

**Media and Ministry . . . more than just books and videos!**

This month, Technology and Catechesis is devoted to providing examples of how to incorporate the use of media – in its multiple formats – into catechetical ministry. It takes time, but the result can be truly transforming ministry!

**ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS
CAN BE “VALUE-ADDED”**

In terms of catechetical ministry, one of the primary benefits of email and the internet is their ability to connect people almost instantly to information. Consider the implications for parish catechetical ministry. Whether through email, or on the parish website, participants and families can be connected to information that relates to their or their child's area of study. For example, in preparing for First Communion, the parish could research and make available a myriad of website resources for families to review, learn, and discuss together. Sites are out there for children through adults. These could be available on the parish website, or they could be emailed directly to families. The same thing could be done for other subject areas and age groups just as easily. And, this can all be coordinated by a volunteer or team of volunteers. This makes it value-added to what is already happening within the program.

E-Newsletter

Many parishes catechetical programs are already in the habit of sending regular newsletters. Converting these from printed and postage mailed format to an electronic format decreases the amount of time and money involved with sending the information. For example, a newsletter sent out to an email list every month could contain a list of relevant learning topics for each age group, family resources to support that topic, a copy of that month's schedule, any important announcements, and any support materials, such as flyers, permission forms, or feedback forms. Having this prepared electronically will also make it easy to post on the website, providing a second channel of communication. One of the greatest benefits about an e-newsletter is the ability to incorporate digital photos or other images to enhance your message. For the tech-savvy, sound files and small video clips can be incorporated as well!

Current Issues

Having just experienced the death of a Pope and the election of a new Pope, as well as the Terry Schiavo situation, electronic media is an outstanding way to communicate about current issues. Information could be made available on the website or email providing parishioners with vital information about these topics.

Providing a Virtual Forum

One challenge facing catechetical leaders is a lack of time availability for families. If people are not able to be present to one another in person, the internet allows for communities of faith and support to be formed electronically. This might be a bulletin board for catechists, or a parish prayer site, or even a log of class activities. Whether through a bulletin board, blog, chat room, or other format, most of these are available at little or no cost! One parish created a bulletin-board interface for parents to talk about raising kids with Catholic values. The parents found support, networking, guidance, prayer, and resources through this tool. All the parish had to do was create the interface and advertise its availability to parents! Imagine the possibilities for other groups within the parish!

Website for forms, policy, etc.

Many parishes report the use of the website to make forms, policies, schedules and other information easily accessible to families. In an era when not everyone checks their postal mail regularly, a well-designed parish website is a great, central location to access information.

**AUDIO/VISUAL AIDS APPEAL TO MULTIPLE
LEARNING STYLES****Digital Photos**

Everyone loves to see pictures of themselves or people they know. Digital photos in the bulletin, newsletters, or flyers sent home can greatly increase the feeling of connectedness to catechetical ministry! Plus, it helps those in the parish not connected with catechetical ministry feel that they have a sense of what's happening.

Use of sound and images in class and presentations

Some people are visual and auditory learners, no matter what age group. As a result, it is important to incorporate different sounds and images in learning sessions. These could be from music, videos, slideshows, computer software, and even the internet. Plus, many age groups are now becoming familiar with use of multiple forms of media, and they can become involved in the preparation of these materials. The more interaction a person can have with their learning environment, the better the chances they will come away with new knowledge! Check out the next issue for more ideas!

For more information, please contact Brian Topping at (815) 727-6411.