern is that to you or to me?”

3. Forgive by way of positive response to restore peace to the relationship:

Mary: “Do whatever he tells you.”

Jesus: “After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother.”

4. Express one’s own and the other’s needs:

Mary: “They have no wine.”

Jesus: “My hour has not yet come.”

These four behaviors of Jesus (and Mary) can easily become four simple but powerful exercises adaptable for training in all church ministries. For example, whether in pairs (preferable for getting each person fully involved), in groups (for their awareness of more possible examples), or individually in the seminar process’s Use of the Intellect Exercise:

- * Servanthood Exercise: One person in the pair mentions a sharable need. The other person responds with some possible way of trying to meet that need. They then switch roles. At the end of the exercise, ask the pairs to share their experience with the whole group.

- * Forgiveness Exercise: One person of a pair says something negative, but obviously not true (“Your ears are such a horrid purple color!”). The second comes back at the “hurtful” person with a positive statement to help rebuild the relationship (“You sure are handsome!”). This is followed by a discussion about their exchange.

- * Use of the Intellect Exercise: Have each person in your group think (eyes closed) of some relationship or other problem they do not have a solution for yet. They then ask themselves many questions about the problem. The facilitator can provide sample questions, such as “What is this problem all about?” Or out of the box, “What color is this problem?” After 15 minutes or so, ask everyone to keep their eyes closed and only raise their hand if they have not come up with a possible new solution to the problem. One or two raised hands in even a large group would be typical, as they experience the power of asking questions in solving relationship or other problems.

- * Speaking Out Exercise: This can be practiced in pairs or in a group that shares concerns they have for their own needs, within their family, neighborhood, or even their church. Depending on your level of comfort, you can ask for volunteers willing to speak.

For each of the four exercises, it helps to experiment with fellow ministry leaders so as to experience the process’s potential power. Adapt each exercise to your particular ministry. The final invitation for each exercise? Invite your participants to practice these four behaviors with their families and others, reminding them that Jesus used them in major instances of conflict with others.

In more recent times, regarding the stresses of human life, including relationships, Our Lady of Guadalupe told St. Juan Diego in 1530 CE (Sentences #118-119, in the “googlable” ancient document *Nican Mopohua: Here It Is Told*) (Readings in Classical Nahuatl) the following:

[S] “Do not fear...any sharp and hurtful thing.”

[A] “Am I not here, I, who am your mother?”

[F] “Are you not under my shadow and protection?”

[E] “Do you need something more?” |

Richard C. Brown, PhD, is the author of four books, including When Ministry Is Messy: Practical Solutions to Difficult Problems (St. Anthony, 2006), Manage the Mess of Family Stress: Gospel Solutions for Everyday Life (Liguori, 2011) and Help Your Child Make Friends and Be a Friend: Nurturing Lifetime Relationships (Liguori, 2012). He is a presenter across the U.S. of Catholic leadership training seminars and retreats, and a former teacher, therapist, student-teacher professor, and parish ministries director. Contact him at rb9781@earthlink.net and 1.800.542.1412.

Religious Education Tuition and Financial Assistance: Balancing Values

Tom Quinlan



A question was posed this fall in one of our deaneries about how to handle families needing financial assistance to have their children enrolled in parish religious education. While parishes are far from preparing to send out registration material for next year, the budgeting process for 2015-16 will be underway

in most parishes soon. So, perhaps it is a good time to look at tuition and financial assistance to families.

A good place to start is by reiterating the long-standing conviction in this diocese and implicit in Canon Law that no family should be denied parish faith formation due to financial constraints. In an era of continued faith erosion, when people come to us wanting formation for themselves and their children, we are obligated in every manner to receive them into the life of the parish and its ministries. (Perhaps here is where I could ask, “*What Would Pope Francis do?*” Of course, the more important question is, “*What would Jesus want us to do?*”)

Now, with this foundational principle of inclusion firmly established, there are lots of nuances to this matter of tuition and assistance. I think another primary concept to keep in mind is that it is important for parish religious education programs to generate adequate revenue. (Adequate is a relative term and will mean different things in different parishes.)

While we may not be in catechetical ministry for the money, we nonetheless need to make prudent “business” decisions that can bring in adequate (or better than adequate) revenue. Doing so allows for stability, sustainability, and success in our faith formation ministry efforts. Of course, parishes are responsible for providing a meaningful subsidy to support catechetical ministry. Religious education is something the church requires any parish to invest in on behalf of the people of God.

So, we are to try to generate adequate revenue or better while ensuring that no one is turned away due to legitimate financial need. How does one gauge legitimate need? Unlike the Catholic schools system, we don’t require tax returns and such documentation, nor do we have access to third-party companies to do the math for us.

As a result, parish directors and coordinators of religious education are left to sift through the information they have available. If a family is well-known and active in the parish, the information is greater and the decision about assistance is generally easier. If a family presents itself for assistance but is not active or even registered in the parish, the situation can be more difficult to discern.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVANGELIZE

I think a conversation is called for when families are asking for assistance, especially with those families who are less engaged in Catholic practice and the life of the parish. I call these interactions the “evangelization conversations.” As a parish DRE, I welcomed these opportunities to sit down with parents and talk about parish faith formation in the broader context of Catholic life and faith. While these conversations are labor-intensive, they can be highly life-giving (for both the family and for the catechetical leader) and fruitful in terms of a family opening itself to greater faith practice.

In the course of such conversations, one can also learn about family dynamics, including a family’s financial state. If a family is asking for financial assistance, I believe the DRE/CRE (or her agent) gets to ask pastorally-sensitive but pointed questions, including about the family’s stewardship support of their parish. (In some cases, asking for this or other documentation can be appropriate.)

I would generally shy away from granting a full waiver of tuition. This is not something that should be done quickly or easily. Doing so will establish a problematic pattern and one that others may learn about. There is value in what the parish provides in religious education and even most struggling families can pay a portion of the charges, even if only nominal. One evening out for dinner and entertainment for a family would go a long way to paying for religious education for a year. (Of course, if a full waiver is found to be warranted, please grant it.)

Work with the parent(s) to determine what is possible for the year. Explore a “payments approach” over the course of the year. This is often helpful and much appreciated by families. Explore this approach before discuss the waiving of tuition.



Regardless of how much assistance is ultimately extended to a family, I encourage the exploration of some manner of service or program involvement with the parent(s). If the assistance is significant, do not be afraid to communicate that this is an *expectation*. Then explore in what ways the parent(s) might be able to donate their time and giftedness in lieu of money. This, too, can be a graced opportunity to get a family more involved in the program and the broader parish. Hopefully, it can be presented and experienced as more than “time served.” (Perhaps, if there are not service needs available, you might consider requiring some additional faith formation participation from the parent(s) as a positive arrangement.)

The goals in play should be as follows, held in appropriate tension:

1. Bring the family more fully into meaningful and active Catholic faith practice
2. Include the children in the parish religious education program (or RCIA adapted for children)
3. Have the family invest in parish religious education as much as possible (financially and otherwise)
4. Establish a culture of accountability and appropriate expectation

To this last point, if a family fails to fulfill its commitment to you and the parish, you should certainly follow up and pastorally hold the parent(s) accountable. This should be another conversation, where both sides listen. If a family holds a bal-

ance on their account from the previous year, I think it is fair to call for the settling of that balance as part of the registration process. However, again, the DRE/CRE must use discerning pastoral skill in judging the appropriate course of action. Forgive a previous balance might be the right action to take. It simply depends on any number of variables.

WAYS TO INCREASE REVENUE

Permit me to name two ideas for increasing revenue to your program:

1. Considering having an additional line on your parish registration payment form. This line near the final balance line would allow for a donation, over and above the charges for tuition and fees. It could read “To assist needy families in our program” or something of that sort. A description of this in your form would help to clarify. Some families can give more as a donation.
2. Another possibility is to put a system in place whereby parishioners can pay for the religious education of a student — or even a family — along the lines of “adopt-a-child/family. This could also be helpful, both financially and if there is a connection established between the family and the benefactor.

Both of these suggestions hold promise for generating additional revenue without any meaningful downside.

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

Four Seconds: All the Time You Need to Stop Counter-Productive Habits & Get the Results You Want

By Peter Bregman

Reviewed by Dan Thomas



Recently, I came across a statement by an East coast bishop who said to a staff person, “We in the Church don’t do a good job of managing our people.” My experience in the church over the years has sometimes confirmed the truth of that statement. Good management is good spirituality, as this

book demonstrates.

Peter Bregman is a management consultant, whose book *Four Seconds* is a guide to management that includes spiritual, relationship, and business dimensions. Its approach is to use four seconds — the time it takes to breathe deeply — to pause, reflect, and decide how to respond to the situations of daily life and work. Nearly every chapter begins with a story from his own experience in the business, family, or relation-

ship worlds to put the reader in touch with his/her own life experience.

On his website, Peter’s mission is described:

Peter bases his work on the notion that everyone — no matter their job or level — has the opportunity to lead. Unfortunately, most don’t. There is a massive difference between what we know about leadership and what we do as leaders. What makes leadership hard isn’t theoretical, it’s practical. It’s not about knowing what to say or do. It’s about whether you’re willing to experience the discomfort, risk, and uncertainty of saying or doing it.

The idea of this process is to help us take the risk of leadership by doing three things: “change [our] mental defaults,” “strengthen [our] relationships,” and “optimize [our] work

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habits.” These actions are the titles of the three sections of the book.

Bregman recommends meditation each morning because it “refreshes us, helps us settle into what’s happening now, makes us wiser and gentler” (13). Some of the principles he presents are these:

- * Ditch the urge to be perfect
- * Make time for rituals
- * Prioritize relationships
- * Take the blame instead
- * Refuse to write someone off
- * Support others’ success
- * Offer to do others’ work

These human and Christian principles challenge the reader to be courageous enough to do the hard work they call forth. As he says, “When you have a strong reaction to something, take a deep breath and ask yourself a single question: what’s going on for the other person? Then, based on your answer, ask yourself one more question: What can I do or say that will help *them*.”

(121). I think this is what we are called to do as good human beings and good Christians.

I recommend *Four Seconds: All the Time You Need to Stop Counter-Productive Habits & Get the Results You Want* because it “preaches” a practical spirituality that can be part of one’s everyday life. It calls the reader to do the hard things that family, friend, and business relationships need to be truly life-giving for others and oneself. There are a plethora of things to do so it is important to choose those that you need to work on most for your personal growth now. My own include the performance challenge and the willingness to give honest feedback. This is a book to use to reflect on your life and relationships in order to strengthen, deepen, and grow them. What could be more Christian than that? |

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



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No Joy on the Internet

Claire M. McManus



The Internet is the miracle of communication of our age, but with any contrivance of human imagination, that which makes us soar to the heights can bring us crashing down like the Tower of Babel. The Internet, miracle of global connectedness, blithely delivers information and entertainment to the masses, but when mixed with human frailty, can be transformed into a monster. Thus, we are plagued by the 21st century phenomenon of Internet addiction.

Internet addiction undermines the fabric of our relationships. It is so prevalent in our society that the latest edition of FOCUS, the pre-marriage inventory used to prepare engaged couples for marriage, has added several questions that deal with Internet use. The questions help couples identify potential abuse before it brings about the breakdown of their marriage. Unlike substance abuse, with its obvious physical manifestations, the symptoms of Internet addiction are subtle and easily dismissed. People who are addicted to the Internet lose track of time while online or have trouble completing tasks at work or home. They become isolated from family and friends, or feel guilty and defensive about their Internet use. And most telling, they feel a sense of euphoria when involved in some Internet activity, celebrating a false sense of happiness that has little to do with true joy. Internet addiction steals away hours of productive time, and whittles away at relationships.

Once again, human beings are looking for happiness in all the wrong places. As Pope Francis warned, “Our technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 7). Beware of searching the Internet for friendship, happiness, and relief from stress; the monster that lies sleeping is waiting to be awakened.

DANGERS FOR TEENS

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to Internet excess, although adults are not immune either. The Internet is a haven for young people, but it can be a very dicey place to hang out. They often sit alone in their rooms, unsupervised and with only their own judgment to guide them. Maybe they take a few minutes away from the stress or boredom of homework to play an innocuous game online with strangers. The minutes soon turn into hours, and the homework never gets done. The stranger may not be a fellow teen, but a hacker sitting in wait for a victim. All of this is going on while parents are in the next room, assuming that their child is engaged in some benign activity.

This was the scene in many homes around the country when their children became the victims of the latest danger on the

Internet: SWATTING. The gaming opponents were actually hackers waiting to perpetrate this crazy prank. The hackers gain access to the phone of the online gamer and then generate a distress message to the police. The 911 dispatchers are tricked into deploying an emergency response based on the false report of an ongoing critical incident. Episodes range from minor annoyance of fabricating a police report that discredits the victim, to large scale scares that required the deployment of bomb squads, SWAT units and other police units, replete with the concurrent evacuations of schools and businesses.

The danger sometimes is from within. Today’s teens are so tech savvy that they can break through the safety nets placed around them and find access to the worst that the Internet has to offer. Teens have hacked through the controls placed on the iPads supplied by their schools so they can search for adult webpages. A distraught parent reported that her child was taught how to do this and her once innocent middle school boy is now addicted to porn.

The casual online gamer may not be the next victim of the SWATTING prank, but the obsessive engagement in the gaming fantasy is a symptom of a larger issue. Using one’s technological acuity to gain access to X-rated websites is a giant red flag flying in our face. No addiction can be resolved by just saying no. Parents can monitor computer use, set clear limits of time spent online, or find the latest apps to lock their kids out. This is only part of the solution. Gaming could be an escape from stress in a young person’s life, or also a flight from the reality of an unwelcoming situation with friends or school. Children who are forever in their gaming world are sending us a message that shouldn’t be overlooked. Obsession with cybersex belies an emotional immaturity that can lead to real problems in forming relationships.

FINDING REAL JOY

The best solution may be to spend more time with the child and away from the computer, both as parents and as church. We have a built-in access point for human connection, which we call Communion. Even though budgets have dried up many vibrant youth programs that used to be a hallmark of the Catholic Church, we have never lost the hub around which the wheels of the parish turn — Eucharist. The church cannot replace the role of the parent in addressing the needs of at-risk teens, but by identifying the dangers and offering to partner with them, we can be part of the solution. Perhaps an evening of Eucharist, followed by inter-generation fellowship, may be the start of restoring equilibrium to the imbalance that drives their need for cyber-connection. First, we offer real joy, and then all else will fall into place. ■

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

Evangelizing Through Art

Michele Harris

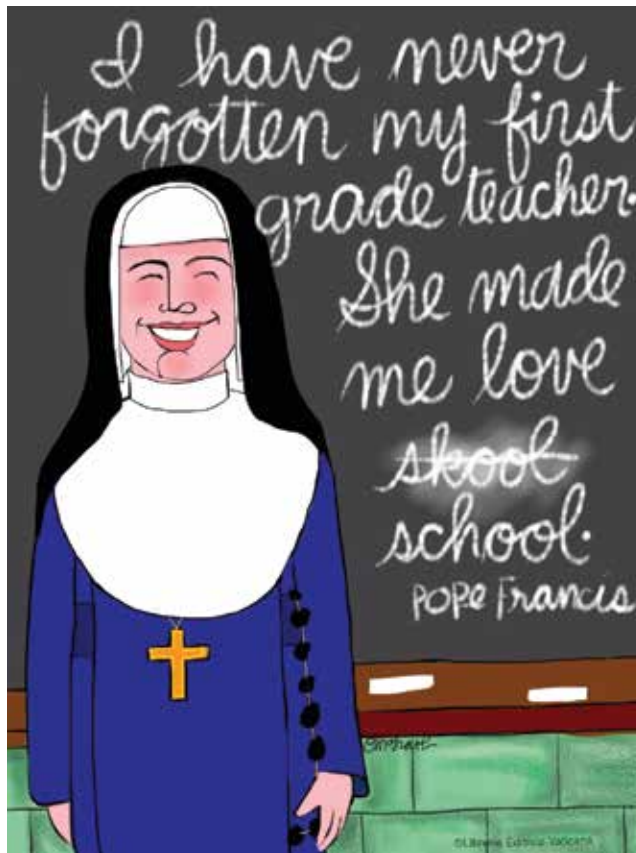


Mondays have a way of starting slow with the weekend behind and a whole week of activity ahead. Arriving at my office and turning on my computer brings a small wave of energy as I look forward to the weekly message from Br. Mickey O’Neill McGrath, OSFS. He started e-mailing reflections during Advent 2013 and was encouraged by the recipients to continue the practice during Lent 2014. He now sends reflections on a weekly basis to some 7,500 recipients.

Every e-mail opens with a burst of color, often a quote, many times a simple picture. The message is short, yet pertinent to life and the events of the day, both within our faith and throughout the world. I now begin my Mondays with a message that is unique, bold, faith-filled and colorful. Social media and technology are used along with Br. Mickey’s artistic talent to evangelize and spread a passion for the faith to more people than could previously be imagined.

Br. Mickey, a resident of Camden, New Jersey, identifies his ministry as one of presence. His studio overlooks the poorest of poor within a section of the city that many choose to avoid and ignore. His belief that beauty brings hope and peace is his mission to the neighborhood. Recently, he gave a retreat to a group of men at Sacred Heart Parish, inviting them to help paint six murals in the new Joseph House Men’s Homeless Shelter.

Br. Mickey created the outline of the scenes from St. Joseph’s life, identified each section with a number, and then asked the men to begin painting the large paint-by-number panels. The



men, intimidated at first, found joy as the scenes came alive. Some of the homeless guests at the house became involved in the project. The murals provide the story of struggle, courage, and faith to those who find everyday life a challenge.

Br. Mickey shares, “Living and working in the most dangerous city in the United States, and one of the poorest, I have discovered new meaning for my talents and gifts; the revelation of unexpected beauty which crosses paths with the pain and challenges I see before me every day.”

The Holy Spirit has a special place in the artwork of Br. Mickey. Besides guiding and directing his pieces, the Spirit is present in many of his works as a haloed dove. Reflecting on his images with the dove always provides growth opportunities for me.

The Holy Spirit, a small and quiet presence, stimulates my response and feeling to works portrayed, such as: grasping the hand grips on a crowded bus; wings outstretched joyfully gliding on the front of a sleigh; hospitably pouring tea; wearily resting on the head of the Virgin; or contemplatively watch-



ing a sunrise. The dove is never the main theme of the picture, always a little side note. Br. Mickey's portrayal of the Holy Spirit beautifully speaks of the existence of the Holy Spirit in our everyday life, journeying with us towards Christ.

The beauty created by Br. Mickey has been shared through 11 books along with countless magazine covers, posters, cards, and calendars. His latest book is *Dear Young People — Inspiration from Pope Francis for Everyone* (WLP).

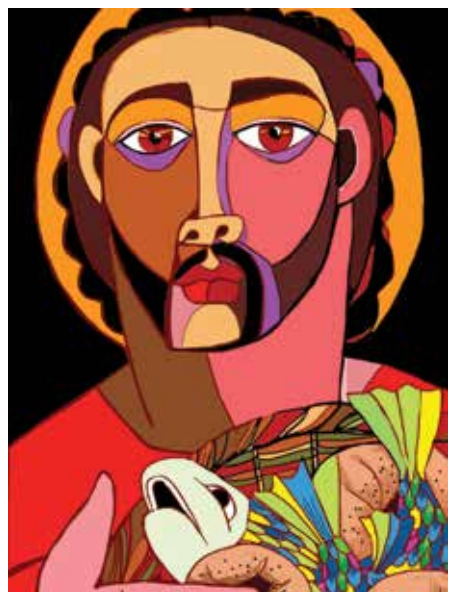
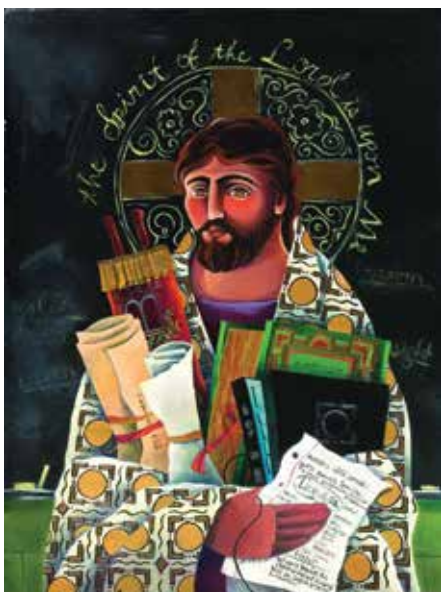
He has received awards from the Catholic Press Association, Association of Catholic Publishers, Moonbeam Children's Book Publisher, Thea Bowman Black Catholic Education Foundation, Illumination Book, and has been officially designated a "Guild Master" by the Grunewald Guild. More important than awards, his works share the stories of our faith, the lives of the saints, and the tenets of social justice teaching. His paintings are full of symbols and alive with color — feeding the spirit, morally challenging, instilling peace, or providing joy.

Enriching for adults and children, his sacred art and stories may be found at: bromickeymcgrath.com. You may also like him on Facebook at facebook.com/bromickeymcgrath.

Br. Mickey is one of the keynote presenters at this year's NCCL annual conference starting May 18, 2015. His presentation, "Encountering the Good News through Art" will share with participants how art can lead us to a deeper understanding of our faith. We hope you will join our annual conference, growing in our catechetical mission and ministry, seeing and hearing the message of faith that Br. Mickey has to share. |

Michele Harris is a pastoral minister at St. Francis de Sales Parish in Salisbury, Maryland.

Images, left to right from previous page: From *Dear Young People — Inspiration for Everyone* by M. McGrath, OSFS; From *Dear Young People — Inspiration for Everyone* by M. McGrath, OSFS; From *At the Name of Jesus: The Way, The Truth, The Life* by M. McGrath, OSFS; From *Blessed Art Thou: Mother, Lady, Mystic, Queen* by M. McGrath, OSFS; *Hungry, and You Fed Me: Homilies & Reflections for Cycle C* by M. McGrath, OSFS



At Work in the Vineyard: Frazzled in the Vineyard

Brigid Johnson



When I began my career as a parish catechetical leader in the Diocese of Knoxville in 2001, a friend, Fr. Evan, made me promise to go to at least one conference or one retreat each year. It was good advice. However, when the diocesan director called me that first spring and offered me the opportunity to go to the East Coast Conference, I said that I just didn't have the time. She told me that was the dumbest thing and that I'd better plan to go.

My first experience of the East Coast Conference was well worth the time and money. It was an opportunity I might have easily lost due to my lack of foresight.

PCLs work hard. We focus on our programs, and our students, and often forget about our own selves. We are the co-workers in the vineyard, but because of our busy-ness, we are often frazzled in the vineyard.

Our diocese sponsors a retreat every February for catechetical leaders called "Frazzled in the Vineyard." These retreats have always been calm and soothing. They aren't for problem solving. Rather, they offer us time to relax and reflect. We have reflected on Scripture with colors, with national catechetical leaders, and local speakers. We have walked with saints, have heard stories of finding God in the Everglades and raising a family in a challenging world.

A retreat provides time for reflection and renewing our relationship with God. We leave behind the usual distractions for a period long enough to allow an inner change to occur: the ongoing conversion of heart that is critical to deepening faith.

There are many reasons for going on a retreat, but the best one may be that Jesus retreated. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert before he began his public ministry. He often "departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). He knew there were many matters that needed his attention, but he also knew that it was essential to make time for prayer and to focus on his relationship with the Father.

He called his apostles to retreat, as well. When they returned from being sent out, "He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place" (Mk 6:30-32).

OTHER WAYS TO RETREAT

After retreats, local and national conferences are the next best opportunity to get away and unwind. While we go to learn, hear new ideas, and see new resources from the publishers, the best part is connecting with other frazzled co-workers in the vineyard. Talking with other PCLs who are coping with similar issues can greatly improve your outlook on life. And you never know who you might meet who can share insight on an issue or provide a service that you need.

Budget woes in all of our dioceses and parishes are cutting into our ability to attend retreats and conferences. We need to find creative ways to finance such events. Many dioceses have retreat houses that offer very reasonable prices for an individual retreat experience. For that important facet of networking,

*You need to make time
to get away, take deep breaths,
and refresh your mind.*

- ✱ Ask your diocesan director to sponsor a day of reflection for PCLs.
- ✱ Ask one of the publishers to sponsor a speaker.
- ✱ Share the responsibilities of location and refreshments among other PCLs.

If you absolutely can't get away, there are online retreat resources. Loyola Press has a daily 3-minute retreat you can receive in your inbox. St. Monica's in Indianapolis offers an inspiring daily reflection. The USCCB provides video reflections on the daily scriptures. The App store has some gems, too. Type "Catholic" in the search box and discover apps to entice you. Sometimes three to five minutes can make all the difference in your day.

You need to make time to get away, take deep breaths, and refresh your mind. You need to take care of yourself. Otherwise, you will become frazzled in the vineyard. ■

Brigid Johnson is a cradle Catholic who fully embraces Vatican II and all it taught. She has been a PCL for 20 of the last 40 years in large and small parishes, rural and urban; currently serving with the Paulist Fathers in Knoxville, Tennessee. Brigid has a Masters Degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in New Orleans and a Master Catechist Certificate from the Diocese of Knoxville.

Evangelizing Families

Jamin Herold



Yesterday at Mass, during the Communion Rite, my five-year-old daughter, Gianna, looked at me and said, “Can I get a kiss from Jesus?” She does this often after I have received the Eucharist. As Jesus is in my mouth, she wants a kiss from me so she can be physically close to Jesus, even though she cannot receive him yet. It melts my heart every time. When my kids do things like this it brings home to me what was written in the *Lineamenta* for the XIV Ordinary Synod of Bishops, “the family needs to be rediscovered as the essential agent in the work of evangelization” (2).

Those who work in catechetics know that the problems boil down to one major issue: many families are not being agents of evangelization. Unfortunately, these same issues are starting to occur among students of Catholic schools as well. Yet, we seem to continue to plow on as we have for years. Sure, we add evangelization to our titles, we try to change some of our teaching to include kerygma, or to be more invitational, and we now try to catechize *and* evangelize in 45 to 90 minutes a week.

The shift has happened in families that the parish religious education or the Catholic school’s job is to “do the religious thing,” and “we don’t do that at home, they get that during class.” Often a second grade religious education class feels like a second grade reading class full of students who have never learned the alphabet, let alone seen a book. There is such a focus trying to help those students who have never even heard of God, that the evangelized in the classroom are bored, lost, and have no desire to be at the class.

FROM CHILD-BASED EDUCATION TO FAMILY-BASED EVANGELIZATION

As catechetical leaders we have become enablers. We continue to program around the convenience of the families, setting up a format where parents are not expected to do anything but drop their kids off, and never reaching out to parents and families in need of a spiritual life-saver. We gather to complain, to

voice concern, to moan, and groan. We change programs, we buy technology, we add more training to our parish catechetical leaders, but we never look to the root problem, or seek the needs of those we are trying to reach.

So it is time to “make a mess in the streets” to use a colloquialism from Pope Francis. We must strengthen the faith of the families. We have to stop being enablers of a culture within the church that wants to do only the minimum. We must demand that the people of faith be “either cold or hot” so as to not be “spewed” from the mouth of God (see Rev 3:15-16). Our focus must shift from a child-based education to family-

based evangelization, based on the road to Emmaus, where we walk *with* the families. We know that many families are in crisis — from absent parents, to divorce, to sexual issues, the list goes on. We have to prepare ways to journey the faith with the saints and sinners of families.

Sacramental preparation, in particular, needs to include an evangelization of the whole family, not just the child. Catechetical leaders need to focus on assisting the parents in their role as primary educators, instead of replacing them. Initially, there will be frustration; there will be challenges. As we

stop the enabling, some families and catechetical leaders will revolt. But it is time to “be not afraid,” and start the genuine conversations about evangelizing families. ■

Jamin Herold is a Catholic, husband, and father of five. He has worked within the church in catechesis and evangelization for over 15 years. Jamin is currently the Associate Director for the Secretariat of Catholic Education and New Evangelization focusing on new evangelization for the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan. He can be reached at jherold@dioceseofkalamazoo.org.

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Investing in Lifelong Formation

Leisa Anslinger



Much has happened in the church and in parish life since *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* (OHWB) was published by the US Bishops in 2000. Adult faith formation plans have been developed in some parishes and dioceses, with increased participation by adults in retreats, mini-courses, small faith

communities, and sacramental preparation to name a few. There is an increased awareness of the need for evangelization, in part due to recognition of the increasing numbers of unaffiliated people, particularly young adults, and in part in response to papal and regional re-emphases on the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ. Learning and formation processes for catechetical ministers are available in in-person and virtual format, with greater numbers of catechists and catechetical leaders being reached through innovative delivery that is not time- nor place-dependent.

All this said, catechetical ministry with and for adults has also experienced challenges and setbacks: diocesan leaders often note that fewer resources (people, materials, and financial resources) are available in parishes and dioceses, even while demand for quality processes increases. As trained and formed leaders retire or move to other forms of ministry, those who follow in their roles often do not have formal training. Many arrive in a part-time capacity (sometimes part-time volunteer), even though meeting the expectations will require full-time attention. And while there is an increased emphasis on the new evangelization, this has sometimes resulted in a misunderstanding about the nature of evangelization, and our Catholic appreciation of the need for ongoing evangelization for all, drawing people more deeply to Christ as disciples throughout the lifespan.

TAKING STOCK OF THE REALITY OF ADULT FORMATION

If you are reading this journal, it is likely none of the above is surprising. It is important for us to occasionally take stock of our situation, particularly in light of the ongoing need for development of adult faith formation processes and plans. What does this awareness lead us to consider in this Easter season and as we conclude the many programs that function during the academic year?

Adult faith formation is normative and therefore a priority. We sometimes lose sight of this, I believe in part because our budgets often reflect the financial realities of children's programming and sacramental preparation. "Such lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church's

catechetical ministry; moreover, it must 'be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it'" (OHWB, 13).

As such, we must continue to promote and advocate for adequate resources (people, materials, and financial resources) to ensure that AFF is a priority.

Adult faith formation is multi-faceted. Knowledge of the faith, while of vital importance, is not the only element of faith formation for adults or anyone. Prayerfully studying and discussing OHWB and the General or National Directory for Catechesis, and aligning our plans with those documents will ensure that all the elements of faith formation are reflected in our plans and strategies.

Have you noticed I assume there is a plan in place or in development? Planning ensures that we are not only reactive but proactive, and that our responses to the current needs of all parishioners are carried out in relationship to the plan.

The plan is developed through prayerful discussion and consultation with a wide representation of parishioners, taking into account the needs, hopes, and desires of as many segments of the parish community as possible.

All this is accomplished through the ministry of well-formed leaders. In my experience, many parishioner leaders do not consider themselves leaders at all. In fact, many parish staff members shy away from the thought of themselves as "leaders," noting that the pastor and other clergy are the leaders. Surely the pastor and clergy are leaders. However, each of us is called to be, and is in fact, a leader as we guide others to Christ and to living discipleship. Our plans and strategies will only be as effective as the time, dedication, and formation invested in them by parishioners and staff as servant leaders.

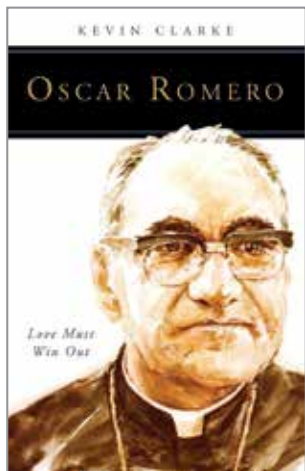
This requires us to invest in people and their formation as leaders through time at meetings, special in-service or retreat opportunities, and courses, seminars, and collaborative learning experiences. The time and resources invested to form our leaders may seem extraneous to the needs of adult faith formation in our parish, and yet cannot — must not — be considered so. Forming leaders ensures the effective implementation of strategies in the short term, and the impact of all who are touched by the leaders and your processes now and in the future. ■

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

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

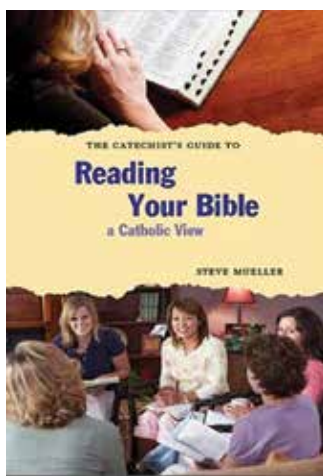
Compiled by Dan Pierson

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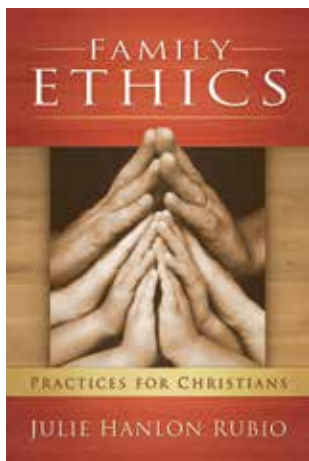


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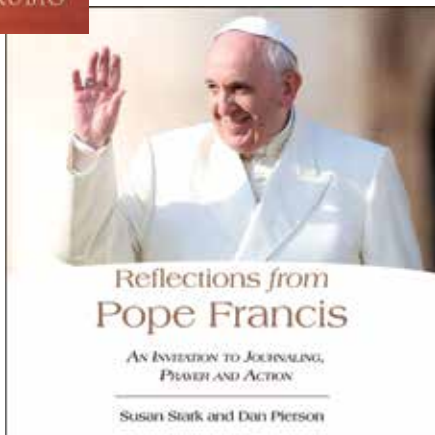
The Catechist's Guide to Reading the Bible: A Catholic View by Steve Mueller. Faith Alive Books Publishing.



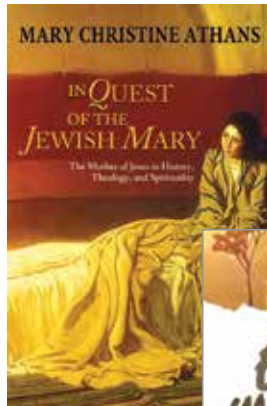
Family Ethics: Practices for Christians by Julie Hanlon Rubio. Georgetown University Press.



Reflections from Pope Francis: An Invitation to Journaling, Prayer, and Action Paperback by Susan Stark and Daniel J. Pierson. Tarcher/Penguin.



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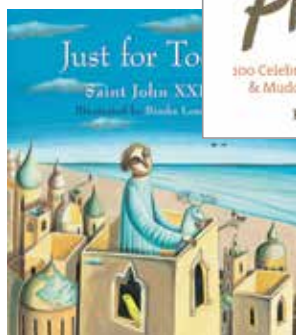


In Quest of the Jewish Mary: The Mother of Jesus in History, Theology, and Spirituality by Mary C. Athans. Orbis.

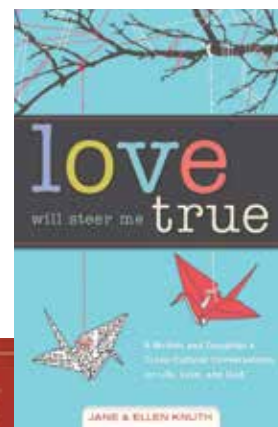
A Book of Uncommon Prayer: 100 Celebrations of the Miracle & Muddle of the Ordinary by Brian Doyle. Ave Maria Press.



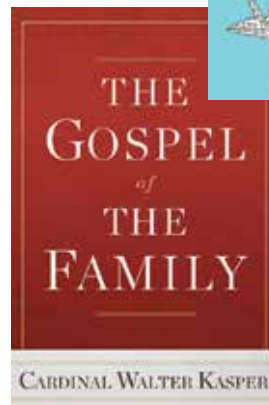
Just for Today: Saint John XXIII by Bimba Landmann. Eerdmans Publishing.



Love Will Steer Me True: A Mother and Daughter's Conversations on Life, Love, and God by Jane Knuth and Elizabeth Knuth. Loyola Press.



Gospel of the Family by Cardinal Walter Kasper. Paulist Press.



Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good by N. T. Wright. HarperOne. |



Dan Pierson has served as a catechist, Catholic school teacher, parish and diocesan director of religious education. He is the founder of *eCatechist.com*, *faithAlivebooks.com* and *Faith Alive Books Publishing*. Contact him at pierson.dj@gmail.com.

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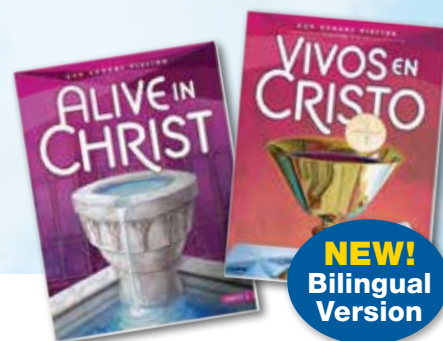
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