



# CATECHETICAL LEADER



## EVANGELIZATION THROUGH ACCOMPANIMENT

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Sorting Fish: What the New Evangelization  
Might Learn From the RCIA

Create a Family Culture of Spirituality

Mercy Me, Mercy You: A Parish Catechetical  
Leader's Primer for the Coming Jubilee

**I**dentidad  
católica  
BILINGUE

Sadlier  
**CREEMOS**

## Catholic Identity Edition for Grades K–6

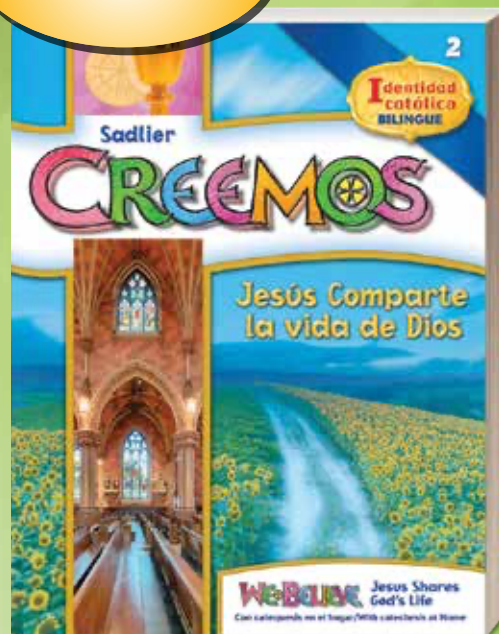
Especially designed for the Latino community, Sadlier's complete bilingual catechetical program inspires, equips, and nourishes the whole family to know, love, and live the faith.

In the new Catholic Identity Edition, you'll find:

- Inspiring **Catholic Identity Retreats** that nurture spiritual growth while helping develop and sustain fruitful relationships with Jesus Christ
- A **Leader's Guide** that provides support to strengthen faith formation throughout your parish's community
- **Latin American Traditions and Catechesis at Home** that build and solidify your students' and their families' Catholic faith
- **Catholic Identity Q&A** with grade-specific and age-appropriate responses
- **Home Companion/Family Resources** that increase families' involvement with prayer and devotions correlated to each Catholic Identity Retreat

**New Edition!**

Coming January 2016



TO VIEW OR REQUEST A SAMPLE, VISIT  
[www.Sadlier.com/Creemos](http://www.Sadlier.com/Creemos)

FOR MORE BILINGUAL/SPANISH RESOURCES, VISIT SADLIER'S  
BILINGUAL WEBSITE AT [www.Sadlier.com/Bilingual](http://www.Sadlier.com/Bilingual)  
SPANISH BLOG AT [www.Creemosycompartimos.com](http://www.Creemosycompartimos.com)

# CATECHETICAL LEADER Table of Contents

November 2015

## In Every Issue

- 4 **From the President** Ken Ogorek  
*Province Experiences Color NCCL Perception*
- 5 **From the Executive Director** Margaret Matijasevic  
*The Fiat: Let It Be Done*
- 24 **Book Review** Reviewed by Dan Thomas  
*Charity Detox: What Charity Would Look Like If We Cared about Results*
- 26 **PCL Perspectives** Justin Huyck  
*Ministry and Mobility*
- 27 **New Evangelization on a New Continent** Claire M. McManus  
*Breathing a Soul into the Technocrat*
- 28 **From the Intercultural Committee** Daniel S. Mulhall  
*So Many Ways to Learn about Culture*
- 29 **Diocesan Director's Forum** Anne Jamieson  
*Encounter in Sacramental Preparation: The Art of Listening to Parents*
- 30 **Adult Faith Formation** Leisa Anslinger  
*Accompaniment in Adult Faith Formation*
- 31 **Notable Resources** Dan Pierson

## Features

- 6 **Sorting Fish: What the New Evangelization Might Learn From the RCIA** Michael Marchal
- 11 **Take Aim: Family Involvement in Faith Formation** Jo Ann Paradise
- 14 **Create a Family Culture of Spirituality** Patricia M. McCormack, IHM
- 18 **First Sacrament Preparation with Families** Laura Weatherington
- 20 **Mercy Me, Mercy You: A Parish Catechetical Leader's Primer for the Coming Jubilee** Reynolds R. (Butch) Ekstrom
- 22 **Hawaiian Videos on Sacraments Receive "New Wineskins" Award** Jayne Mondoy & Darlene J.M. Dela Cruz

## NCCL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ken Ogorek <i>President</i> Archdiocese of Indianapolis	Jayne Mondoy <i>Treasurer</i> Diocese of Honolulu	Teresa Burns <i>At-Large</i> St. Robert of Newminster Church, Ada, MI
Libiá Paez Howard <i>Vice President</i> Archdiocese of Chicago	José Amaya <i>At-Large</i> Archdiocese for the Military Services	Richard Drabik <i>At-Large</i> University of Dayton
Ellie Nelson <i>Secretary</i> Diocese of Rockford	Most Rev. Christopher J. Coyne <i>NCCL Episcopal Advisor</i> Diocese of Burlington, Vermont	Bryan Reising <i>At-Large</i> Diocese of New Ulm

## NCCL STAFF

Sally Russell, SSJ <i>At-Large</i> Archdiocese of Baltimore	Margaret Matijasevic <i>Executive Director</i>
Michael Steier <i>Ex-Officio</i> USCCB, Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis	Gina Garroway



*Sorting Fish: What New Evangelization Might Learn From the RCIA* page 6



*Take Aim: Family Involvement in Faith Formation* page 11



*Create a Family Culture of Spirituality* page 14



# PROVINCE EXPERIENCES COLOR NCCL PERCEPTION

Ken Ogorek



## National Conference For Catechetical Leadership



“Why should I belong to a professional organization?” As we continue to seek new members while serving current NCCL members, it’s good to have a concise, compelling answer to this very legitimate question.

Here is how I arrived at my own answer to this question. My sense of NCCL membership is rooted in the experience of gathering with fellow leaders at a province level.

### “WHAT IS NCCL?”

Almost 20 years ago, I started doing diocesan catechetical work. Two or three months after starting, I was invited to a province meeting. It was a great experience. The fellowship I enjoyed was a preview of how province activity and national involvement would — and still does — nourish and refresh my spirit. There’s nothing quite like sitting down with folks who do what you do, sharing your joys and even a few frustrations, all with an eye toward being better servants of God’s people — all by his grace. It is the fellowship of our professional organization, experienced first at the province level, that stands out for me as a vital benefit of membership.

### PROFESSIONAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Some of the best province meetings I ever attended included a component of professional and spiritual development. All great ways to spend a block of time at province meetings included: a local expert on a pertinent, church-related topic; a focused and intentional discussion of a recent magisterial document; and a time of spiritual reflection facilitated by a person in ministry who has a sense of what ecclesial administration entails. By extension, the spiritual and professional development potential and opportunities when NCCL gathers for our annual national meeting are in many ways unparalleled. The church in the United States is largely present at our national gathering, and in that context we can enjoy timely and relevant experiences of professional development as well as praying and worshipping — celebrating the Holy Eucharist, even — around a table that includes representatives from throughout our nation.

### SHARING OF RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES

“What project have you recently completed?” “Name some efforts that are either currently underway or soon to start in your work of catechetical leadership?” I love the agenda item at province meetings generally known as Diocesan Sharing. Why reinvent the wheel? Although we constantly adapt various efforts to the unique needs of our faith communities, we needn’t start from scratch. When we gather as catechetical leaders at the province and national levels — and as we use technology to network in between our meetings — we share with each other the fruits of our reflection, labor, and expertise. What a great way to give support to our coworkers in the vineyard, receiving substantial help for our local work as well!

### A CONFESSION

I have plenty of work to do for my job as a catechetical director, so when I attend a province meeting, I’m not looking for additional projects, or products and services to produce outside of what I’m blessed to do in our local church. At times, though, a special project will generate much interest and enthusiasm at the province and national (NCCL) level. One great trait of NCCL is that if you’re looking for a professional organization that’ll afford you an outlet for creativity and energy beyond your local church, we can provide that for you.

### THE ELEVATOR PITCH

What, then, is NCCL and why should a parish or diocesan leader participate? My answer is: “NCCL is a group that provides me with fellowship, professional and spiritual development, and opportunities to share resources and best practices with nearby parishes, dioceses, and church leaders throughout the United States.” Your elevator pitch might sound different as NCCL is a somewhat multi-faceted organization.

I encourage you to plug into your province in a focused and intentional way. If your province is not active, please contact the NCCL office for assistance in functioning effectively at the province level. ■

415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017  
(202) 756-5512 • FAX (202) 756-5519 • E-mail [nccl@nccl.org](mailto:nccl@nccl.org)  
Website [www.nccl.org](http://www.nccl.org)

# THE FIAT: LET IT BE DONE

Margaret Matijasevic



The National Conference for Catechetical Leadership has a beautiful history of saying “yes” to God’s will. A long legacy of catechetical leaders, paving the way for catechesis, have made tremendous strides in working in the field to further the gospel message. They committed to a vision of sharing the Good

News, challenging societal values to include dignity, justice, prayer, and love for our God. We are the ongoing story of a remarkable history of leaders, who were not fearful to echo the faith loudly and firmly, and who mentored and nurtured various people to the vocation of catechesis. What a testimony of grace for us to behold!

This past summer the NCCL Board of Directors had the privilege of sitting with two remarkable leaders, Neil Parent, former Executive Director of NCCL, and Mary Ann Ronan, first Parish Catechetical Leader President of NCCL. Both invited us into the narrative of NCCL, learning of the rich roots of the organization, from its earliest gatherings as diocesan directors in the 1930s, its formal institution as NCDD (National Conference for Diocesan Directors) in the 1960s; its attachment and departure from the USCC (United States Catholic Conference); and our current place as the only national catechetical member-driven organization. The story of our “yes” is filled with depth and courage, passion and risk, creativity and progression.

## ACCEPTING THE INVITATION

As I sat through our board meeting, I found myself paying attention to people’s eyes, filled with excitement; words professing prayers of hope, and actions of dedicated, collaborative commitment. There is something remarkable when we know our story — when we know whose we are — and how we came to be. The imagery of Mary’s own Fiat is one that often depicts her contemplating the Presence before her, the invitation to become, and her own recognition of whose she is and how she came to be. In many ways, the Board of Directors was living fully into their own Fiat, responding with their uniquely created selves, but more importantly on behalf of you, the members and owners of this amazing legacy that has driven the national catechetical agenda.

There was a desire for the Board to commit themselves to the invitation of becoming, to serving fully the vision that was for

the respect of the members, and the organization’s growth in a joint relationship with each and every one of you. Not unlike Mary, who said yes for reasons beyond her own life’s story, but for the good of God’s people. A woman who entered into a full, mutual relationship with our God, not knowing where the journey would lead, but trusting in God’s care of her along the way. We, the Board of Directors, have agreed to such a journey ourselves, and request your prayers along the way.

With inspiration from our Episcopal advisor, Bishop Coyne, this fiat can be lived by each one of us. He shares,

My particular *fiat* has played out most especially in the promise of obedience that I made to my bishop when I was ordained. It was a *fiat* to that promise in the ceremony, yes, but it also was a *yes* in obedience to subsequent moments when I would be asked by him and his successors to serve the local church. A few years ago, though, I was in a great pastoral assignment. I was very content and figured I could say ‘no’ for a while. However, my spiritual director reminded me that I had promised obedience to my bishop so the next time I was asked to move and serve the church elsewhere, I really had to say ‘yes.’ I set myself to do so. Little did I know it would be the apostolic nuncio asking me on behalf of Pope Benedict to say ‘yes’ to being a bishop and moving to Indianapolis.

How beautiful our God is to provide to us the gift of relationship. In our response to God — in our personal “yes,” — we somehow surrender something within ourselves that better connects us with each other through love and trust in our God’s desire for us. Like Bishop Coyne, there is that “someone” who asked us, who summoned us, to become more fully who God created us to be. And together, as a networked group of professionals, we are a unified reflection of that summons.

As the Board of Directors transitions more fully into the living out of their “yes,” please hold each of us in prayer this Advent season. Like Mary, there is a trust in our God that is being responded to with some fear, but mostly with great desire — a desire to serve the national catechetical community with honesty, integrity, zeal, and vision. Pray for us and for God’s will for us. Let it be done! ■

---

*There is something remarkable  
when we know our story —  
when we know whose we are —  
and how we came to be.*

---

# Sorting Fish: What the New Evangelization Might Learn From the RCIA

Michael Marchal



The efforts in American Catholicism directed towards the new evangelization are crucial to the future of the church in this country. Those of us who celebrate Mass on Sunday have been noticing for a long time that there is usually plenty of room in the pews. And that feeling is corroborated by two facts.

First, the 2008 CARA Report from Georgetown described how ten percent of the U.S. population consists of former Catholics. Second, the same report also describes how almost one-third of the Catholics in the millennial generation have not been confirmed. The old evangelization seems not to have been working very well lately.

Blaming the situation on the purported flaws of post-Vatican II religious education is a pointless exercise. For every horror story told by a conservative, there is a matching one by a progressive. What I am certain of, though, is that trying to revive in our very different society the pedagogical methods of an immigrant, ghetto church is misguided. Is there instead a contemporary way to make intentional disciples?

What we have had for decades is an alternative approach to catechesis with adults, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. Where authentically implemented, this experience of coming to be a committed Catholic Christian has been very successful. Indeed, both the National Catechetical Directory (116) and the General Directory for Catechesis (58, 66) propose the RCIA as the “model and inspiration” for all attempts at catechesis and evangelization.

## THE RCIA APPROACH TO CATECHESIS: FOUR COMPONENTS

What is the specific pedagogical approach of the RCIA? One sentence in the Introduction (4) summarizes it well: “The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful.” Three elements from the catechesis of the unbaptized are the model proposed for dealing with anyone coming to fuller conversion — and especially with any outreach to the “fallen-away.”

First, “process,” not program. It is easy to slip into the school model and organize sessions and syllabi; yet the intellectual is only one component in mature conversion. People also need to grow emotionally, morally, and spiritually. And so prayer

and worship, outreach activities, and some form of spiritual direction must also be a part of the ongoing flow of this sort of primarily adult catechesis. (Many parishes have not gotten to this level yet in the practice of the RCIA.)

Second, “gradual,” there is no timeline. Since every individual’s growth in faith is unique, the process does have a goal, but it needs to flow at the pace of the participants.

Third, “the community of the faithful,” not just a relationship with the pastor or sponsor or the RCIA team. You learn to be church from the church. Common worship, shared service, and building relationships are all just as important catechetically as any presentation or discussion session. (I love the Protestant question: Have you found your church family?)

The fourth component to RCIA pedagogy is not expressed in this quote but is equally crucial. As its title says upfront, the RCIA is not so much a catechetical document as a book of rites. The public, liturgical context that it presumes will both mark and facilitate growth for the participants is fundamental. It has to be since the goal of Catholic evangelization is not a “me-and-Jesus-my-personal-Savior” spirituality but full initiation into the living Body of Christ, the church. And I suspect that lack of attention to the liturgical component is part of what is lacking in many attempts at the new evangelization.

Although it is the “model and inspiration” for all other catechesis, the RCIA itself is most definitely not the place for current or former Catholics to be re-evangelized. It originated as the process by which the unbaptized could be initiated into the life of the church. It is also meant for those who were baptized in infancy as Catholics but who have had no further formation to be catechized as they continue their initiation through confirmation and Eucharist. And so it has also become the place where most baptized Protestants are also catechized in order to complete their initiation.

## WHY WE HAVE TO SORT FISH

These three categories all have the sort of questions that beginners have. The questions that current and former Catholics have are very different — and more complex.

In addition to these four components that define RCIA pedagogy, those of us who have spent decades in this kind of work also have a very important bit of practical wisdom for those





engaged in the new evangelization. And that foundational insight is succinctly expressed in a classic RCIA phrase: we have to “sort fish!”

We have to carefully discern individual by individual what type of conversion is needed and how to get each participant to new life in the Spirit and a more authentic membership in the church. Years ago, Ron Oakham showed us in RCIA work how to distinguish between baptized and uncatechized Protestants (for whom the catechetical process involved in becoming Catholic would be seen primarily through the lens of *Christian initiation*) and baptized, catechized Protestants (for whom that process would be seen through the lens of *restoring Christian unity*). That distinction explains why some “candidates” get the whole catechetical and liturgical process and enter the church at Easter Vigil and why some spend a few months in preparation and enter on some Sunday.

It also reveals the hidden challenge in RCIA work: it is easy to discover whether a new participant is baptized or not. It requires real listening skills, a genuine empathy, and an openness to new questions in order to discover the degree not only of catechesis, but of conversion that each participant has attained,

So how do we sort these fish, this net full of diverse folks that the new evangelization pulls ashore?

### THE TWO LENSES OF RE-EVANGELIZATION

I believe that there is a theory that can guide us; for here too there seems to be two lenses through which we can view the people being re-evangelized: the lens of *owning their Christian*

*initiation* and the lens of *pastoral care*. If we are able to discern where individuals fall on the continuum defined by these two foci, we can authentically meet and effectively guide both their further conversion *and* any ritual needed to facilitate it. (We must never forget the liturgical component!)

### RETURNING MEMBERS

The liturgical and catechetical resources shaped by either lens are rich. If the lens of claiming initiation seems dominant, then participating in one of our many rites of public reaffirmation of faith such as the renewal of baptismal promises at Easter or professing the Creed almost every Sunday are all liturgical possibilities. For some, celebrating reconciliation as “second Baptism” is another — along with appropriate catechesis through the sort of spiritual guidance and small group work we are familiar with from our RCIA experience. (The Methodists would call this group returning members.)

### SEARCHING MEMBERS

If the lens of pastoral care seems dominant, then many public and private resources are available. Ritually there are the same rites of public reaffirmation as well as reconciliation celebrated more as forgiveness and healing. There are also the anointing of the sick and prayer for “deliverance” as the charismatics call it. Catechetically, there are professional psychological and spiritual counseling, support groups for the grieving, etc., 12-step programs, study groups, St. Vincent de Paul, and so on. (The Methodists would call these people searching members.)

Let us look then at seven different categories of people who are or who have been Catholic for whom some catechetical pro-

cess and ritual of reaffirmation of faith might be appropriate and see how looking through each lens might help us follow a process of discernment about each category.

### CATEGORY ONE: THE UNAWAKENED

There are those who “received the sacraments” growing up and have never drifted away, but whose practice of their religion has been a matter of family tradition or an ethnic or social phenomenon. They are the “born-Catholics” who are already converted to some degree intellectually, morally, and emotionally. Now, they are experiencing a deeper emotional and spiritual conversion, which is reanimating their inner life and communal connection. Their desire often originates because of a life event in their family or because of some new stage of personal development.

Catechetically they need to be invited into some ongoing ministry or small-faith group in the parish in order to give their new vitality a place to take deeper root.

Ritually if they skipped or missed confirmation earlier in life, then celebrating that ritual would make the appropriate fuller connection to the community of faith. If they did celebrate all three initiation sacraments, then they need some degree

of involvement in a rite of reaffirmation of faith as they claim more deeply their identity as initiated Christians.

It is important to realize that not everyone in this group is an adult. Many adolescents whose faith has been awakened and whose lives have been changed by a retreat would find some public acknowledgement of their newfound faith commitment helpful as they continue to grow into that part of their emerging identity. (If, as frequently happens these days, they skipped confirmation, celebrating that sacrament is another option.)

### CATEGORY TWO: THOSE WHO DRIFTED AWAY

There are those who have simply drifted away. They may still identify themselves as Catholic and are to some degree both intellectually and morally converted, but not emotionally. Now for some reason — often a significant event in their family or in the larger world — they are getting back in touch with their roots and are searching for meaning in their lives.

Perhaps the most common family event that brings people back is the birth of a child, an event that reawakens a sense of connection with their religious tradition. Once again, or perhaps for the first time, the parents are claiming their own identity as initiated Catholics.

## CATEGORIES OF BAPTIZED CATHOLICS WHO MIGHT REAFFIRM THEIR FAITH

CATEGORY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SITUATION	unawakened	drifted away	alienated sinner	alienated prophetically	alienated spiritual seeker	alienated by addiction, mental illness or emotional instability	deepening of faith
SOURCE OF CHANGE	positive or negative life event; personal growth & maturing	positive event: e.g., birth of child negative event: e.g., loss of loved one	moral maturing; repentance	longing for a holy community	longing for a richer community	longing for an accepting community	God’s call; spiritual growth and maturing
TOOLS	small faith community; outreach ministry	positive event: catechesis negative event: counseling, support group	therapy, counseling, support group, outreach ministry	small faith community; outreach ministry; activist organization	formal catechesis, spiritual direction, retreats, outreach ministry	therapy, counseling, support group	focused small faith group
RITUAL RESOURCES	Confirmation, Eucharist	Reconciliation, Confirmation, Eucharist	Reconciliation, Eucharist	Foot-washing, Reconciliation, Eucharist	Reconciliation, Confirmation, Eucharist	prayer for deliverance, Anointing of the Sick, Eucharist	Easter Vigil Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Eucharist



And that growing awareness is enough for the baptism of their child since the requirement for baptism is only that there be some “founded hope” that the infant will be raised as a Catholic (*Rite of Infant Baptism* #3 and the *Code of Canon Law* #868.2).

The American Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church have a more challenging timeline that presumes that a pregnant couple will be introduced and blessed at a parish service months before the birth and that the couple will participate in some sort of catechetical and spiritual preparation during pregnancy in order to lead up to baptism.

A similar program would be possible for Catholics as well, and the advantages of meeting the parents well before the birth of their child would be considerable — and might possibly help to avoid embarrassment. Some parents, for example, might need a deeper catechesis; some parents might benefit by celebrating reconciliation. All will publicly reaffirm their faith at their child’s baptism when the parents and godparents profess the baptismal promises as part of the ritual. (Though the rite calls for only the parents and godparents to do so, I have noticed that frequently the rest of those present feel called to do the same — and that involvement feels right if we are their supportive community.)

For those whose personal sense of loss has led them back, the lens of pastoral care is usually predominant. Grief work through counseling or a support group would be important. In some cases, reconciliation and prayer for healing might be important. Participating in some sort of public ritual of reaffirmation of faith could also be significant as well so that they experience solidarity with the community of Christian faith as they try to move on in life.

Those who have felt called back because of some larger world event such as 9-11 are more challenging to discern because their motives run the gamut of the spectrum. Only sensitive, honest, personal encounter can discern which lens should be used to facilitate the work of the Spirit within them.

### CATEGORY THREE: THE ALIENATED SINNER

Another group is made up of those who feel personally alienated from the community because of their own very real sins. They are usually intellectually and even emotionally converted but struggle with moral conversion and so desire forgiveness and reconciliation with both God and the community. Yet they bring certain complexities. On one hand, their past hypocritical behavior reveals a lack of moral conversion that has stunted their inner growth. On the other, their failings have often led them to a deeper personal insight. They have often matured from an external and legalistic understanding of sin as rule-breaking to an awareness of how what they have done and what they have failed to do has gravely harmed others and themselves. And that insight is the ground for their yearning not just for forgiveness, but for reconciliation.

Which of the two lenses is appropriate for them? The answer to the question of how to walk with them authentically lies

in their previous stage of growth. If their alienation was short-term, then they are probably reclaiming their Christian identity. If it has been long-term, then various forms of pastoral care such as counseling of various sorts or support groups would be needed. In either case, along with reconciliation some public reaffirmation could be helpful for both the individual and the community. (The issue of confidentiality would play a major role, though, in that decision!)

### CATEGORY FOUR: THE PROPHETICALLY ALIENATED

There are people who can make us uncomfortable because they are “prophetically” alienated. Often they are deeply converted emotionally, but their cynicism about what they see as the intellectual and moral flaws of the church has made them separate themselves from active membership. For example, judgmental attitudes on contraception or divorce or towards various minorities have driven many away. Clerical sex abuse and the accompanying cover-ups have driven many others away, especially the family members of the victims. Although their estrangement is based upon very real flaws in the church, they still long to be connected with a community of authentic holiness. The reconciliation needed *must* come, though, from a *mutual* recognition of the validity of their reasons for leaving and an attempt on the part of the church to live up to our ideals.

Which of the two lenses is appropriate for this category is a question that can once again be decided only on an individual basis. For those driven away because of a lack of mercy shown them or others, the lens of once again claiming initiation as a Catholic Christian is probably the best way to guide this process. For those who have suffered personally from the effects of victimization, the lens of pastoral care seems more appropriate. In either case personal involvement in outreach and ministry or in some group committed to a cause can add a crucial element to their experience of and reconciliation with the Catholic community.

The public ritual that seems appropriate in either case is not one of the usual ones by which Catholics reaffirm their faith, but rather the Holy Thursday foot-washing since it would recognize the fact of the church’s offense and the church’s humble desire for reconciliation.

### CATEGORY FIVE: THE ALIENATED SPIRITUAL SEEKER

This group is close to the fourth and in some cases overlaps. These are the spiritual seekers who have left the Catholic Church because they thought that they could not find authentic growth there and that might have been true in their concrete circumstances. The mega churches, for example, are often filled with ex-Catholics. Yet, somehow they feel called to reconnect with the Catholic community, perhaps because they long for the richness of a more historically grounded tradition.

Sometimes, though, I find myself puzzled and even wondering if they looked hard enough before they left. Intellectually, some seem not to know about the richness of Catholic tradi-

tion. In terms of spiritual practice, for example, Christian monasticism is almost as old as Eastern, and the mystical resources available within Catholicism are inexhaustible.

Some need a deeper moral conversion, often because on both the right and the left they have canonized a political or ethical statement as the litmus test for “orthodoxy.” Such a crusader mentality is always dangerous because it is too narrowly focused — witness the remarks by Pope Francis about the need for the church to expand its attention beyond a narrow range of moral issues, no matter how important those issues are in themselves.

And some need emotional conversion and an opening to the treasures of art and music that have been created by Christians for worship. Everyone has their own personal preferences, but the praise band at the megachurch is not the only way to lift up our hearts to the Lord.

Yet, like the prophetically alienated, the disaffection of this group is often justified. Many Catholics are ignorant or insensitive or boring. And some parishes are dead in the water. Yet the church is not a monolith, and the failure of some members does not mean the failure of the community.

And so deciding how to walk with someone in this category who is considering returning is a very individual discernment and requires openness to mutual reconciliation — much like the fourth category. Formal catechesis, spiritual direction, retreat work, outreach ministry — all are ways of opening for them the richness of the full communion of the church. And they too need some way of publicly reaffirming their return to that communion.

#### CATEGORY SIX: THOSE ALIENATED BY PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

There are those who often feel alienated because they have difficulties with addiction or mental illness, or who are on a personal level experiencing an anomic lack of a strong identity for some reason, perhaps a life transition. Their hope for support and healing is often the motive behind their desire to stay connected or to reconnect with what they hope will be a loving and understanding and accepting community.

The need for confidentiality and the stigma attached to such psychological challenges means that many such people are invisible. The recent development of the Semicolon Tattoo Movement is an indication of how much these people yearn for stability and support and not judgment from the larger community.

Yet, the psychologically challenged are often deeply converted people intellectually, morally, and emotionally. It is their struggle to maintain that conversion with stability that is a challenge both for them and for any individual or group within the Catholic community that walks with them. Thankfully, in our society there are many forms of support available for such people; yet the structured interactions and dependability of church ritual can also be a positive source of stability for them, a “safe” place to which they can keep returning. And

so their participation in celebrations of anointing of the sick and various rites for reaffirming faith can have a positive effect, whether celebrated in public or more in private.

#### CATEGORY SEVEN: THOSE DEEPENING THEIR FAITH

To end on a positive note, there are those in the light who wish it to shine more brightly. These are the already converted and practicing Catholics who now desire a deepening of their faith and would like to commit themselves to a concentrated period of spiritual growth individually or with a group of likeminded people — not so much along the model of a small-faith group (more appropriate for category 2), but more like an enhanced Lenten retreat program.

This group is probably going to experience that process under the lens of claiming their initiation even more deeply and would probably benefit from some sort of public reaffirmation of faith at the end of the process  $\frac{3}{4}$  perhaps the renewal of baptismal promises at Easter Vigil.

And so “we walk by faith and not by sight.” Despite the ambiguities and complexities of life, the light of the risen Lord and the fire of the Spirit guide us on the path of the kingdom. When we accompany those who somehow are living in a process of transition in the life of their baptism, we can guide them to fuller conversion, to love and peace and joy — but only if we walk with them honestly and humbly.

#### REAFFIRMING FAITH

The challenge is that in every one of the seven categories, some would benefit from a range of more or less public rites of the reaffirmation of faith. Although many possibilities for such a rite already exist in Roman Catholic liturgies, what further possibilities could be developed is a topic for extended discussion. Fortunately every mainline Protestant church in this country has developed some version of such a rite so we have some models to start from.

What I would share here in conclusion is the formula of reaffirmation from the rite used by the United Methodists for these are truly words of power and grace for anyone involved in evangelization.

Stir up in *[name(s)]* the gift of your Holy Spirit.  
Confirm their faith, guide their lives, and empower their service.  
Give them patience in difficulties  
and joy in the fellowship of all Christ’s true disciples. |

*Michael Marchal has degrees from Xavier University and Fordham University, and is retired after teaching high school for 44 years. He has been involved during that time with worship at Bellarmine Chapel of Xavier University and has served a term on the archdiocesan worship commission. He has published numerous articles on education and on liturgy and four books: Parish Funerals, Adapting the Liturgy, the award-winning The Spirit at Work, and Towards the Table. His hobby is cooking, and he is currently exploring desserts.*

# Take Aim: Family Involvement in Faith Formation

Jo Ann Paradise



At the 2015 NCCL Conference, there was no less than one keynote, seven sessions, and 11 quick fires that focused on family involvement in faith formation. No matter where you go in this country or in North America, for that matter, catechetical ministers are asking the difficult and haunting question,

“What will happen to the church if we do not reach these parents?” If you listen, you can actually hear the silent prayer to the Holy Spirit, “Recreate in us, O Lord, a heart renewed.” Surrendering to the creative power of the Holy Spirit, everyone from diocesan directors to catechists is searching for insight and wisdom as we face a true crisis of faith.

We have mined the catechetical documents, listened to psychological and sociological research about generations and culture, acknowledged and rightfully explored the power of technology, and yet we may still feel like the Israelites standing in the shadow of Goliath. When the challenge seems so overwhelming there is a possibility that it can immobilize us and cause us, like the Israelites, to be paralyzed.

You can hear the challenging words of Goliath in the voices that say: “My family is too busy to participate in this faith formation program,” “The church is just irrelevant,” “You are making my child choose between sports and God,” or “Are you saying we should be going to Mass?” We might learn how to respond to this giant if we take on the disposition of David.

In 1 Samuel 17, as David prepares to take on Goliath, Saul dresses him as soldiers have always dressed, in helmets and a coat of mail. The problem is it doesn't work for David. He is too small and the protection too heavy. He cannot walk. Not even the traditional weapon — the sword — will work this time. He cannot let Goliath get that close or he will be overpowered. So David literally strips himself of the norm of ancient armor and picks up five smooth stones. Turns out he only needs one! He takes aim and proclaiming his trust in God, fires that single shot. Goliath goes down.

As with all of God's living word, this narrative speaks to us in so many ways. When we apply it to the crisis of family faith formation it speaks volumes. What we have known as the norm for faith development in previous decades, is not meeting the needs of this age. The traditional age-specific classroom model has lost important components. This was only a part

of a faith formation process that was supported by family and parish life. It does not mean that it was never effective or that systematic and intentional catechesis is not necessary. In fact, the need to be able to articulate not only what you believe but why you believe it has never been more important. In a global world where you can access information instantly, faith without reason will not stand.

One of my cherished treasures that I have kept for 30 years is a hand-written note I once received from a student I taught in high school who had gone on to college. Here is in part what the note said, “I wanted to thank you, Ms. P for those religion classes I had with you. There is so much discussion in our dorms at night about so many things and what we believe often becomes part of the discussion. I didn't realize until now how important it is to be able to explain to others what you believe. Sometimes I feel like I am being grilled.”

## FINDING NEW ARMOR

In the 30 years that have passed since then, family and parish support have all but disappeared. There are a multitude of reasons, a topic for another discussion. What we are left with however is the *critical* need to realize that we are fighting a new battle but we cannot use the traditional armor. Like David, we need to summon the courage — and it will take courage — to take off the security of what we know and trust in God so deeply that we are willing to walk out with some new strategies.

There are many innovative and creative ways to approach the need to involve the whole family in faith formation. There are best practices being shared in dioceses and publishers have attended to the need as well (e.g. [aliveinchrist.osv.com](http://aliveinchrist.osv.com), home session plans), yet I have come to believe that there is one stone that responds to the heart of the problem, one single stone that offers us the best chance to evangelize our parents: a faith coach.

While I hear many people speak about the hunger people have today for the spiritual, that has not been my experience. There are some for certain who have reached a point on the journey that Sherry Weddell calls, “Seekers.” Yet, during any given sacramental preparation gathering (a standard touch point for people who are not the 20 percent of engaged parishioners), I would hazard a guess that they are hungering much more to get home to watch their episode of *Scandal* than to grow in relationship with the Lord. Evangelization in



this age requires more than just feeding the spark of faith God has given to each human person. It requires the slow process of chipping away at stony hearts. The phantom curriculum of the culture has heaped layers upon layers of ideologies and beliefs over that spark. Getting to the space that hungers, reaching that holy longing, requires a conscious and intentional vision.

The evangelization of parents requires more than innovative new programs. It begins first in meeting families where they are. Do we do any discernment with parents that would help both them and us to name, without judgment, how conscious and intentional they are in living their baptism? This step is critical if you believe in what Pope Francis calls, a journey of accompaniment. In education circles, this step in learning is called pre-assessment. It allows the teacher to individualize instruction for the learner. Do the parents who never celebrate Mass need the same formation as the ones who are faithful to Sunday liturgy? Do the parents who are in the midst of a bitter divorce need the same formation as the ones who are sending their child to the Catholic school because he was being bullied in the public system?

Yet, who of us in ministry has the time to personally journey with 1,000, 500, or even 75 families in such a time intensive way? Not one of us. That's why the model we will look at takes a team. A catechetical leader becomes the director of the symphony, but she has an orchestra. Now before you begin to think of all the reasons this won't happen, can't happen, is beyond imagining — read on. Have the courage to imagine what small things you can do that over time will move you and your parish to a new vision.

### WHY DO WE NEED FAITH COACHES?

The church calls the family the domestic church. She does so because she recognizes that whether the parents are conscious or unconscious of this reality, the family is the first place where God gathers us, forms us, and from which we are sent forth. Whether or not there is *intentional spiritual formation*, children are acquiring dispositions. Children satisfy the human longing to feel as if they belong, or not. They learn to attach, or not. They learn to trust, or not. Their inherent capacity toward the Transcendent is nurtured and supported, or not. In reality, they are either being formed or de-formed in the midst of family.



Evangelization begins with helping parents become conscious of the consequences of what they have chosen, or sometimes just allowed to happen. The one thing all catechetical ministers know for certain about every parent, regardless of their cultural, socio-economic, educational, or religious background, is that parents love their children. They cannot however, love them perfectly, for only God can. However imperfect our love in family can be, parents learn something more of God's love when they look in their child's eyes. When I was a child in those moments after a tense conversation, my mom would say to me, "I love you the best way I know how." Helping parents learn that what they do in their homes *is* the foundation for a life of faith, is how evangelization must begin. Providing parents

with a faith coach would help them see their lived experience through the eyes of faith. A faith coach would be someone who could help chip away at the stone around that spark of faith implanted by God. They would also be the human bridge between the parents and the rest of the parish.

### WHEN WOULD THE PROCESS BEGIN?

This process would work best if it began as baptismal preparation and followed the family through its time in faith formation. As you are just beginning this process, you may want to start with kindergarten or first grade. At this age, parents are often willing to attend activities in which their children participate.

### WHO CAN BE A COACH?

A faith coach would be a parishioner who has accepted the gift of new life in Christ, a disciple on fire with the love of God. She or he would also be recognized within the parish as a person who is committed to the communal life of the parish and is a vital, engaged member of Christ's Body here on earth, the Catholic Church. At the heart of a faith coach would be the skill of inviting questions and listening to responses. The coaches are not expected to be experts, but would be skilled at finding the "experts" who could provide for the needs of the family; getting an out of work father in touch with someone in the parish who assists the unemployed, connecting a single mom struggling to feed her children with the St. Vincent de Paul, putting the couple experiencing difficulty in their marriage in touch with the counselors at Catholic Charities, or asking the deacon to meet with someone who is confused

about a teaching of the church. Their essential work would be helping the parents to hear God's invitation to relationship and connect their lives to faith.

The training of these coaches does not necessarily have to be done by the already overstretched catechetical leader. Turning to spiritual directors and Christian counselors to train the coaches in listening and discernment skills is a natural choice. These women and men could also help the coaches learn the art of asking questions that evoke curiosity and inviting questions from the parents. The faith coach becomes the face of the parish's commitment to accompany these families as they walk with them through the thresholds of conversion — trust and curiosity. The gathering itself would help to develop a spirit of openness in the group that mirrors the openness of the faith coach.

### WHAT WOULD THE STRUCTURE LOOK LIKE?

Once a faith coach is trained, they would meet quarterly at the parish with the facilitator and the other coaches. They would be given the resources for the following months created by the parish staff. The faith coach would work with four to five families meeting every four weeks. If this model sounds familiar, it should. The General Directory for Catechesis tells us that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is also the model for other forms of catechesis. The purpose of these "life is spiritual" sessions (pre-Inquiry) is a systematic plan for chipping away at a stony heart. Another way of seeing this process is the spiritual work of accompanying a person by directing their focus. Through prayer, the word of God, responsive listening, and dialogue, you help parents begin to see themselves and the members of their family as God's creation, a creation that has a purpose. *The challenge here is to not give answers before there are questions.* No one cares about an answer unless the question has come from their experience. Prompting questions in response to listening is a fine art.

### WHAT WOULD A SESSION AND RESOURCE LOOK LIKE?

The resource would begin with a simple prayer to the Holy Spirit led by the faith coach that asks for openness to God's invitation and comfort for all the anxieties and stresses in the lives of the participants and the needs of the parish.

A short reading of a passage from a story, a movie clip, or perhaps a song from YouTube (e.g. "Happy").

The plan continues with some formulated questions that move the group to discussion. You may want to start with small groups of three or four within the group of ten until they become comfortable with each other.

Close the approximate one-hour session with a prayer that the parents will pray each session that gives thanks for the gift of their family, asks for blessings upon their family, and strength in their journey as parents.

These sessions may adapt over time to include spontaneous prayer and reflective reading of Scripture as the groups grows in their spirituality. What a joy it will be when they begin to "touch" that holy longing and ask to go deeper!

### GIRD YOUR LOINS AND LIGHT YOUR LAMPS

In chapter 12 of Luke, Jesus advises us, "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning." The phrase cries out the need for urgency while advising us to get ready for business. Can you not hear Jesus speaking those words to us *right now*? We have been working our fingers to the bone and emptying our hearts until they are almost dry. But we need some new lamps. We need to have the courage to reexamine. We need to keep what is necessary and good but then find a new way to reach into the hearts that have been deadened to the voice of their shepherd.

In a recent interview, the director of the film *Tomorrowland* spoke to why he wanted to make this film. He reflected on the picture of future that is often presented to our children in the movies as various forms of Armageddon. "What ever happened to hope," he said "and the possibility of a future of a better life?" The lamps we need to light are the lamps of hope, of joy, and of the possibility of imagining Jesus' salvation accepted and lived. A church where a parent in the process of readying their child for first Eucharist asks, "How is the parish helping our children to understand that they are sent to be Christ's Body in the world?"

If the very thought of that question gives you spasms of glee, then shed your armor, pick up your stone, take aim, and fire! ■

*Jo Ann Paradise, DMin, is a National Catechetical Consultant with Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum Division.*

## CATECHETICAL LEADER

**PUBLISHER:** National Conference for Catechetical Leadership

*Catechetical Leader* (ISSN: 1547-7908) is published six times a year by the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017.

Authors' views do not necessarily reflect those of NCCL. Letters to the editor and submissions of news items are encouraged. Send to *Catechetical Leader* at the address above or e-mail [nccl@nccl.org](mailto:nccl@nccl.org). Phone: (202) 756-5512.

Fax: (202) 756-5519. Contact NCCL for reprints.

Copyright © 2015 by NCCL.

**Subscription rates:** (U.S. addresses): One year, \$24; two years, \$42; three years, \$54. (Foreign addresses): One year, \$48; two years, \$86; three years, \$114. NCCL members receive *Catechetical Leader* as a part of membership. To subscribe, send name and address with check or credit card number to NCCL at address above.

**Bulk rate subscriptions:** 2–5 subscriptions, \$22 each; 6–10 subscriptions, \$20; 11–20, \$18; 21 or more, \$16.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to NCCL, 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20017

Please recycle CL.



# Create a Family Culture of Spirituality

Patricia M. McCormack, IHM



Like parents of past generations, third millennial moms and dads desire to establish a culture of spirituality within their family but what a countercultural challenge that is! Media assault children with messages of popularity, possessions, power, prestige, fame, fortune, self-absorption and its “me, myself, and I” focus. Society secularizes Christian holydays and a culture of death, violence, and promiscuity threaten childhood innocence. Faced with this contemporary reality, parents can take comfort in the promise of Jesus to be with them until the end of days (Mt 28:20).

Rather than be paralyzed by negativity, Christian parents ask questions of themselves similar to these:

- \* By what virtues do I most want to be remembered?
- \* What do I offer my children that will carry them through life — in good times and times of stress or trial?
- \* What part of me do I want my children to integrate into themselves?
- \* What qualities will inspire, direct, and advise my children when they are separated from me and after I die?

Most frequently parents voice qualities like integrity, compassion, morality, faith, self-reliance, kindness, holiness, happiness, responsibility, and perseverance. The replies to these questions set the agenda for family spirituality. Soulful responses lead to parent practices.

Parents share in the evangelizing mission of the church. For sure, they are “the first heralds of faith for their children” (John Paul II, 1981. *Familiaris Consortio* 39) and the “channels through which the lifeblood of the love of God passes” (Benedict XVI, News. VA. 1/8/2012). Parents introduce both Jesus of the gospel and the gospel of Jesus to their children. They establish within their children the foundation for life-long relationship with Jesus. Through word and deed, as a pattern and over time, Christian parents communicate to their children four core messages of the gospel: (1) God made us. (2) God is love. (3) God is present among us and interested in us. (4) God calls us to continual growth in relationship, conversion, and transformation.

## GOD MADE US

God made us in God’s own image, giving us the ability to think and the freedom to choose. And why did God make us? Why are we citizens of earth? People of various ages search for the meaning of life. I consider myself blessed to have learned — and believed — the answer to this question at age six. On my first day of school, Sr. St. Rose introduced the first three questions of the Baltimore Catechism. With my classmates I repeated the words; at home I committed the words to rote memory. I viewed the book as a reliable source of God-information. My teacher said the words were true and my parents already knew the responses before I showed them my book. So when my mother questioned me: “Pat, why did God make you?” I responded with a conviction that has never wavered: “God made me to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in heaven.” This early experience made all the difference in my life!

As primary evangelizers, parents teach their children that God is the source of life, and that God called them into life and will sustain them in life here and into eternity. When this sacred notion seeps into the soul of children, they develop a predisposition to hearing God speak personal direction to them through Scriptures like, “I have called you by name, you are mine” (Is 43:1) or “I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit — fruit that will last” (Jn 15:16).

## GOD IS LOVE

Love nurtures, builds up, heals, and encourages. Love forgives. Love remains faithful. Love bestows blessing without condition. Love does not hold grudges and love continues to extend affection whether or not the object of regard returns the affection. These expressions are more than descriptors of an abstract concept. They are more than attributes or qualities of God. They define the essence of God. God *is* love. “God” and “Love” are synonyms! We do not earn God’s love, nor do we lose God’s love. God’s love is steady. God’s love does not depend upon us. Despite our unworthiness, God loves us because love is what God is and what God does. In the book, *What’s So Amazing About Grace*, Philip Yancey offered a succinct summary of this divine dynamic. He wrote:

Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more...And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less...Grace





means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love. (70)

God loves us unconditionally because that's who God is – unconditional love! This is the good news that parents are the first to herald within their families. In speaking about God's love with their children and by imitating the unconditional love of God, they teach that "God" and "Love" are synonyms.

### **GOD IS PRESENT AMONG US AND INTERESTED IN US**

Omnipresent sounds like otherworld vocabulary because it is. God is omnipresent; that is, God exists at all times, in all places. God's presence is both immanent (intrinsic, within us) and transcendent (beyond human experience). God is never distant from us though we sometimes distance ourselves from God. God's divine providence governs everything with wisdom and love. God cares for us and gives us every grace needed to sustain our true good (eternal life). Everything that God permits is good even though some instances do not "feel" good and even hurt. In the midst of pain or sorrow, God is present and walking with us.

What comfort and security it gives to children to know that God holds them in the palm of his hand; that God knows and cares about their decisions. This knowledge can serve as a valuable guidepost. For instance, allow me to share an incident that occurred at an Arizona elementary school:

During lunch recess fourth graders Nate and Robert had a heated argument in the schoolyard. Their teacher was on duty. She began to address the situation when another student-event needed her attention. She told the boys that she would continue the conversation after recess and she left to attend to the other occurrence. When she arrived at the classroom the two were waiting for her and both began to chatter at her. She used the universal signal for "time out" and said that each person involved would have a chance to speak. Pointing to each student she said, "You will have a chance. You will have a chance. Jesus will have a chance. And I will have a chance." At that point Nate said, "Is that true?" The teacher responded, "Is what true?" Nate volleyed, "That Jesus knows what happened?" The teacher replied, "Well, yes." Nathan then announced, "In that case, Robert is telling the truth!"

Perhaps if Nate realized before lunch recess that Jesus is present at all times and all places, Nate might have handled his disagreement with Robert in a more life-giving manner from the get-go! Who knows? After all, my head and heart believe that God is omnipresent and yet, sometimes my choices fail to reflect my conviction.

## GOD CALLS US TO RELATIONSHIP, CONVERSION, AND TRANSFORMATION

Scripture gives witness to God's desire for a *relationship* of love with us. We hear ourselves referred to as sons, daughters, friends, chosen people, precious, dwelling places of God, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Not as a servant do I talk to you because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15). God calls us to freedom, not slavery; to life-giving choices, not to a sterile list of "dos and don'ts;" to understanding and righteousness, not rigidity and "black and white thinking." Of course, young children best understand rules and consequences, power and authority. "Black and white" thinking is a core element of young children. Parents minimize the limits imposed by stages of human development when, as a pattern, they speak of God as a loving father, Jesus as our brother, and explain to children that doing good deeds is a way of showing their love for God.

When we fall God calls us to *conversion* — to a change of heart from stiff-necked reactions to tender-hearted responses; from mere compliance in requirements, regulations and expectations to freely chosen expressions of love; from extrinsic motivation rooted in fear of punishment or desired rewards to intrinsic motivation that is rooted in a desire to please God, a desire to respond to love with love.

It is this positive, life-giving, freely loving attitude that parents want to communicate when they speak of the Ten Commandments. On Mt. Sinai, God initiated a covenant — a two-way relationship — with us. Though spoken to the entire assembly, the covenant was an expression of one-on-one commitment. First it expressed God's love for us and then illustrated what our love-response would look like in day-to-day practice. Specifically, the Ten Commandments identify the attitudes and actions that demonstrate love for God, neighbor, and self. Parents lead their children towards continual conversion when they correct misbehavior with the attitudes of "teachable moment," "What would Jesus do?" and "What is the more loving thing to do?"

Ongoing relationship with God and conversion of heart lead to personal transformation, that is, the process of giving God free reign over the pieces of your life, both the beautiful and the ugly, and trusting God to arrange the pieces into a pattern of praise. When we make a free-will choice to entrust all the pieces of our lives to Divine Providence, God knits them together to create true happiness, similar to a transformer toy whose appearance can change from a dinosaur to a spaceship merely by rearranging the pieces of the puzzle.

## TRANSMIT SPIRITUAL CULTURE WITHIN THE FAMILY HOME

By far, the personal example of a parent is the most important element in faith formation. The adage, "Actions speak louder than words" proves true repeatedly. Or, as Emerson said, "What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying." My dad expressed it less eloquently but effectively:

"Talk is cheap!" Through words and actions and thoughtfully chosen inaction, parents convey God's primacy in the family. Like Joshua a parent communicates: "As for me and my family we will serve the Lord" (Jo 24:15). Sunday Mass, attentiveness to Scripture, reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, participation in the sacrament of reconciliation, and prayer in the home are some of the ways that parents overtly lead their children towards a God-relationship. Through environment, rituals, and customs, parents covertly transmit a spiritual culture within the home.

## ENVIRONMENT

What are the physical reminders of the sacred in your home — external signs that may integrate an awareness of God into ordinary family events? Is there some notification of the liturgical season, perhaps a napkin or table centerpiece of blue-purple for Advent; white for Christmas and Easter; violet for Lent; red for Pentecost; green for ordinary time, or blue for feasts of Mary? Display a symbol related to the feast or liturgical season like a picture of the Sacred Heart or a birthday candle for Mary on September 8, or a crown of Christ the King on the last Sunday of the year's cycle, or a thought-for-a-day calendar, or a miniature easel to hold a focus picture or a quotation.

Some parents report that they punctuate family life with the following kinds of environmental practices.

1. A *prayer center* on a windowsill, coffee table, or on top of the family TV, or a *prayer corner* on tiered corner shelving or on the landing of a stairway. On the center are religious objects: statue, rosary, prayer books, etc.
2. A *Jesus chair*: a comfortable chair in a quiet space that is reserved for sitting with Jesus or a chair at the food table reserved for Jesus — a reminder that God is always with us.
3. A *prayer dish*: a container with a lid to hold prayer intentions. When something is out of your control or burdening your spirit hand it over to God to be resolved by God's Divine Providence. Write it on a slip of paper and drop it into the prayer container. Occasionally transform the contents of the prayer dish to be something useful for God. For example, shred the paper slips to become paper-hay for the Christmas crib or burn the contents, add water to the ashes, and pour it as fertilizer for flowers or shrubs in the garden, or use the paper prayer slips as filler in a pillow slip to be a cushion for a Jesus chair.
4. Agree upon a *family motto*. Hang it as a banner above the entrance to the common room, i.e., "Do whatever He tells you." "That Christ may reign." "Love one another." "What have you done for others today?"
5. Display *tabletop messages* on a mini-easel or a business-card holder. Periodically rotate the message. Messages could be (A) *spiritual practices* like "Perform a random act of kindness today" or "Show humility by asking for help today." (B) *Scripture thoughts* like, "I know well the plans I have

for you, plans for your welfare, not for woe. Plans for a future full of hope” (Jer 29: 11-14). (C) *Picture cards* of a mystery of the rosary or a station of the cross, etc. (D) *Favorite quotations* that shape attitudes like, “The brook would loose its song if God removed the rocks” or “Good, better, best. I will never rest. Until my good is better and my better is my best.” (E) *Table cards* with names and definitions of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, cardinal virtues, social virtues, etc. When these tabletop messages are part of the dining table environment, choose a card, discuss it as a family, and practice it the following day.

6. Post *quotations or prayers* on the family mirror, above doorways, as wall hangings, at the light switch, or at any place that family members might easily spot them. For example: Advent — “Jesus is the reason for the season.” Lent — “By your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free. You are the savior of the world.” Ordinary Time — “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, save souls.”

### CUSTOMS AND RITUALS

What social habits, practices, or routines season family time with a sense of the sacred? What procedures, ceremonies or ways of observing a sacred occasion have you established as part of the spiritual inheritance your children will receive? Such customs and rituals become memory markers that transmit from one generation to the next. Consider the following kinds of practices:

1. *Blessings*. (A) At wakeup, “Good morning, Laurie. You are a gift from God.” (Laurie responds: “And everything God makes is good.”) (B) At bedtime, “Good night and God bless you, Aiden. May God watch over you and keep you. And may you grow up to be a good and healthy boy. I love you.” (C) When leaving home, mark your child’s forehead with a sign of the cross and say, “May God bless you and keep you and bring you home safely to me.” (D) Grace before and after meals. (E) Prior to a disciplinary discussion, “May the Word of God be in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.”
2. *God table-talk*. Designate one night a week for God table-talk. Ask questions like: What is one way that you recognized or experienced God this week? Or, What is one way that you needed God’s help this week?
3. Employ a stimulus-response *family mantra* like, (A) “Mother of Good Counsel...counsel and protect us.” (B) “God is good all the time. And all the time God is good!” (C) “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!”
4. Share *gospel ABCs* on the drive home from Sunday Mass or at the Sunday meal. Identify a person in the gospel. Name attitudes of that person, behaviors, and the consequences of their choices.

5. Annually *consecrate the family home*. Honor the feast of the Triumph of the Cross (September 14) with family Mass in the morning. At home remove the family crucifix from the wall and pray, “We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because of your holy cross you have redeemed the world.” Welcome each person to make a physical expression of reverence towards the crucifix and then re-enthroned the crucifix.
6. Observe *service Sunday*. Annually perform a family service project on the feast of Christ the King (our Servant King) on the last Sunday in Ordinary Time.
7. Establish rituals that *solemnize Christmas* like, blessing the family Creche, placing the figurine of the Infant Jesus into the crib, and choosing a function to serve in the Court of the Infant King. Have family members choose by lot a figurine (Mary, Joseph, Shepherd, Angel, Animal, etc.), explain how they will imitate a quality of that figure during the year ahead, and then place it into the Creche during a reading of the Christmas Gospel story.
8. Orchestrate a *mini-retreat* to make solemn the Good Friday Hours, noon–3pm. Eliminate TV, stereo, Internet, games, etc., view a video of Jesus’ Passion, discuss or re-enact the stations of the cross, pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.
9. Observe *quiet Saturday* on Holy Saturday. Eliminate noise-activities. Create a schedule that involves children in quiet activities. For instance, make cards for relatives, to each family member write a letter of apology or forgiveness or affirmation to be placed under their pillows, do good deeds for others like weeding or cleaning sidewalks, clean out closets, gather items for the poor, help with family chores, etc.
10. Annually provide an *ascension keepsake* — a small symbol of Christ to carry in a pocket or purse like a wooden cross, a Christ-coin, or a pebble with a cross engraved on it. Whenever it is touched, it will serve as a reminder of Christ’s abiding presence...“I am with you all days” (Mt 28:20).

The above suggestions represent input from many parents. No parent does all of these practices, nor do I advise that a parent transform their home into a religious goods store. Let the practices stir your own creative juices and move you to craft a culture of family spirituality. |

**Dr. Patricia M. McCormack, IHM**, is an international formation-education consultant, presenter, and retreat facilitator. Her practical experience in education includes both classroom and administration experience at the elementary, secondary, and college levels. Contact her at the IHM Office of Formative Support for Parents and Teachers, [DrPatMcCormack@aol.com](mailto:DrPatMcCormack@aol.com), [ParentTeacherSupport.org](http://ParentTeacherSupport.org).



# First Sacrament Preparation with Families

Laura Weatherington



In northeast Baltimore County, Maryland, there are many parishes within two to four miles of each other. Like many other metropolitan areas on the East Coast, many of these churches were built by ethnic communities to serve new immigrants settling in a specific neighborhood; others were built as missions of those first and second generation communities. Today, the ethnic and neighborhood identity of these churches is a distant memory. People choose a church or leave a church based on perceived idiosyncrasies of the pastor or congregation, and see their relationship to the parish as a patron to a restaurant, picking and choosing what to order, and leaving when not happy with the service.

Sacraments are simply items on the menu, and if the customer is unhappy with the preparation or the ingredients, they know one of the churches down the street will cater to their perceived wants. Because of this, a certain sense of competition grew, with success being measured not in spiritual terms but in physical — numbers of individuals in programs and dollars in the collection basket. Surely, this is a familiar story, and the background for an exciting and fulfilling journey towards building a collaborative first sacrament preparation program.

## CREATING A BETTER WAY

Two parish catechetical leaders, Laura Weatherington and Amie Post, began to dream of a better way, at first independent of one another. I, Laura, had different concerns from Amie, but we both felt that the sacrament preparation programs we inherited were little more than requiring families to jump through hoops to reach the prize at the end. The programs focused on *what* they knew rather than *whom*. We recognized that a model of treating children as open bowls into which to pour information was not serving their needs; what they and their parents needed most was to begin to see their faith not through the lens of academics, but as formation and of building a relationship with Jesus Christ. At the same time, we began to imagine a way to work smarter while providing families with greater support and options. It is for this intentional collaboration that three parish catechetical leaders and our parishes, Laura at St. Ursula, Amie at Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Deacon Mike Baxter at St. Isaac Jogues were awarded this year's parish/cluster New Wineskin Award.

This collaboration did not happen overnight; it was a process that took a few years. We began with a simple conversation and reaching out to our neighbors to join in that conversation. When no one else was interested in revising their current system, it did not deter us. Amie and I slowly worked to revise our first sacramental preparation programs; content was already similar, so we worked to include parents in formation and opportunities for spiritual experiences. The result is catechesis outside of sacramental preparation, formation of parents, and a retreat which intentionally guides the children and their parents towards an encounter with Christ. By the time we were ready to invite parents and families into our collaboration, a new catechetical leader was hired at another neighboring parish, who was more than happy to join us in our first year of intentional collaboration.

I share our experience not to convince you to follow our model; every situation is unique and all parishes have different needs. However, ask yourself, are you serving your families, or just making them jump through hoops, as our programs were? As you consider how your sacrament preparation can step out and find new roads, consider the following:

## FROM PAST TO POSSIBILITY

- \* What is the current structure of your formation?
- \* What are the absolutely necessary components?
- \* How do you know those are the absolutes?
- \* Brainstorm — if you could wave a magic wand and create the perfect first sacrament formation, what would it look like?

In asking ourselves these questions, we recognized that there were uneven tracks for first sacrament preparation, one for homeschoolers, one for Catholic school students, and one for public school faith formation/religious education students. We collaborated out of a desire to serve the community better — all of the community, not out of a crisis of declining enrollment. Even if collaboration is being considered due to a decline in numbers or a lack of resources, it is important to understand what was offered in the past, what is happening now, and what is it that the families most need from the church. Do not be afraid to throw away something that is not working or not touching people's hearts simply because that is

how it has always been done. Dream. Listen. And then realize that you are ultimately not in control.

### FROM CONTROL AND COMPETITIONS TO COLLABORATION AND CREATION

- \* What are your worries in sharing? What makes you anxious as you consider change?
- \* What are your strengths? What are the strengths of the parish catechetical team?
- \* What are the strengths of your colleagues and other parish catechetical teams?
- \* Brainstorm — How can you share the work and lean into your strengths?

An unfortunate reality we noticed was a climate of competition among parishes. In meetings with other catechetical leaders, we noticed an undercurrent to our conversations: who had the most people, who had the more exciting programming, who was the most creative, etc. This sense of competition served only to diminish authentic communication of the gospel message. When we work together, we reveal the Church Universal to our families. The message does not change simply because one has driven five minutes down the street. The strength of our collaboration lies somewhere between the creation of a single, fixed system of sacramental preparation in our area, and the flexibility that we are able to offer to our families because of that collaboration.

### FROM FIXED TO FLEXIBLE

- \* What are the elements that you are not willing to give up?
- \* What is your understanding of why those are immutable?
- \* What are you willing to change?
- \* Brainstorm — What are some of the possible ways you can be flexible? Consider delivery method, attendance options, etc.

With three parishes working together, we are not only able to offer greater options for families, but we also are able to work smarter, sharing our resources. Instead of each individual parish offering two retreats for each sacrament, then scrambling for alternatives for those families who could never make any of them, each parish was able to offer three retreats for families to choose from, while only being responsible for hosting one. For families unable to make any of the three, we created take-home packets so that the parent and child could share the experience together at home. After all, if we truly believe that parents are the primary educators in the faith, we must equip them and trust them to form their own children. Which leads us to our next questions.

### FROM PARENTS AS PAINS TO PARENTS AS PARTNERS

- \* What are some of the biases you have about parenting today?

### CATECHETICAL LEADER

- \* How does your thinking direct your programming?
- \* What is the goal of catechesis? Specifically, what is the goal of first sacrament prep?
- \* What are the realities that parents in your parish are facing?
- \* Brainstorm — How can you partner with parents? What do your parents need to be able to move forward in your partnership?

Let's face it, today's parents are demanding. They overschedule their children, and attending faith formation and celebrating Mass are always last on their priority list. Right? Well, perhaps not. When we stop judging parents we instead begin to see them as they truly are — the people who love their children the most and want what is best for them. We must regard parents as the experts on their own children, form parents to be able to share faith with their children, and invite them to participate in the life of the parish. Many parents may not feel equipped to form their children's faith, and we often do not help, with our attitude of "we are the experts, bring them to us and go away. We will take care of everything." This attitude helps no one; and yet, at least in our parishes, this is the attitude we took with parents. Evangelization is well served when we intentionally form parents to be able to share their faith with their own children. Will soccer and baseball still come first in their priorities? Perhaps. But when parents and children together begin to be open with each other and share their faith journey together, families become stronger and faith in Jesus Christ blossoms.

Our collaboration is not perfect; we continue to work to improve our offerings, and there are times when we struggle with answering the question of how best to serve families. We do not always agree, but we remain open to hearing one another's thoughts and ideas. This leads to interesting conversations and thought processes, which in turn help us to better understand our ministry within the context of the larger church. Choosing to collaborate necessarily means giving up some control and being willing to rely on others. But it also means that we each have the opportunity to learn from one another and to lean on one another. Each person is gifted in a different way, and together, we became stronger. In the end, the families whom we serve are served better with more competence because of the personal growth in faith and ministry which we have, together, undergone. ■

*Laura Weatherington serves as the Director of Religious Education at St. Ursula Parish in Parkville, Maryland. There she has created a bereavement ministry, renewed the sacramental preparation programs, and established a parish library. Laura has received an MA in Theology and an MA in Church Ministries from the Ecumenical Institute of Theology of St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore.*

# Mercy Me, Mercy You: A Parish Catechetical Leader's Primer for the Coming Jubilee

Reynolds R. (Butch) Ekstrom



*Mercy is above the sceptred sway,  
It is an attribute of God...  
And earthly power doth show like God's  
when mercy seasons justice.*

William Shakespeare  
The Merchant of Venice, A4, S1

## A JUBILEE FOR OUR TIMES

Earlier this year, Pope Francis proclaimed an extraordinary year of jubilee in his letter *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy). Beginning on December 8, Christians are to focus on remission of sins and the consolation of universal pardon, like a veritable dose of spiritual medicine.

The starting date is the annual Feast of the Immaculate Conception. And it is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis calls Vatican II an entryway (door) swung open by the Spirit to a new territory for the living history of God's People. The Council participants needed

to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a *new phase of the same evangelization* that had existed from the beginning... a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. (4)

Pope Francis quotes Thomas Aquinas on the power of mercy: "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way" (6).

Pope Francis alludes to an ancient ritual prayer to underscore this doctrinal point:

O God, you reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness.... Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful. (6)

## JUBILEE IN CONTEXT

The Law of Moses (see Lev 25, 8-13) maintained that every 50 years there should be a holy period, a jubilee. Every Hebrew

household could recover and re-admit absent members; land and properties were restored to their proper owners; Hebrew slaves were to be set free; and debts could be forgiven.

In 1300 Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the first Christian Jubilee Year. Pope Boniface declared that "great indulgences (lessening of the purgatorial atonement, punishment, required for sin after one's death) and full remission for all sin" were to be made available to pilgrims visiting Rome. Steps to gain such forgiveness and mercy such as confessing sins, visits to certain churches and basilicas, etc. were spelled out.

The poet Dante, it is said, went to Rome to seek God's mercy and grace as part of the 1300 observation of that initial Christian *annus jubileus*. Dante mentions it in his *Inferno* as a great "Giubbileo."

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the church had started to hold jubilees every 25 years by the decree of Pope Paul II. For outstanding spiritual reasons, jubilee years have also been observed periodically during non-traditional years. This happened recently in 1933, 1966, and 1983, for example, and will recur again during 2016.

## MERCIFUL AND KIND: ONCE UPON A JUBILEE

The religious beliefs and sentiments of Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike, the world over, are linked inextricably to the topic of pardon and forgiveness. The basic belief is that our Source is just, merciful, and kind. And, richly so; this is why the subject of a holy year of pardon, mercy, and witness is critical to PCLs and catechists.

The doctrine of a caring God who loves and forgives is central to Catholic tradition and catechesis. Yet, it is critical to other peoples in momentous religious faiths everywhere, symbolic of

### YEAR OF MERCY ONLINE

- \* Letter proclaiming the Jubilee Year, <http://goo.gl/dutziv>
- \* Year of Mercy on Facebook, <https://goo.gl/pYtrRj>
- \* Year of Mercy on Twitter, <https://goo.gl/A4W8VC>
- \* Year of Mercy on Instagram, <https://goo.gl/pxeTdt>
- \* Year of Mercy on Pinterest, <https://goo.gl/LIE4Wq>



the richly textured, diverse and colorful mosaic, the beggars, banquet, of human culture. The very idea of a God of Mercy is a hope, a dream, and a revelation that matters to the Catholic Church and to our whole, beleaguered, fragile globe.

Catechetical ministers know that if anything, people today need to be reassured of God's good will and treated like persons and communities that truly matter. They are ready to be convinced, in their hearts, that the universal availability of hope underpins the urgent calls for a new evangelization.

There are many fascinating and curious symbols and teachings that explicate what a Christian jubilee is and how its key aspects fit in with an ethical lifestyle. These make up, via a random brainstorm, a rich list:

Psalm 136 ("For God's mercy endures forever")  
*Great Hallel*  
The Signs and Miracles of the Christian Scriptures  
The Call of Matthew  
Story of the Prodigal Son and Father  
Story of the Ruthless Servant  
Sin and the Judgment of God  
Penance  
Repentance  
Beatitudes: Blessed are the merciful  
*Dives in Misericordia, Misericordiae Vultus*  
New Evangelization  
Divine Mercy Sunday (+Saint Faustina Kowalska)  
*Metanoia* and Conversion  
Mercy as a Way of Life — "Be merciful as the Father is merciful" (Lk 6, 36)  
Be perfect as the Father is perfect  
Pilgrimages  
Holy Door(s) of the Church  
Motto of Holy Year 2016: Merciful Like the Father  
People on the Margins of Life  
The Poor/Poverty  
The Corporal Works of Mercy  
The Spiritual Works of Mercy  
A "year of the Lord's favor"  
"24 Hours for the Lord" — Lent 2016  
Sacrament of Reconciliation  
Priests (Confessors) and Penitents  
Forgiveness and Absolution  
Mary, Mother of Mercy  
Missionaries of Mercy  
Reserved Sin(s)  
Prudence and Discernment  
Justice related to mercy  
Legalism  
Justified by Faith

Liberation  
Indulgences  
"Merciful and Kind"  
Islam and Mercy  
Judaism and Mercy  
Witness

That's just *some of them*. Pope Francis unpacks the significance of numerous items in *Misericordiae Vultus*. They all play significant parts of a meaningful, reflective catechesis on the jubilee.

However there are dynamic, jubilee-related themes that run a little deeper than, say, church visits or the doctrine on partial indulgences.

Recent Catholic thought, including Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* and Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*, wagers that modern science and technological culture and the very idea of a merciful creator don't mix well. In fact, the word mercy seems to be evaporating from modern usage.

Therefore, contemporary lifestyles seem opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tend to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of 'mercy' seem to cause uneasiness ... thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history. This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy. (*Evangelii Gaudium* 24)

This line of Catholic thinking also stresses that the insistently permissive, materialistic, and self-indulgent pop culture — within which many confess to being "spiritual, but not religious" — requires an urgent proclamation and witness, the new Christian evangelization. It also makes essential a self-realization that everyone bears a personal, universal hunger for mercy.

It likewise obliges me to have recourse to that mercy and to beg for it at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and of the world. This teaching is more pertinent than ever. ... The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy.... (*Dives in Misericordia* 13 and 15)

So, PCLs, catechists, all lay ministers, take heart. With these recent strands of religious reflection, the concept of why we should try to make the jubilee experience relevant, to all ages and shapes of learners, comes into focus. Patience, mercy, kindness, forbearance — universal human values that seem so desirable but in such short supply today — are those that each person should accept and extend to all others. ■

*Reynolds R. (Butch) Ekstrom is the associate director of the faith formation department in the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky. He began work for the church 42 years ago. Ekstrom's books and over 250 articles, essays, and reviews have appeared via a variety of publishers.*

# Hawaiian Videos on Sacraments Receive “New Wineskins” Award

Jayne Mondoy and Darlene J.M. Dela Cruz



Educational videos on three sacraments created by the Diocese of Honolulu’s Office of Religious Education and local producer Bernadette Baraquio Hamada recently won the

NCCL 2015 “New Wineskins Award” for innovative evangelization.

Jayne Mondoy, diocesan religious education director, accepted the award during the NCCL’s awards luncheon May 20 in Buffalo, New York. Last year, the series also won a bronze “Telly” award, a secular honor recognizing excellence in non-broadcast religious productions.

The “One Ohana” video series consists of three 20-minute DVDs on baptism, Eucharist, and reconciliation. They feature commentary by Hawaii’s clergy and lay Catholics on the sacraments’ theology and their personal spiritual impact.

## THE SACRAMENTS’ BEAUTY

Mondoy and diocesan Office of Worship director Deacon Modesto Cordero came up with the idea of creating local catechetical videos several years ago.

“The sacraments are Christ’s gift to us,” Mondoy said. “How can we help others better understand the beauty of the sacraments so we can live our lives inspired by him? Since we can only do so much person to person, we must use the resources of the electronic age.”

Deacon Cordero, who also has a background in theater and drama, had worked previously with Mondoy in adult faith formation. He thought it was a good time to freshen up the diocese’s sacramental resources. He told Mondoy that the diocese should create its own videos reflecting “a local envi-

ronment — a local taste — to make it more attractive to our audience today.”

Mondoy slowly took to the project, inspired by the teachings of recent popes and bishops encouraging the use of local culture to evangelize.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, in his apostolic exhortation following the 2008 General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, wrote “God does not reveal himself in the abstract, but by using languages, imagery, and expressions that are bound to different cultures.”

In the National Directory for Catechesis, the U.S. bishops said, “The inculturation of the Gospel message is an urgent mission for dioceses in the United States because it correlates faith and life.”

These insights spurred Mondoy’s enthusiasm for a series using Hawaii’s richly diverse people and landscape.

“We set out not to present a set of abstract doctrines, but to tell a story of faith incarnated in a way that is familiar to us,” she said. “We have a unique story to tell the world that connects our culture to the gifts and graces we receive in the sacraments.”

## SHARING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

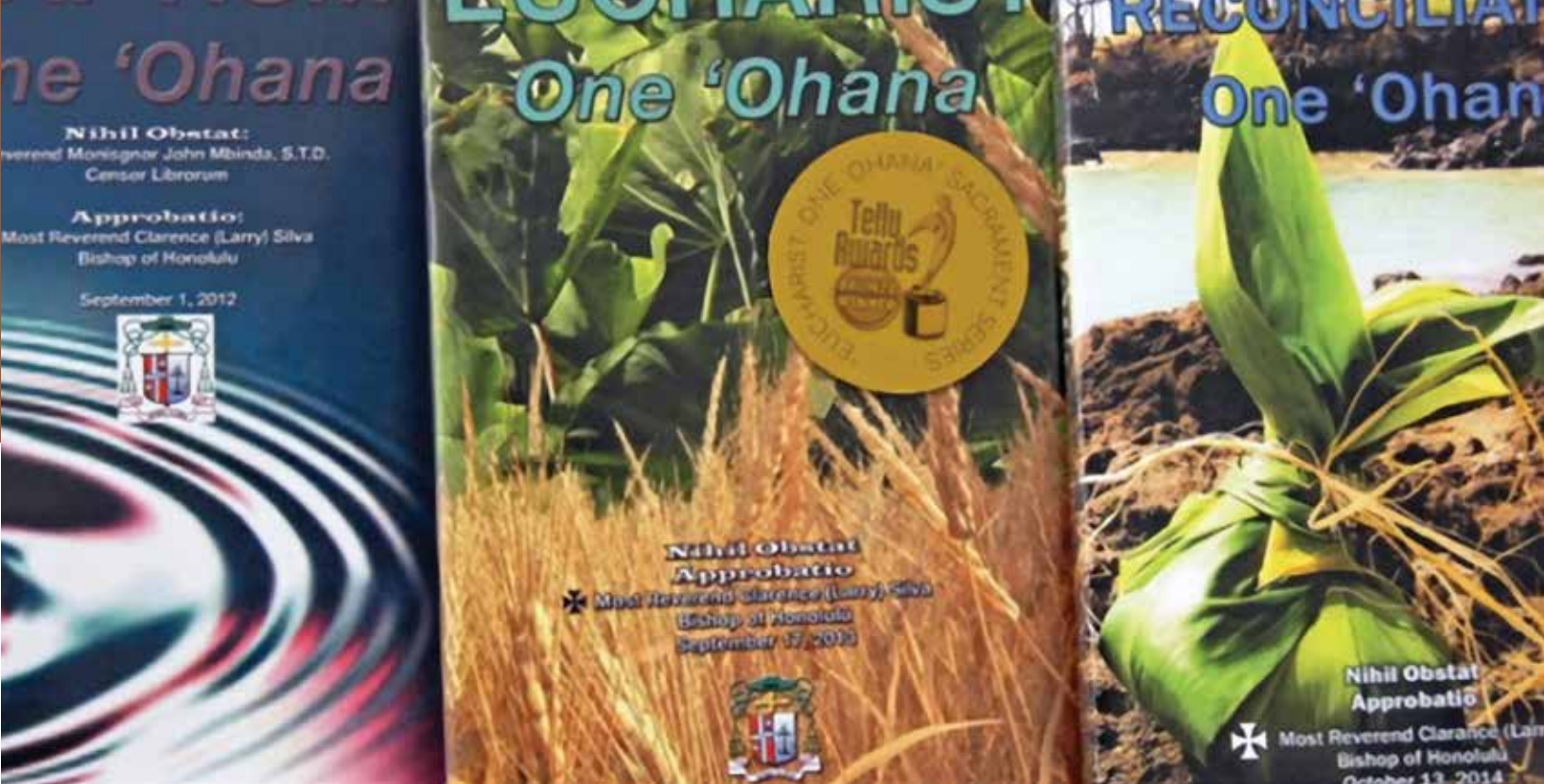
Baraquio had already produced videos of local ordinations and for the diocesan Office for Social Ministry. She gladly jumped onboard the “One Ohana” project. Sharing her skills for the church, she said, “is part of my ministry and my vocation.”

“The work I do for the diocese is the part that fulfills me,” Baraquio said. “I feel good at the end of the day knowing what I’ve produced is reaching a great number of people with an important message that they wouldn’t otherwise have received.” She helped come up with the “One Ohana” title,

---

*“The work I do for the diocese is the part that fulfills me,” Baraquio said. “I feel good at the end of the day knowing what I’ve produced is reaching a great number of people with an important message that they wouldn’t otherwise have received.”*

---



which means “One Family” — “a common theme that’s going to connect all the sacraments.”

Later joining the “One Ohana” team was Blessed Sacrament Fr. Bob Stark, the diocese’s Office for Social Ministry director.

Each sacramental video runs less than 30 minutes, belying the hundreds of hours of work put into them.

A project generally began with weeks of brainstorming the scriptural and catechetical elements to be taught. Bishop Larry Silva was brought into the discussion, and clergy and lay Catholics were sought for interviews. Filming locations were selected; footage of Island nature and local church events was collected.

Baraquio pulled everything together in her editing process, poring through “stacks” of transcribed interviews and hours of video. The video team and Bishop Silva reviewed the first cuts of the film. Sometimes scenes needed to be reshot or changed to correct or enhance the message. The detailed work was time consuming but the team saw the production itself as a spiritual process.

### A COLLABORATIVE GIFT

It is “a blessed gift,” Fr. Stark said, “to be part of this collaborative spiritual journey.”

Mondoy added, “My faith has grown deeper with every project. To be able to hear clergy and lay persons describe their experience of Christ present in the sacraments is very, very powerful.”

“It’s a good way of stewardship, using our talents, our time, to create a new way of evangelization in our diocese,” Deacon Cordero said.

Fr. Stark said that all can benefit from the videos which remind the viewer how to be Catholic, “combining all three essential components of our faith: sacraments, Scripture, and service.”

“Everyone is invited to participate in the sacraments as opportunities to deepen our connection with God and each other,” he said.

The “One Ohana” videos have received a *nihil obstat* from the bishop, ensuring their doctrinal correctness. They may be viewed on the Diocese of Honolulu’s website at [catholic-hawaii.org](http://catholic-hawaii.org) under the sacraments page. The team is already conceptualizing its next video on the sacrament of confirmation. |

*Jayne Mondoy is Director of Religious Education for the Diocese of Honolulu, serves as Treasurer for the NCCL Board of Directors, and is a member of the NCCL Inter-Cultural Committee.*

*Darlene J.M. Dela Cruz has been a reporter/photographer for the Hawaii Catholic Herald, official newspaper of the Diocese of Honolulu, since 2010. She is a parishioner at St. Anthony Church in Honolulu.*



# Charity Detox: What Charity Would Look Like If We Cared about Results

by Robert D. Lupton

Reviewed by Dan Thomas



*Charity Detox* is a challenging book in which Robert Lupton calls churches to examine what, why, and how they are doing charity. In this book, as in his others, Lupton raises important questions for pastors and believers that need to be confronted in the work we do for and with the poor; he doesn't call it "doing

for the poor [but] doing *with* the poor" (126-7). He asks his readers: What is the most effective way to serve the poor? His opening sentence states, "Charity often hurts the people it was designed to help" (1). The danger he describes in various ways throughout the book is "turning people into beggars!" (100)

"To be poor is to be marginalized, isolated from mainstream society, excluded from the privileges and advantages available to the rest of the culture" (17). Much of what we are doing presently reinforces these disadvantages rather than changes

them. We must create independency rather than dependence. "[W]hen you do for others what they have the capacity to do for themselves, you are likely doing them a disservice" (26). "Everyone, no matter how impaired or down on their luck, has a talent, a capability, a strength to bring to the table. To overlook these abilities, to offer pity instead of opportunity, is to diminish rather than empower" (68).

## A NEW LOOK AT CAPITALISM

One of the crucial ways to do this is to use the insights of capitalism with "a moral and ethical foundation." He suggests such principles as wealth creation, wealth transfer, purposeful work, return on investment, accountability, measurement of outcomes, meeting market demands, reciprocal exchange, addressing pressing needs, and for-profit wealth-generating enterprises. This capitalism is called to move beyond just economics, and into respect for those it involves in its work.



A Project of the  
National Conference for  
Catechetical Leadership

## CATECHIST FORMATION FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

**COMING  
SOON! NEW  
ECCLESIOLOGY  
MODULE,  
"THE CHURCH"**

### A Completely New Module:

#### Six Segment and Article Topics:

1. The Origin of the Church
2. Evangelization & the Mission of the Church
3. The Nature of the Church
4. The Church's Hierarchy
5. Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue
6. Mary, Mother of the Church

#### AND Two New Bonus Interviews:

- The Latin American Church
- Understanding Islam



**Sign up for a FREE  
30 day trial at  
Demo.Echoes3.com!**

*Echoes of Faith.com*



8805 Governor's Hill Drive, Suite 400  
Cincinnati, OH 45249  
1-877-275-4725 | [RCLBenziger.com](http://RCLBenziger.com)  
f /RCLBenziger @RCLBenziger

Lupton challenges us to take a new look at capitalism and businesspeople in order to help business leaders see their work as a calling. Businesses run with the guidance of ethics, and moral principles can follow the gospel. Wealth used well for the sake of self and others can be part of bringing the reign of God on earth.

We certainly need to address crisis situations when emergencies happen. The challenge is distinguishing between famine and hunger. The first demands a response immediately; the second needs a long-term strategy. "Rather than fostering dependency from continued emergency responses, [our] strategies [should] strengthen the capacity of people in need to assume a greater measure of control and self-sufficiency over their own lives" (120).

This book is full of practical examples of ways within and without our country to put into practice what it suggests. How to make a food pantry into a food co-op? How could a mission trip foster independence rather than dependence? Since getting an education is essential to independence, how does a program avoid moving those educated out of the community rather than staying involved there?

One of the more interesting stories Lupton tells in the book is the way a pastor of a suburban church dealt with a profound question Lupton raised: "If his church were disbanded tomorrow, would his community even realize it?" (75) The pastor's

program to answer that question did not meet Lupton's criteria. This would be a question that every church should ask itself.

There is a section of the book that presents the author's work in Atlanta in community development that led to the foundation Focused Community Strategies. It describes the essential elements for creating a stable community that has diversity of incomes, races, and economic class, and suggests the joys and difficulties of living that reality that Lupton himself has embraced. He describes this as "mixed income redevelopment that protects the interests of the poor" (165).

This is not a political book, for as Lupton says, his Republican friends call him a Democrat and his Democratic friends call him a Republican. It is a practical book with some profound questions about church, its ministry, and its vision. Thus, while the church is about its internal life and growth, the purpose of these is for its mission: to prepare for the reign of God's presence in this world. That means real, significant outreach to the poor and disenfranchised in the here-and-now. **I**

*Dan 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.*



## A new resource for Catholic families!

# OUR FAMILY Prays

Available Now!

**Our Family Prays** is a collection of rituals, blessings, prayers, and traditions meant to encourage and inspire Catholic families to keep prayer at the heart of their home. It is organized by the seasons of the liturgical year and includes religious traditions and celebrations from around the world.

English item 20863  
Spanish item 20873.



Available in English or Spanish



20863

Contact your local sales representative for a FREE GIFT!



8805 Governor's Hill Drive, Suite 400  
Cincinnati, OH 45249  
1-877-275-4725 | [RCLBenziger.com](http://RCLBenziger.com)  
f /RCLBenziger @RCLBenziger

For a free sample, visit **RCLBSAMPLES.com**

# Ministry and Mobility

Justin Huyck



Last spring, I had the opportunity to walk a labyrinth with colleagues from the Diocese of Youngstown. As I twisted and turned my way into the labyrinth, I reflected on my own journey in ministry, characterized by a high degree of mobility.

I am the husband of an academic, mutually committed with my wife to correlating our respective vocations, which includes taking seriously her movement from doctoral program to post-doctorate to faculty position. So, I recognized some of the most profound turns as experiences of investing labor and energy in one vineyard before moving abruptly to another context.

Like the movements of the labyrinth, sometimes it seems that one is turning in an entirely new direction.

## MOBILITY AND DISORIENTATION

For those whose ministry journeys have involved significant mobility, such turns can result in a certain amount of disorientation, which can take various forms:

- \* Blooming where you're *trans*-planted: Having one's faith and ministry fostered and energized in a particular family, parish, or campus ministry setting, only to then serve in a much different context — perhaps no less vibrant, but not what was expected when beginning the journey.
- \* Networked and re-networking: From a professional standpoint, moving from one geographical location to another can pose practical difficulties, as one needs to re-introduce themselves to diocesan leaders and pastors. Belonging to an organization like NCCL can help this process.
- \* The Pauline dilemma: Galatians edition: Like St. Paul, we can get grumpy when we leave a community into which we invested time and energy, only to have parishioners and new leadership “go their own way,” change our catechetical processes, or upend our best-laid plans.
- \* The Pauline dilemma: Athenian edition: And sometimes, upon arrival in a new community, we can feel like Paul in Athens, preaching and teaching with the same energy that worked so well in the past, but apparently with no effect (Acts 17), as if one needs a whole new toolbox.

## MINISTRY AND MOBILITY: ATTEND FIRST

In their classic text, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*, James and Evelyn Whitehead suggest that ministry reflection must take seriously the virtue of *attending* to experience and tradition, as well as culture. To start with *attending* is to understand the ministry leader, not so much as one who “brings God” to a community, but as one who “discerns God already present” — an “attendant” who listens to God's voice before speaking, assisting “other believers in their attentive response to God's movement in their lives” (68).

Applied to the experience of ministering amid mobility, this virtue might suggest humility on the part of the ministry leader, paying attention to what God is already doing in a community and what aspects of tradition constitute its strengths (even if it's different from the experiences of past communities or one's personal theological emphases), as well as the religious “culture” of that particular community (even if it means not using an element or two of one's toolbox, or not employing one's favorite catechetical resource). To commit to attending, then, is really to commit to what the Whiteheads call a “ministerial asceticism” and “spirituality of *kenosis*” (73) in which the minister empties him or herself of her own agenda, listening first to the needs of the community.

More positively, the practice of attending can help the ministry leader more accurately discern what instruments in one's own toolbox would indeed be most effective in this new context. Just as importantly, attending to the community means attending to the resources available within that community, both those currently being employed for ministry, as well as those in need of cultivation.

As I walked the labyrinth last spring, I found my gaze moving from the ground, my own path, up towards the rest of the group as they traversed the same earth. As it happened, this shift in *attending* occurred while I walked along the outer-lip of the labyrinth. I felt like I was on the edge of the world, and certainly on the “outside” of this diocesan team. As I reached the turn, I paused for a moment to give thanks for these pastoral workers, walking in front of me, who had animated our diocesan ground long before I arrived. I gave thanks too for my parish community, formed and shaped for countless years of the Spirit's breath. And then I turned in.

*Justin Huyck is Pastoral Associate for Adult Faith Formation at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Canton, Ohio. Contact him at [justin@stmichaelcanton.org](mailto:justin@stmichaelcanton.org) or [@justinhuyck](https://www.instagram.com/justinhuyck).*



# Breathing a Soul into the Technocrat

Claire M. McManus



As soon as the encyclical *Laudato Si* hit the streets, the responses came from many quarters. Climate change is now a topic of conversation that transcends political grandstanding into the realm of Scriptural mandates. That we are deeply connected to the earth is no longer a statement from new

age spirituality or a by-gone hippy era. This encyclical is making us question how we relate to nature and to the poor who are without the resources to adjust to its force.

Looming large above the debate on climate change is the role that technology must and will play to set things right. Pope Francis worries about the unbridled advance of technology, and he warns that our technological prowess has both possibilities and problems. It seems that humanity has taken up technology as the only means by which a problem can be solved. He warns, this “one-dimensional paradigm exalts the use of rational procedures that approach nature as a problem to be solved. This technocratic view of the world no longer works with nature, taking from it what it will give” (106).

Pope Francis is not expressing an opinion that is not supported by fact. Technological advances that dawned during the industrial age of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have careened into the 21<sup>st</sup> century at a mind-blowing rate of expansion. Just one example is the plentitude of devices powered by microchips. Ninety percent of the world’s data was created in the last two years (*Forbes* 7/20/15). Everything in the world is powered by data, in what is known as the “internet of things.” These “things” refer to the computer chips found in our cars, phones, garage door openers, irrigation systems, etc. The data that is generated by all of the chips found in the devices on which society has come to depend creates an industry just to interpret its information. The predicted earnings from the data generated by these things are \$8.9 trillion! With this kind of profit to be gained by every technological solution, it is hard to imagine that technocrats will take the high road.

## ETHICAL LIMITS OF TECHNOLOGY

Although one might see great hope in technology as a panacea for all that ails us, and engineering and science is needed to combat climate change, can we rely on the technocrats to take into account the larger social and ethical limits to their solutions? Pope Francis suggests that this is a difficult habit to develop. “Life gradually becomes a surrender to situations conditioned by technology, itself viewed as the principal key to the meaning of existence” (110). He raises the philosophical ante by suggesting that we may not be freely choosing our lifestyle. “We have to accept that technological products

are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups” (107). For those of us who inhabit one of the world’s most powerful democracies, the thought that we have been shackled to the profit-driven motives of a technocratic elite is very disconcerting.

Rather than resign ourselves to the reality of technological control over our lives, we have been charged with the task of re-engineering the souls of the technocrats of the next generation. “There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generates resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm” (111). This is the next catechetical challenge we face. It is not so much how to use technology within our programs, but how to look at the world’s problems and approach the resolution from many angles. There are already many faith-based environmental movements that can serve as models for solving the problems wrought by climate change. Organizations span religious denominations; names like “Green Muslims,” “Presbyterians for Earth Care,” “Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth,” “Episcopal Ecological Network,” and “Catholic Climate Covenant,” demonstrate the breadth of concern. If an interfaith worldview is poised to partner with technology, there just might be a balanced approach to the problem.

## DEVELOPING A STEWARDSHIP MENTALITY

Changing the hearts and minds of the next generation of technocrats is the responsibility of all who catechize. Developing a stewardship mentality that expands from within the parish and flows into the larger world community will form a global consciousness. Ecological education is planted early in the minds of the young. The parish that catechizes is one that promotes a simple lifestyle, grateful contemplation of God’s creation, the protection of the environment, and care for the poor. We will see a change in the way people think about the world as this message becomes foundational to who we are as church. Pope Francis calls us to be the educators that develop “an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care” (210). ■

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

# So Many Ways to Learn about Culture

Daniel S. Mulhall



We profess that the Roman Catholic Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. As every catechist knows, the word “catholic” means “universal.” This means that the church is made up of people from almost every nation throughout the world. As the theme from Encuentro 2000 proclaimed, there is one church, many cultures.

To understand what it means to be catholic, then, requires us to understand how these many cultures experience and worship God, and how they live out their faith. As Cardinal Francis George, recently deceased archbishop of Chicago, famously said, “I can’t know what it means to be Catholic until I know what it means to be a Nigerian Catholic.” Not taking away from Nigerian Catholics, but Cardinal George could have easily have said “Honduran” or “Korean” Catholics; what he meant was that each of these nationalities and the various cultures found within them each reveal something important about God, faith, and the church.

## EXPERIENCING CULTURE FIRST-HAND

I have written before that my understanding of culture was limited to a very narrow community for the first half of my life. That community was primarily English-speaking, white, working class. Over the years, through study and experience, I’ve come to a fuller and richer appreciation of culture and some of the many peoples from throughout the world who are members of the Roman Catholic Church. I first became aware of the diversity and importance of culture within the church when I moved to Los Angeles. At that time, the Archdiocese offered a wonderful week-long course on culture called Building Inclusive Communities. This wonderful program, put together by Irma Isip and the Archdiocesan Office for Religious Education, laid the foundation of my understanding of culture and its importance to faith formation.

During these last 20 years, I have been fortunate to have many opportunities to work closely with a large number of Catholic communities — African, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, Native American (Lakota, Mohawk, Navajo, and Ojibwa in particular) and others. While I learned about the importance of culture from courses and reading, I really didn’t understand it until I experienced it first-hand from these many people.

Today, through the wonder of the Internet, there are many ways to become familiar with the importance of culture and cultural diversity within the church. In the rest of the article, I will highlight three resources:

## VIRTUAL LEARNING

The first is the 5-week course “A Pastoral Approach to Culture” offered through the University of Dayton’s Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLFF). I am biased about its quality since I developed this course. I can only say that every time I’ve facilitated it, students have stated how valuable it was for them. Let me take a moment here to thank Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski and her team at UD for their interest in and support of this topic.

The second are the programs developed and offered by the USCCB’s Department for Cultural Diversity in the Church ([usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/index.cfm](http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/index.cfm)), especially their program “Intercultural Competencies” ([usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/intercultural-competencies/index.cfm](http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/intercultural-competencies/index.cfm)). Everything this department develops is of excellent quality and is of value for anyone interested in learning about culture and the gifts that each culture brings to the church.

The third is the website Catholics and Cultures ([catholicsandcultures.org/](http://catholicsandcultures.org/)) which has been developed by Dr. Thomas M. Landy, the director of the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J. Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. Landy is also a member of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Holy Cross.

The site, which is funded by donors and the College of Holy Cross, “aims to foster comparative study of contemporary Catholic life around the globe and to provide teaching resources about Catholic life in all its richness.” The resources are certainly here. The website features articles, interviews, photos and videos, maps, graphics, and video lectures in order “to provide viewers a global sense of what it means to be Catholic today.” The site aims to “provide insight into Catholic practices and beliefs as they are understood by those who live them,” and to help us “understand those practices and beliefs in the context of the cultures they navigate and variously reflect, shape, and oppose.”

This website is a jewel for anyone interested in the topic of cultures and cultural diversity within the church. It includes demographic data about the Catholic Church for almost every country of the world, along with information about practices and values — including charismatic practice, childhood and coming of age, death and mourning, feasts and seasons, shrines and pilgrimages, and so much more.

I encourage you to take advantage of these wonderful resources. ■

*Daniel S. Mulhall is a lifelong catechist. He currently serves as director of strategic markets for RCL Benziger, a publisher of Catholic catechetical materials.*

# Encounter in Sacramental Preparation: The Art of Listening to Parents

Anne Jamieson



Preparing children for first penance and first Eucharist has a lot to do with preparing parents. Welcoming, encouraging, and equipping parents as the teachers of the faith is essential if we want these sacraments to become an ongoing part of their lives. We need to remind families that these sacraments speak of the very ordinary human experiences of hurt and hunger and the human longing for forgiveness and being fed. In all our good planning, however, we need to remember to stop and listen, too.

Parish catechists, DREs, volunteers, diocesan directors — we're all working to improve our sacramental preparation sessions. We search out new resources, find videos to engage parents, and make inroads into online offerings. We focus on the resources and strategies, and rightly so as these are the tools of our trade. Pope Francis, however, encourages us constantly to draw people into an encounter with Christ. He wants us to meet people where they are, even to go search them out at the peripheries (*Joy of the Gospel*, 20). We must draw them to Christ by the irresistible glow of Christ in us (112).

The question is, how? How will they experience encounter in the midst of all our good planning? I believe the answer lies in the art of listening. We are so prepared to give, to teach, and to lead, but it has to begin with our willingness to listen. Jesus so often teaches in this way; he asks and he listens. Consider his question to the travelers on the road to Emmaus, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" (Lk 24:17) Or again, in the call of Andrew and Peter, "What are you looking for?" (Jn 1:38) In the same spirit of inquiry, The Rite of Baptism begins with its own question of encounter, "What do you ask of God's church for this child?"

ASK AND LISTEN

The first moments of sacramental preparation need to be moments where we ask parents these essential questions and listen:

What have they been discussing? What is important to them at this time?

What are they looking for? Why have they come?

What do they ask of the church? How can we help?

These questions serve two important functions. First, they remind us that people are not transformed by great programming; they are transformed by the love of God. We must be, above all, witnesses to that love. Second, these questions remind the parents that sacraments are moments of encounter — with Christ, with the church, with God's grace. They can be encouraged to enter into the encounter deeply knowing they are not alone on this journey.

All parents want good things for their children. They want them to be happy and whole and to be able to face the future with some security. The good news we have to share is that Christ, through the sacraments entrusted to the church, offers us encounters with God's grace that bring healing and strengthening, joy and peace.

Build your own preparation sessions keeping in mind the art of listening. Choose resources and plan preparation that gathers parents and children together, makes room for parent-child storytelling, and makes parents at ease in their parish and their role as teachers of the faith. Once you have welcomed them, encourage the encounter. Ask: Why have you come and how can we help? And then... listen. I am certain they have much to say and confident that you have Good News to share! ■

*Pope Francis, however, encourages us constantly to draw people into an encounter with Christ.*

*Anne Jamieson is the Director of Catechesis for the Diocese of Hamilton. Anne is the co-author of Gifted by God: We Prepare for Confirmation and the Gifted by God Confirmation Retreat Kit DVD through Novalis publishing. Anne has experience in sacramental preparation beyond her diocesan role as a parish volunteer, an elementary school teacher, and a mother of four children. Contact her at: [ajamieson@hamiltondiocese.com](mailto:ajamieson@hamiltondiocese.com).*



# Accompaniment in Adult Faith Formation

Leisa Anslinger



As a parish catechetical leader, some of my most profound experiences of adult faith formation involved discussion on “hot topics,” areas of contemporary interest in relationship to Catholic teaching. One such gathering that stands out was an evening with a moral theologian from our diocesan seminary who spoke about the theological and moral implications of the sacredness of human life, focusing in a particular way on the end of life. The room in which the gathering was held was crowded, and as the presenter began, he explained that he would present a theological foundation first, followed by some examples from his own pastoral experience with people who faced decisions for themselves or a loved one. He promised time for questions and discussion.

As he began speaking, I surveyed the room. Some of the participants were familiar; others were people I had seen at Mass but could not recall any previous participation in adult faith formation. During the first open discussion time, one of the participants thanked the presenter, explaining that she is a nurse who rarely has the opportunity to discuss these matters in a Catholic context. Heads began to nod, and the presenter asked how many in the room were health professionals. Two-thirds of the participants raised their hands. Suddenly, the focus of the discussion deepened.

No longer was this an abstract presentation on Catholic theology and teaching. Faith met life that evening, through knowledge shared, and especially through the pastoral dialogue that emerged. Participants felt their experience was honored, their questions were treated with respect, and their struggles acknowledged. They were given permission to grapple with the times when their professional responsibilities and their belief as Catholic Christians seemed at odds. Those who serve in Catholic hospitals shared the gratitude they have for being in an institution that values our Catholic perspectives. Everyone went home with deeper appreciation for the richness of what we believe, and the assurance of the respect and care of all who were present.

## WITNESSING CATHOLIC TEACHING IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

Much has been said and written about the need for adult Catholics to be able to articulate and witness to Catholic teaching in their everyday lives — at home, work, and in the public sector. Often, within articles, interviews, and survey data, however, we learn that many people either do not fully understand church teaching, have ambivalent feelings about one or another doctrinal point, or simply disagree. As

catechetical leaders, we grasp the quandary of our current situation. The homily is not an adequate platform in which to form people with an understanding of the many facets of Catholic teaching, yet adult participation beyond Mass is elusive in many parishes. How do we present what we believe in a manner through which people will hear our teaching in greater depth, apply it to their lives, and grow in their formation as adult disciples of Jesus Christ?

Pope Francis encourages us to accompany people in all of the stages of their lives and their faith:

In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone — priests, religious and laity — into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. (EG, 169)

## MODELING ACCOMPANIMENT

The gathering described above is one example of such accompaniment. The adults present learned what the church teaches about the sacredness of all human life, and they were invited to apply that teaching in their daily lives. No question was considered off the table; no situation too sensitive for discussion. The presenter acknowledged their experience while adeptly providing a process for theological reflection and offered himself as a continuing resource to them, should the need arise.

Of course, those of us steeped in the principles and practices of the catechumenate find such accompaniment very familiar. In fact, this is one way in which the catechumenate may serve as the model and inspiration for catechesis. Those who lead and those who participate in the catechumenate journey together over time; participants learn what we believe; participants and leaders share faith, acknowledge when faith places demands upon us; grow in willingness to take on Christ's life and love, not as a burden, but as a gift and as a profound way of life. ■

*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

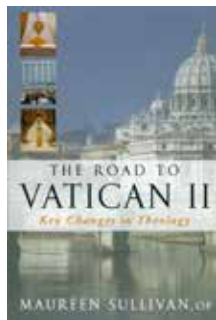
Compiled by Dan Pierson

**Jubilee of Mercy – A Moment of Grace**

On December 8, 2015, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) and the beginning of the Jubilee of Mercy (December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016). In announcing the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis said, "The Church feels a great need to keep the event (Vatican II) alive." The Holy Year is "dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which God constantly extends to all of us."

Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP, PhD, a recently retired professor of theology from St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, sees Vatican II and the upcoming Jubilee of Mercy as historic moments in the modern history of the church, moments when the activity of the Holy Spirit can be discerned, hence, moments of grace. She connects the Jubilee of Mercy to Vatican II, showing the genuine similarity between Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis.

Now is an ideal time for catechetical leaders to revisit the themes, messages, and theology of Vatican II as they too become disciples of mercy in the ministry of education and formation.



**The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology** by Sr. Maureen Sullivan. Paulist Press.

The book illustrates the story of how the

Roman Catholic Church moved from a rigid, hierarchical model of church to a collegial, "communion" model through the theological insights and espousal of certain paradigm shifts of some key theologians so attuned to the workings of the Holy Spirit.

**101 Questions & Answers on Vatican II** by Sr. Maureen Sullivan. Paulist Press.

This book is a good resource for those who have heard of Vatican II but may not have a clear understanding or experience of it. It asks the basic question: "Just what was Vatican II?" The user-friendly format is ideal for catechists, RCIA, and adult faith formation.

**A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II** by Edward P. Hahnenberg. Franciscan Media.

Hahnenberg outlines each of the documents produced by the Second Vatican Council. Offering the background for each work, its language and context, this book provides a clear and concise overview of the Council's work and its significance in the life of the church. Each document's history, content, major concerns, and effects are considered.

**Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents. Study Edition** by Austin Flannery. Liturgical Press.

This is the translation chosen for inclusion in The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the text that both students of the Council and students of the Cat-



echism will want. It contains all 16 documents of the Second Vatican Council plus the 49 later documents from popes and Vatican congregations that implement the details of the Council's decisions.

All documents are available at the Vatican website.

(As you approach the 16 Documents, I recommend beginning with the four constitutions.)

**Misericordiae Vultus (The Face of Mercy)**

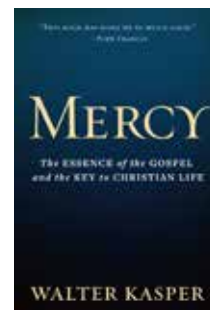
Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

Pope Francis

Available at the Vatican website: [iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en.html](http://iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en.html)

**Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life** by Walter Kasper. Paulist Press.

Cardinal Walter Kasper examines God's mercy and reflects upon the following: What does it mean to believe in a merciful God? How are divine mercy and divine justice related? How can we speak of a compassionate God? Can undeserved woe and divine mercy be brought into harmony with one another?



He likewise seeks to address the ethical questions that similarly arise: How can we measure up to the standard of divine mercy in our own actions? What does the message of mercy mean for the practice of the church and how can we cause the central message of God's mercy to shine in the life of Christians and the church? What does this message mean for a new culture of mercy in our society? ■

*Dan Pierson is the founder of eCatechist.com, faithAlivebooks.com and Faith Alive Books Publishing. He is coauthor with Susan Stark of Reflections from Pope Francis: An Invitation to Journaling, Prayer and Action. Tarcher/Penguin. 2015. Email him at pierson.dj@gmail.com.*

# ALIVE IN CHRIST

## Going beyond the traditional classroom...

**Our Sunday Visitor's**  
*Alive in Christ* is flexible and adapts easily to accommodate multiple faith formation models!



### RELIGION CURRICULUM

PARISH  
SCHOOL  
BILINGUAL

eBooks available



### Traditional Classroom

Catechists and teachers are supported and empowered to authentically share the teaching of the Church with passion, clarity, and creativity.



### Bilingual

*Vivos en Cristo* is the fully bilingual version of *Alive in Christ*. Every detail is presented in both English and Spanish.



### Home-Based

21 core sessions in both English and Spanish and eAssessments that are returned auto-corrected meet the needs of today's busy parents.



### Family Gathered

10 complete gathered family sessions are new each year and model the same three-step catechetical process in *Alive in Christ*.



### Summer Adaptation

Two-week summer intensive program is a breeze with a guide for program directors, a suggested lesson plan for each grade.

Visit [aliveinchrist.osv.com/aicinfo](http://aliveinchrist.osv.com/aicinfo) to discover what makes *Alive in Christ* different, review online or request evaluation copies, view videos, testimonials, and more.

Call 800.348.2440 ext. 2173

## Our Sunday Visitor

