



Leaven

The Newsletter of the
Religious Education Office



Into the Fields Strengthens Parish and School

Special to "Leaven" by St. John of Arc Catholic School in Lisle

Catholic educators are always seeking to strengthen their catechetical teaching skills. Consider what the journey *Into the Fields* has done for the teachers and staff at St. Joan of Arc Catholic School in Lisle. By using this multi-part formation program, they have turned their weekly faculty meetings into experiences of faith sharing, spiritual growth and personal renewal.

Principal Sister Carolyn Sieg chose *Into the Fields* for her staff after reviewing three different catechetical training programs. She said it is very user friendly, and was impressed by its emphasis on faith sharing as an important component.



Over the course of the school year, teachers from every grade are taking turns being presenters, along with their co-teachers, at two consecutive staff meetings. Regular school business is dispatched quickly, allowing about forty-five extra minutes for formation sessions based on the "Growing Faith" series of booklets.

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January Events for You and Your Parish Leadership

We would like to highlight two upcoming events that are great opportunities for leadership formation, though in very different ways:

Congregational Inclusion Training Day

Saturday, January 12, 2008 - Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Naperville

www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/specialneeds.asp#events

"Congregational Inclusion: From the Liturgical Table to the Church Picnic Table" is an important training day for any and all parish leaders charged with developing, implementing or enhancing Special Needs Ministry including catechesis. It will be a very enriching experience, giving us tools to move from worshipping alongside special needs individuals to creating real social and interactive experiences with them. We hope each parish will have at least one representative present to benefit and bring back the wisdom on ministering well with an often marginalized population. There's still time to register!

THE BIG GATHERING THIS YEAR

Pastor-Staff Leadership Day: "Reality Ministry"

Thursday, January 24, 2008 - Hickory Ridge Marriott Conference Hotel, Lisle

Featuring special guest presenter **Mike Patin**

www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/leadershipday.htm

Take time to refresh and renew yourself this January.

This is the big gathering of the year for catechetical leaders with their pastors and associate pastors! We ask you all to encourage your colleagues on staff to take time to be with us for a fun and festive mid-winter break. Mike Patin will be excellent...ask anyone who has heard him before. The venue is lovely. Good food and drink, great company, and lots of exhibitors. You gotta be there with us! Register today!



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JAN / FEB 2008

Parish-Diocesan Partnership: Catholic Education Foundation Grant Money and Parish Initiative Working Together!



With the New Year comes some annual opportunities: Best chance to get frost-bite! Planning for that Super Bowl Party! And applying for diocesan grant funding for parish evangelization and catechetical initiatives! Between now and April 30, 2008, you and your parish are encouraged to submit a proposal for ministry seed money from the diocesan Catholic Education Foundation for the 2008-09 year.

It's really very simple. For more information, go to www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo and click on "Diocesan Funding Opportunities". There you will learn more about both grant programs annually offered: *Religious Education Grants* supports catechetical initiatives in child, youth and adult programming. *Outreach Initiative* is specifically aimed to evangelization and faith formation ministry for adults.

What you are about to read is a description of a ministry initiative, at St. Thomas the Apostle in Naperville, that has received funding in the current 2007-08 year. I'm grateful to Susan for sharing with us about the outreach effort she is helping to develop and lead at St. Thomas. Even more so am I grateful to her and the parish for looking for a way to reconnect with Catholics who are no longer active in the faith. What an important area for us all to explore!

There are several parishes that have received funding through the Catholic Education Foundation this year to help them develop a variety of ministries that enhance evangelization and catechesis. Mid-year reports on these efforts will be made at the February 28th meeting of the diocesan Catechetical Leadership Council. You are welcome to attend to learn more firsthand. Contact me for more information or with questions you may have. The Church needs creative, dynamic and fresh ways to evangelize and catechize, especially with adults.

Some exciting efforts are underway in many of our parishes. Please consider the possibilities at your parish. And remember, the diocese wants to help!

Reactivating Inactive Catholics

Special Guest Writer: Susan Francesconi from St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Naperville

I'm not a gambler, but I'd wager your parish has a few inactive parishioners. You know them; these are the folks who once felt strongly enough about belonging to a Catholic parish that they joined yours, yet over time have silently disappeared. They are still registered, have not moved, changed parishes, or switched to another faith tradition—or, at least they haven't made the formal leap. As far as you know they do not regularly attend Mass, and your parish records indicate they do not participate in any ministries, nor have they made any recorded contributions.

There are a myriad of reasons why people drift away from active parish life, but each reason is grounded in this singular harsh truth: from the perspective of the inactive parishioner, the Roman Catholic Church and your parish are not currently relevant to them and their state in life. They have eliminated active participation from their list of priorities.

This statement is a clarion call to everyone involved in Church ministry. Christ's great commission tells us to create disciples and we are failing in that by not serving these parishioners—the lost sheep. The primary challenge we face is in recognizing that even our best efforts cannot be imparted to people who are not present to hear it.

Who among you does not feel slightly defensive after reading that statement?



After all, we can't force people to take part in our faith formation events, or to come hear our guest speakers, to attend our parish missions and so on. But the truth is, Jesus did not remain at home waiting for people to come to see him. Rather, **he** went to them.

St. Thomas the Apostle in Naperville, thanks to a recent grant awarded by the Diocese of Joliet Catholic Education Foundation, is piloting an evangelical program called **C.R.E.W.** (Connect, Respond, Engage, and Welcome) which strives to seek out and reconnect with inactive parishioners through invitation and welcoming. It is our hope that this initiative will lead to an increased number of parishioners who are aware of, thinking about, attending to and maturing in their faith through the community, events and activities at St. Thomas the Apostle.



Our method of identifying inactive parishioners is based on two parameters measured over a twelve-month period: no recorded ministry participation, and no recorded contributions. While we realize this is an imperfect method, we believe that these two parameters are good indicators of waning or inactive participation. We also realize the inadequacy of measuring our success within these parameters. Rather, in the first year, it may be the relational aspects—the one-to-one conversations and awareness of newcomers—that indicate our success.

The three parts of C.R.E.W. include **invitation**, **welcome**, and **engagement**.

1. The Invitation: Our first point of contact is through a series of seven large four-color postcards. The cards in no way indicate the recipient's inactive state. These cards are original to St. Thomas and look like nothing our parishioners have received in the past. The front of each card features a clever image and message; the content on the back includes an invitation to attend three upcoming events, a social (Donut Sunday) during which they can learn about a featured ministry, and general parish information. We believe that over the sixteen-week period that the cards are received; a percentage of parishioners will identify with and attend at least one event.

2. The Welcome: When a parishioner decides to attend an event, how will he or she be greeted? Will we live up to the warm and welcoming image portrayed on the postcard? An increased welcoming presence will benefit all parishioners and has the potential of making or breaking the success of our efforts to reconnect. St. Thomas C.R.E.W. has a small but extremely dedicated team who currently work at various large events greeting people, initiating conversations with newcomers and providing information from the welcome table. We anticipate increasing the size of the team as the results our efforts become more visible, and expect that over time the essence of welcoming will become part of the "breath" of every parishioner.

3. The Engagement: While there is no guarantee that an inactive parishioner will become reengaged after attending a single event, we believe that a verbal invitation to return can help bridge that gap. Consider the impersonal "See you soon" vs. the sincere "If you like music, I hope you will decide to attend our Praise night next Wednesday, here's a flyer with all the information". Our attended welcome table is the perfect channel for verbally communicating a broad platform of upcoming parish activities. In addition, on Donut Sunday we have initiated ministry presentations called "Spotlight on Ministry". These presentations allow a single ministry to showcase what they do, promote their upcoming events and recruit new members.

Making disciples begins with meeting people where they are. As the coordinator of St. Thomas C.R.E.W., I pray that the efforts of our first year will do just that and result in an increased awareness of the relevance of parish life and allow greater participation in the many opportunities for spiritual growth here at St. Thomas.

If you would like to read more about CREW, a volunteer recruitment summary has been posted on the St. Thomas the Apostle website. Please visit www.stapostle.org and type the word "CREW" into the search engine.



January DRE Cluster Meetings

Please attend local cluster meetings for assistance, support, and information. For more on DRE clusters, call Joyce Donahue at (815) 727-6411, x258.

Kankakee-Grundy

January 10, 2008
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
St. Rose Parish
Kankakee

Ford-Iroquois

January 10, 2008
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
St. Peter Parish, Clifton

Directors of Adult Faith Formation

January 10, 2008
Time & Location TBA

For more information about the Adult Faith Network, please contact Paul Jarzembowski or Joyce Donahue at the REO at (815) 727-6411.

Cultural Sensitivity for Catechetical Ministry

Joyce Donahue

Many parishes are experiencing a rapidly changing cultural landscape, as immigrants become a larger portion of our diocesan population.

By far the most prevalent groups are people of Hispanic descent - from Mexico, Central and South America. While in many communities, adults from this population are taking their rightful place as catechists, “Anglo” (non-Hispanic Caucasian) catechists may find themselves faced with students whose experience of life and faith differs rather markedly from their own.

In *The Catechist’s Toolbox*, master catechist Joe Paprocki cautions: “One common mistake made by many well-intentioned catechists... is to presume that there is a “norm” (typically Anglo European) that strives to be open and sensitive to others who are not the norm. The fact of the matter is, when it comes to the Body of Christ, there is no norm.” We are in fact all one. Paprocki advises catechists to “be aware of the cultural diversity in your group and do your ‘homework’ about traditions, customs and values...” (p. 31)

What many people from outside the Hispanic culture do not understand is that most Hispanic faith practices are not based in the “official” church structures we are familiar with, but in traditions experienced within the family and community. Students who may report they seldom or rarely attend Mass may in fact be regularly experiencing family and community devotions associated with the liturgical year that have a great depth, a profound richness, and a living connection to the Scriptures and the Catholic faith and which are seldom, if ever, mentioned in our catechetical textbooks.

Watch for the results of a proposed project from the newly formed Spanish Faith Formation Cluster – a resource to assist catechists with learning the many diverse “traditions, customs and values” of people of the Hispanic culture.



Hispanic dancers begin worship at Holy Spirit Catholic Community in Naperville in November 2007. Each year, Holy Spirit Parish celebrates ethnic and racial diversity in the Church with a weekend of festive liturgies, cultural presentations, and foods from around the world.

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This is when the real action takes place. Teachers combine faith witness, music, art and technology to enhance the material presented in each booklet. For one of the first presentations, kindergarten teachers designed a board game to help facilitate faith sharing among the teachers.

After each two-week cycle, new presenters take the stage, and the rest of the staff gets a new role, too. Teachers draw a random table number to find out who they will sit with for the next two sessions. Sister Carolyn and literature teacher Patti Sendlak, who coordinates the program for the school, wanted to liven up the experience and to give teachers a chance to interact with different people throughout the year. It is the continuous opportunity to share with and learn from different colleagues that has made *Into the Fields* such a rewarding experience.

Junior high religion teacher Mike Gormley said that he is inspired by every teacher who has conducted presentations so far, saying, "They have been creative, and have made their lessons very relevant and meaningful." Presenters have sometimes shared personal faith experiences, which helps the rest of the staff feel comfortable engaging in small group sharing. Teachers also are enjoying rotating where they sit at meetings. Preschool teacher Colleen Clark put it this way: "The table lottery enables me to share and listen to co-workers whom I normally would just say hello to. I am enjoying sharing our faith journey with new and old friends."

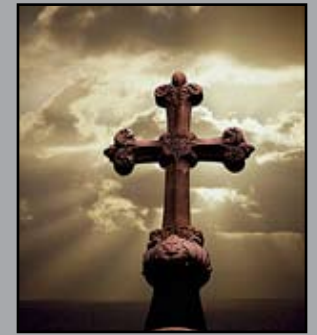
Kindergarten teacher Bernetta Kolar agrees. "Teachers arrive at meetings worn out from the day, but they leave filled with faith and determination. Each meeting is so different. Teachers bring their own gifts and personalities to the presentations."



Sue McMahon, who has already given her presentations, also enjoys the faith sharing aspect. She said it leads to a better understanding of the people she works with every day. She likes the fact that *Into the Fields* addresses spiritual growth on both a personal and professional level. "It allows us to see the value of being a Catholic educator."

Sendlak sees the program also fostering a sense of reflection among the staff participants. Not only is there a peaceful time for prayer at each session, but she says the program also helps teachers bring prayer, faith and patient hearts into their classrooms. The meetings generally last a bit longer than normal, so Sister Carolyn provides refreshments each week. There's always something different to enjoy, and she says that's one of the fun things her teachers look forward to: will it be pizza, or sundaes or a fruit and cheese tray?

But, most of all Sister Carolyn says she loves to see the staff's enthusiastic embrace of *Into the Fields*. She knows the program will give her teachers a sense of spiritual renewal and a greater relationship with God. "Overall, it's an outstanding program," she said. Sister Carolyn, as well as her teachers, would highly recommend it to other schools and parishes. The staff and students is our highest priority. This program easily enhances and facilitates staff catechesis," she said.



February DRE Cluster Meetings

Please attend local cluster meetings for assistance, support, and information. For more on DRE clusters, call Joyce Donahue at (815) 727-6411, x258.

West DuPage

February 14, 2008
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
St. Margaret Mary
Naperville

Kankakee-Grundy

February 14, 2008
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
St. Joseph, Bradley

Ford-Iroquois

February 14, 2008
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
St. Edmund, Watseka

Joliet-Will

February 21, 2008
12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
St. Jude, New Lenox

Northeast DuPage

February 28-29, 2008
(overnight retreat)
Aylesford (WHERE?)

Youth Ministry News Updates

PLEASE NOTE: March Youth Rally Days Cancelled

The March Rally Days for high school youth on March 15, 2008, and for junior high youth on March 16, 2008, had to be cancelled for this year. We will begin working on providing this opportunity for the 2008-2009 school year.

If you would like to be on the core team for planning these events, please contact Paul Mach in the Youth Ministry Office at (815) 727-6411, x281.

NET Ministries in the Joliet Diocese

Once again, the National Evangelization Team (NET) will be coming to the Diocese of Joliet to provide retreats during March 18 to 30, 2008.

If you are interested in booking a date, please contact Paul Mach in the Youth Ministry Office at (815) 727-6411, x281.

For more information regarding NET Ministries, please go to their website:
www.netusa.org

Bishops release 2008 USCCB Catholic Voting Guide

Paul Jarzembowski

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released their new "Faithful Citizenship" document as a guide for American Catholics during the 2008 elections.

The bishops outline the purpose of this important work: "This statement highlights the role of the Church in the formation of conscience, and the corresponding moral responsibility of each Catholic to hear, receive, and act upon the Church's teaching in the lifelong task of forming his or her own conscience. With this foundation, Catholics are better able to evaluate policy decisions, party platforms, and candidates' promises and action in light of the Gospel and the moral and social teaching of the Church in order to help build a better world." (*Faithful Citizenship*, no. 5).

The USCCB set up a Faithful Citizenship website (www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship), which includes the following features:

- The full text of the 2008 "Faithful Citizenship" document
- Bulletin inserts regarding Catholics and voting
- Additional USCCB documents and statements regarding Catholics and public life
- Link to the Vatican document on the participation of Catholics in political affairs
- Diocesan and parish suggestions on promoting "Faithful Citizenship"

Throughout 2008, the USCCB will release additional materials and guides (including Bible studies, small group discussions, etc.) for parishes and Catholic leaders on working with congregations and fellow Catholics on political responsibility.

These resources are meant to be the foremost guide for American Catholics. Additional publications, websites, and literature which claim to be the definitive voice on how Catholics should vote are not the official voice of the American bishops as is the *Faithful Citizenship* statement. The bishops have stressed that a broad vision of all issues, including war, abortion, poverty, capital punishment, immigration, among many others, should be taken into account when voting.

We encourage catechetical leaders to use these resources primarily with adults of voting age (18+), perhaps with special attention to college students and young adults who statistically need more motivation to get involved in the political process.

With children and youth, "Faithful Citizenship" is a great way to get young people excited about future participation in the political process, about the American democratic system, and about the balanced approach to making important decisions. It is also a good demonstration of how our faith influences all aspects of life, not just church on Sunday. (St. Mary Press also has some resources available for teaching about *Faithful Citizenship* to youth).

Even more resources will be available over the next few months for children, youth, collegians, and adults of all ages in the parish (as well as several small-group facilitation materials and prayers).

If you need any assistance or ideas for using these materials in your parish, please contact the Diocesan Religious Education Office at (815) 727-6411.



Student Absenteeism from Faith Formation Sessions: What's the Pastoral Thing to Do?

Joyce Donahue

Every now and then I get a call or an email from a parish Director of Religious Education wondering how to handle students who miss faith formation sessions. While you might think this is a pretty simple issue, how to balance the church's need for a child to be consistently present with the need to be pastoral to the family is a true challenge. There are some things we can do to invite families to a better faith formation experience for their child or young person.



Once there are three missed sessions, try sending a formal letter to the parents informing them, and asking if there is a specific difficulty. Sometimes the child really might be ill or there has been a family crisis, and that may justify the absences. That opens a window for you to express concern and work with the family or to refer them to pastoral care. Keep a copy on file; if the problem continues, you will know you have already contacted the family.

You could also ask to arrange a time for the catechist to work with the child to make up the missed sessions. That lets the parent know that you are serious. Obviously, if absenteeism continues, you can raise the consequences, moving from asking about makeup work to requiring it. Try being invitational, not confrontational – but firm. Excessive absenteeism can be an opportunity for expressing pastoral concern and evangelization, more than for enforcement or jumping through hoops.

Normally, we would not recommend requiring students to repeat a grade, but certainly in the case of a sacrament preparation year, excessive absenteeism (1/3 of the sessions or more) is grounds for asking either for monitored makeup work over the summer (for a first sacrament preparation year) or for repeating a year (in the case of a second year).

All of these are suggested strategies, not diocesan policy. It is up to the local Directors of Religious Education to set more specific policies, keeping in mind the delicate balance of standards and the needs of families.

If you haven't been at cluster meetings lately...

Joyce Donahue

We know you're a busy parish catechetical leader – and sometimes you simply cannot spare the time to get out to your local or diocesan cluster meeting. Or, maybe you have been meaning to go, but somehow never made it out the door. So what have you been missing? Clusters for Religious Education, Youth Ministry, Adult Faith Formation, and the new Spanish Faith Formation Cluster, are all an essential source of:

- * **Information** (featured speakers; what's happening in parishes and in the diocese)
- * **Support** (for your ministry – solidarity, advocacy, and emotional support)
- * **Connection** (with talented and caring people in your ministry area)
- * **Sharing** (of resources, ideas, and stories that can be of great help to your work)
- * **Physical Distribution** (of resources from diocesan offices; parish ministry ideas)
- * **Cooperation** (a forum to get leaders to work together on formation, events, etc.)
- * **Shared Prayer** (calling the grace of God down upon our work never hurts either...)

If you want more information about the clusters that you are a member of, please contact any of the staff at the Religious Education Office at (815) 727-6411.

Safe Environment Record-Keeping Reminders

Please remember to submit documentation for Safe Environment instruction to the Diocesan Religious Education Office (REO).

ALL parishes in the Diocese of Joliet must turn in the form, found at www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/safeEnvironment.asp

SPECIAL NOTES

If your students receive instruction at their public school – note the number enrolled in your parish programs and number (presumed) instructed by public school. Mark “public school instructs” in the box for resources used.

If your parish conducted instruction, please mark the number enrolled, number instructed, and number whose parents declined instruction.

PLEASE RETAIN all parent signed opt-out forms and records for a period of two years. Do not discard them after you submit your documentation form!

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Joyce Donahue or Paul Mach at the Religious Education Office at (815) 727-6411.

Being Age Appropriate

Always an Important Aspect of Catechetical Ministry

Tom Quinlan

Most of us would agree that our society today encourages children and youth to grow up too fast.

They are exposed to so much information, much of it related to adult themes. From news of violent crimes to TV shows with sexual innuendo (and worse), the world in which minors live today is constantly chipping away at their innocence.

This reality provides a keen challenge to catechists and catechetical leaders striving to invite young people into a discipleship relationship to Christ. On one hand we need to relate to children and youth in a way that opens them to the *Good News* of Catholic faith. We have to be in touch with *their* world. Yet, we also need to have a sense of what's healthy and appropriate for discussion, given the ages and maturity of the group. This is complicated by the possibility that there could be a wide maturity range within any group.

This question of age appropriateness applies to every catechetical topic and all ministry settings. In the area of Scripture formation, for example, it is important that care be given in how the concept of *literary form* is introduced to younger children. While we certainly do not want to be forming our little ones to grow up as biblical literalists, we also do not want to bring them into the world of symbol and allegory too early, before they can grasp it. Helping to bridge children to an adult understanding of the Bible takes both a solid scriptural grounding and a gentle, intuitive touch.



Having a sense of the developmental stages of children and youth is a valuable knowledge for any catechist or catechetical leader. The catechist should try to develop a sense of each of the young people to which they are ministering. Additionally, the catechist benefits from developing a relationship with the parents of children or youth they are relating to. We must, in all we do in parish ministry, try to honor and affirm the place of parents as the first and most important catechists for their children.

As catechetical leaders and catechists, we should always remember that we are representing in a public way the face of the Church. This means that we are obligated to fully teach the truths and traditions of Catholic faith, without ambiguity or personal reservation.

Our central goal must be to bring minors into a deeper relationship to Christ in and through the Church.

While bringing personal sharing into the catechetical mix is an essential aspect to our ministry of touching the hearts of the young people we are trying to mentor, we should always reflect beforehand on what is appropriate for the group.

A well-formed and well-prepared catechist, trained in the *knowing, being, and doing*, as set forth in the *National Directory for Catechesis* and the diocesan certification program, will have most often a knack for understanding how to handle the ordinary and tricky dynamics related to age-appropriate faith formation.

And in those situations of particularly delicate moral and theological questioning, hopefully catechists will act with initial care and look to their catechetical leader for guidance.

Being Age Appropriate

On Topics of Human Sexuality in Particular

Tom Quinlan

An area that comes to mind when considering age appropriateness with minors is human sexuality. Our Catholic faith has so much to offer in the formation of the entire person. Certainly this applies to human sexuality, to which the Church offers a rich, profound and decidedly positive perspective.

Appropriate integration of sexuality and sexual activity into a holistic, Christian understanding of the human person, is a vital aim for the journey of faith formation of any young Catholic. It becomes even more important to do this...and do it with great intentionality...in a world today that loudly and constantly invites young people to understand their sexuality quite differently.

We must not shrink from the challenge of catechizing on human sexuality. We should embrace it with respect, sensitivity, and sufficient knowledge of the teaching of the Church. Further, we ought to grasp the *rationale* for the Church's understanding of sexuality, both in general and on particular topics. It is the depth, beauty and coherence of the Church's view of sexuality, within the context of the person, society and salvation, which is ultimately so compelling. Simply put, catechists and parents charged with forming young people should not only share *what* the Church teaches but *why!* The soon-to-be-released statement, *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living: Guidelines for Curriculum and Publication Design*, explores this further, with an affirmation of the parental role being primary in this formation.

Catechists, like parents, generally have a sense of caution as they engage in such formation with children and youth. This is reasonable. Youth are looking to parents and the parish for guidance that offers a hopeful contrast to tone of our culture. It is a necessary and important formation area.

Just like parents, catechists must be ready to provide a gentle and caring presence. We must give great attention to presenting the Catholic perspective on human sexuality so that it will be clear and consistent. And we must be sure that the material covered and the manner of conversation is proper to the developmental stage of the youth.



In recent years, the Church has been blessed with a renewed catechetical focus on sexuality and the human person. Many look to the philosophical and theological exploration on the subject by Pope John Paul II, in what has come to be known as *Theology of the Body*. This renewal offers hope to the current and future generations for a holistic understanding and a well-integrated living of human sexuality.

With this renewal comes the need for catechetical leaders to give great care in making sure

that the topic will always be addressed in a way that is age appropriate and proper to its sacred nature. The challenge is to present the material in such a way so as to invite growth while respecting where the minor is in the developmental process. Catechetical leaders have the responsibility to ensure that catechists have been duly formed to carry out their role in this area, with both fidelity to Church teaching and pastoral sensitivity.

Peace and Social Justice

Great Learning Opportunities for Catechists

Catechists who attend these or similar events can submit them to their local catechetical leader for certification credit.

For more information on these events or to sign up, contact Joyce Ruhaak at joyceru@dioceseofjoliet.org or call her at (815) 834-4036.

Sat., Jan. 26, 2008 Border Crossing

Lisieux Pastoral Center
371 N. St. Joseph Ave., Kankakee
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Topic: Immigration and the official Catholic position, how to welcome and assist immigrants in our parishes.

Sat., March 1, 2008 Journey to Justice

Sacred Heart Parish
337 S. Ottawa St., Joliet.
The morning session will be only for current *JustFaith* people. Lunch and the afternoon session are open to all.

Topic: Human contact diminishment and deprivation as experienced by those incarcerated, their families, victims and their families.

RCIA – Content *and* Conversion

Joyce Donahue

Earlier this year, the U.S. bishops explored the possibility of creating a national curriculum for the RCIA because they felt the RCIA process was not adequately providing the content of the faith. However, no decision was made to create such a directive.

It seems likely that the bishops were aware such a change might do more harm than good, since it has the potential to detract from the RCIA. Rather than a series of classes, the RCIA is a process in the context of the local community, to form disciples who experience a profound conversion of heart, and are not merely formed in matters of the intellect and understanding. So, how do parishes provide in the RCIA process “a suitable catechesis... planned to be gradual and complete” -- catechesis that “leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate”? (RCIA, 75)

For an overview of best practices you may find it interesting to look at the following document from the USCCB Department of Evangelization: “Appendix B-2 Consultation with Parish RCIA Leaders.” Log onto <http://www.usccb.org/evangelization/appendixb2.shtml>

One appropriate, solid method for formation (and, according to the USCCB consultation, the most frequently used model) is lectionary-based catechesis. There are a number of resources to accomplish this and still “cover” the content of the faith in a non-intrusive manner. Here are some:

- *At Home with the Word*. Palabra de Dios. Sunday readings with commentary and reflections. (Liturgical Training Publications).
- *Breaking Open the Word of God*. Resources for Using the Lectionary for Catechesis in the RCIA ed. Karen Hinman Powell and Joseph P. Sinwell (Paulist)
- *Celebrating the Lectionary*. There is an RCIA thematic component for each week's readings. Adult, teen, versions are available. (Liturgical Training Publications)
- *Come and See*. A Lectionary-based Christian Initiation Resource Using Catholic Updates (St. Anthony Messenger Press)
- *Echoing God's Word*. James B. Dunning. A model for conversing with scriptures for catechesis and preaching. (Liturgy Training Publications).
- *Footprints on the Mountain. Preaching and Teaching the Sunday Readings*. Roland J. Faley. A thematic commentary on Sunday Lectionary. The author provides a short list of topics related to each week's readings. Also available on CD-ROM (Paulist Press)
- *Living the Lectionary*, Geoff Wood. Helps connect the Sunday Scripture readings to life and the world. (Liturgy Training Publications)
- *Opening the Scriptures: a Guide to the Catechism for use with the Sunday Readings* (Diocese of Pittsburgh, Our Sunday Visitor)
- *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies* - for children's catechumenate, use the appropriate age-level. Teaching guides included in subscription. (Pflaum Publishing Group).
- *Word & Worship Workbook*, resource for each of the three cycles. (Paulist Press).

For general RCIA issues or specifically liturgical ones, please contact Sr. Sharon Stola at the Diocese of Joliet Office for Divine Worship at sstola@dioceseofjoliet.org or call her at (815) 838-7098. For more information about these resources or the catechetical component for the RCIA, please contact Joyce Donahue at jdonahue@dioceseofjoliet.org.

Theology-on-Tap now year-round in Joliet Diocese

Paul Jarzembowski

In January 2008, three multi-parish clusters in the Diocese of Joliet will be beginning an active outreach and evangelization to young Catholics in their twenties and thirties.

Downers Grove & Southeast DuPage

On Monday, January 7, the Southeast DuPage Young Adult Ministry Network launches their first monthly Theology-on-Tap at Papa Passaros Restaurant in Westmont. Popular retreat leader Fr. Michael Sparough, SJ, will address young adults on "Keeping the Spirit Alive After the Holidays." They will continue meeting on the first Monday of each month. For more information, contact Denise Rose at (630) 479-0223 or via email at ladycabdriver23@yahoo.com.

Joliet & Will County

On Thursday, January 10, the Will County Young Adult Ministry Network will host their first monthly Theology-on-Tap at The Charley Horse Restaurant in New Lenox. Paul Jarzembowski from the Diocese of Joliet will speak about "Spiritual Popcorn: Finding God Speaking to You in Your Favorite Movies." They will meet on the second Thursday of each month. For more information, contact Sarah Jarzembowski at (708) 326-9302 or via email at sarahj@stmarymokena.org.

Naperville & West Central DuPage

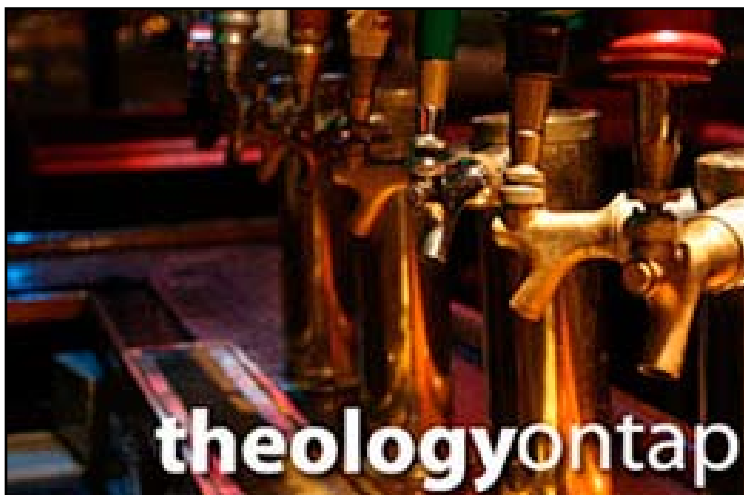
On Tuesday, January 15, the West Suburban Young Adult Ministry Network (Naperville, Wheaton, West Central DuPage) continues their ongoing speaker series at Mullen's Bar & Grill in Lisle. Greg Pierce, author of *Spirituality at Work*, will speak on "The Mass is Never Ended: Rediscovering Our Mission to Transform the World." They meet on the third Tuesday of each month. For more information, please contact Kris at (630) 527-9608, email her at kdulski@calamos.com.

If your parish is in or around one of these areas (Southeast DuPage, Will County, or West Central DuPage), please consider inviting college students, twenty-somethings, and thirty-somethings, married and single, to these gatherings. The topics are open and accessible to young adults, and the setting is non-threatening for inactive or semi-active Catholics.

For those familiar with "Theology-on-Tap," this year the Diocese of Joliet is taking a broader approach to that term and including these monthly gatherings in local restaurants and bars. The summer speaker series (also called "Theology-on-Tap") in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Chicago will continue as planned for July and August 2008.

Hosting Theology-on-Tap year-round reminds young adults and parishes that our commitment to the next generation of Catholics is not limited to four weeks per year.

If your area does not have one of these Theology-on-Tap sites nearby, and you would like to help spearhead something in your region, please contact Paul Jarzembowski at (815) 727-6411, x261.



MORE PEACE AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE
OPPORTUNITIES

Sat., April 12, 2008
Border Crossing

St. Charles Pastoral
Center, Romeoville
(times TBA).

Topic: *Mountain Top
Removal: It's Effects
on the People of
Appalachia, and
Advocacy Possibilities.*



Sat., May 3, 2008
Peace Day 2008

St. Charles Pastoral
Center, Romeoville
Morning to MIDDAY

*Keynote speaker is
John Carr, Secretary
of U.S. Conference
of Catholic Bishops
(USCCB) Department of
Social Development and
World Peace.*

*Also featured are
several workshops,
a number of exhibits
(including one from
the Hiroshima Peace
Memorial Museum),
a Eucharistic Liturgy
with the commissioning
of the 2008 JustFaith
Graduates, and a
closing luncheon.*

Jan. & Feb. Youth Ministry Cluster Mtgs.

January 10, 2008

10:00 am SE DuPage
Notre Dame Parish
Clarendon Hills

10:00 am NBA Jr. High
St. Dominic, Bolingbrook

2:00 pm Naperville Area
(High School Cluster)
St. Dominic, Bolingbrook

3:30 pm Joliet Cluster
St. Paul Parish, Joliet

January 17, 2008

6:30 pm East Will
St. Jude, New Lenox

January 23, 2008

10:00 am SOB Cluster
St. James, Glen Ellyn

February 7, 2008

10:00 am SE DuPage
Notre Dame Parish
Clarendon Hills

3:30 pm Joliet Cluster
St. Paul Parish, Joliet

February 14, 2008

10:00 am NBA Jr. High
St. Margaret Mary Parish
Naperville

2:00 pm Naperville Area
(High School Cluster)
Holy Spirit, Naperville

February 27, 2008

10:00 am SOB Cluster
St. Alexander, Villa Park

For up-to-date details:
[www.dioceseofjoliet.org/
reo/ymClusters.asp](http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/ymClusters.asp)



National Catholic Youth Conference Reflections and Experiences from some Joliet Diocese Participants

On the way back from the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Columbus, Ohio, in November 2007, we asked for the participants' thoughts and reflections on what they had experienced there. Here is what they had to say about it:

"The feeling you get when you see 20,000 kids, just like you, so madly in love with Christ is the most overwhelming feeling ever."

- Kaitlin Maggiore, *Christ the King (Lombard)*

"We don't think that there is a more uplifting experience than singing, dancing, laughing and praying with 20,000 other teens, all in the name of Christ. Especially with the keynote speakers who really hit home, and added a little comedy, it was amazing. There were so many new experiences; for example a priest, with his own bobble head!"

- Kirsten, Kate, Jess, Matt, and Amanda, *St Scholastica (Woodridge)*

"NCYC was awesome and really inspiring. It really made me want to be closer to my family it also made me proud to be Catholic."

- Tom Aguayo, *St Joseph (Downers Grove)*

About 90 youth from the Diocese of Joliet attended the national event. A sampling of photos from the conference are included on this page. For even more quotes from the teens who participated in the 2008 National Catholic Youth Conference, go to the Diocesan Youth Ministry website, <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/ymNCYC.asp>.



Finally! YLC for Collegiate Young Adults

Paul Jarzembowski

Plans are finally underway for the Diocese of Joliet's first Collegiate Leadership Conference (CLC), a college-focused version of and companion to the popular annual high school summer event, Youth Leadership Conference (YLC).

The Collegiate Leadership Conference will take place simultaneously with the high school program from Friday to Sunday, June 27 to 29, 2008, and will be held at both the Diocesan Pastoral Center and Lewis University in Romeoville.

This year, the College Leadership Conference will include several potential audiences: first, high school "graduates" (incoming college freshmen); second, all young adults currently in college are welcome to attend, as well as any university graduates who graduated in the spring of 2008. Finally, YLC "staffers" of college-age will also participate in many of the CLC programs throughout the weekend.



The CLC is perfect for YLC "alumni" from the past four years who would like to reconnect with other collegiate young adults. This conference will be a great opportunity for college students to keep alive the fire of faith and the call of leadership that were begun in them when they were high school students at YLC. If they found a love of God and the Church at that event, they won't want to miss this experience either.

First Eucharist Formation:

My Parent Letter in Support of Your Parish's Efforts

Tom Quinlan

As in previous years, you will find my **First Eucharist Parent Letter** as an insert in the January issue of *Leaven*. I ask that each parish share it with parents currently engaged in formation for their child's First Eucharist celebration this year. I offer it as an expression of solidarity from the Diocese of Joliet for all your parish is doing to bring your children to a point of readiness to come to the table of the Lord. I know that sometimes having an extra voice of support can be helpful.



The letter is also meant as an affirmation of the parents' role in their child's faith life and an encouragement to see Sunday Eucharist as a central to Catholic life and faith practice. The letter is also available in Spanish by simply visiting the Diocesan Religious Education Office online at www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo, and clicking on "Letters from the Director". You can also go there if you would like a copy of a color version of the letter for your parents.

Youth Leadership Conference Updates

Registration Forms

All forms are up on the Diocesan web page at <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo/ylc.asp>

New 2008 Dates

The YLC 2008 dates have now changed to Friday, June 27, through Sunday, June 29, 2008.

Parish Banners

This year, we are asking each parish to make their own banner. Directions for banners can be found on the YLC website (see above).

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is also available this year. Application forms can be found on the Diocesan YLC website (see above)

Next Diocesan Youth Ministers Gathering

Thurs, Feb. 21, 2008
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

St. Charles Borromeo
Diocesan Pastoral
Center, Romeoville



Important Media Center Pricing News

AV Equipment Price Changes

The Diocesan AV Equipment will no longer be part of the Catechetical Media Center, and there will NOT be a flat rate for the entire year.

Each piece of audio or visual equipment will be rented on an individual cost to rent.

Prices will be out in the March issue of *Leaven* and take effect July 1, 2008. Thank you for your understanding.

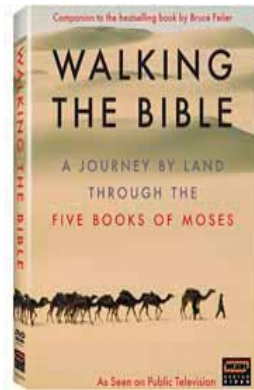
For questions please contact Paul Mach at (815) 727-6411, x281, or email pmach@dioceseofjoliet.org.



Make This New Year's Resolution: Use More Media in Your Ministry This Year

Jeanne Pirc

This year, make a resolution to use more media in your ministry. Whether that means using popular movies or television shows, or using videos and DVDs to better explain the Lenten season to children and adults (a full pullout guide has been inserted into this issue of *Leaven* with age-appropriate listings for Lent and Easter 2008). The Diocesan Catechetical Media Center has books, videos, and DVDs that can help you in your ministry. Here are a few from that list that we highly recommend:

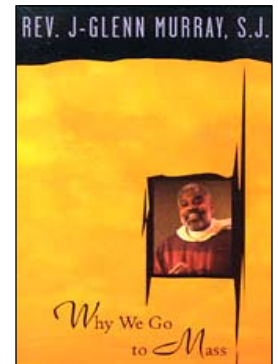


WALKING THE BIBLE: JOURNEY BY LAND THROUGH THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES (with BRUCE FEILER)

Walking the Bible presents one man's epic journey - by foot, jeep, rowboat, and camel - through the greatest stories ever told. From crossing the Red Sea to climbing Mount Sinai to touching the burning bush, Bruce Feiler's inspiring odyssey will change your view of history's most legendary events. The stories in the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Torah, come alive as Feiler searches across three continents for the stories and heroes shared by Christians and Jews. Dramatic Scripture readings interspersed throughout bring you closer to the stories of our faith. Great for adults, especially those in their 20s & 30s.

WHY WE GO TO MASS (with FR. J. GLENN MURRAY)

Fr. J. Glenn Murray, SJ, provides a provocative view of the Catholic Mass. This video is divided into three parts: 1) "Liturgy and Our Lives," in which he shares personal experiences of making sense of liturgy for daily life; 2) "Table Fellowship," during which we hear about how ritual reminds us of our rich heritage and how liturgy recalls our story; 3) "The Mass," where he presents a walk through the Catholic Mass so that viewers have a better understanding of the experience. Fr. Murray is truly on fire in this great series, and will serve as a great and motivational inspiration for all viewers.



POVERTY and PRAYER (with GERRY STRAUB)



Gerry Straub pauses in *Poverty and Prayer* to reflect on the impact of filming in the poorest places on earth. This film features the most powerful scenes from San Damiano's first five films. The short segments cover a wide array of destitute places and people from around the globe, making it an essential educational tool and a wake up call for all viewers. This stunning collection includes the topics of global poverty, leprosy, homelessness, migration, and the desperate need for silence and prayer which leads to an active life of love and justice. This is a great resource to introduce audiences to the critical issues of Catholic social justice.

Children and adults in the new year are more media savvy than ever before, and we have some great resources in our Media Center Library that can help your ministry respond to this postmodern reality. Feel free to contact us for availability of these videos, as well as ideas on how to use them with your ministry.

How to connect Lent and Pop Culture

Paul Jarzembowski (www.spiritualpopcorn.blogspot.com)

This Lent, we enter into Cycle A of the Catholic Lectionary, which provides us with gospel readings from Matthew and John. To use a secular word, these six weeks of Lent give us glimpses into “Jesus the Superhero,” who goes head-to-head with evil in the desert, who becomes otherworldly on the mountaintop, or who raises Lazarus from the dead.

In our popular culture today, heroes have a special place. Each summer at the box office, heroes pull in big dollars for movie studios (*Spider-Man*, *Shrek*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *Harry Potter*, along with the *Bourne* movies for more adult audiences, were the big money-makers in 2007). On television, shows like *Heroes*, *Chuck*, *Reaper*, and *Lost* (all shows featuring everyday heroes in extraordinary circumstances) are some of the networks’ most watched series. This Lent, why not use the “heroes” phenomenon to connect the experience of Lent with kids, teens, and adults of all ages? Here’s a sample movie guide to the seven major gospels of the Lenten season in 2008:



First Sunday of Lent: Matt. 4:1-11 (Temptation in the Desert): *Batman Begins*

Why? Bruce Wayne is tempted to destroy Gotham City because of its faithlessness, but he rejects this offer and takes on the mantle of defending even those who would reject him.

Second Sunday of Lent: Matt. 17:1-9 (The Transfiguration): *Shrek*

Why? Shrek and Fiona reveal their true identities to their closest friends at first, but it is by revealing their true selves to the world that they can best save it, and discover who their true friends really are.

Third Sunday of Lent: John 4:5-42 (The Samaritan Woman): *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

Why? Throughout all the films, Harry Potter befriends those rejected by others, and in this film particularly, he befriends the despised Sirius Black. Harry sees beyond prejudice to who people really are on the inside.

Fourth Sunday of Lent: John 9:1-41 (Jesus Heals the Blind Man): *Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back*

Why? When Luke Skywalker scoffs at miracles and mystery, Jedi Master Yoda shows him that nothing is truly impossible with the Force (or from our perspective, God) by your side. Miracles are indeed possible with faith.

Fifth Sunday of Lent: John 11:1-45 (The Raising of Lazarus): *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*

Why? To defend Middle Earth, Aragon summons an army from beyond the grave to stand alongside him as he, Gandalf, and Frodo make their way closer to the end of their long journey to save their world.

Palm Sunday: Matt. 26:14 to 27:66 (The Passion): *Spider-Man 2*

Why? In this movie, Spider-Man alter ego Peter Parker experiences a “Garden of Gethsemane” moment as he struggles with his call, but understands that he must sacrifice himself in order to save the world.

Good Friday: John 18:1 to 19:42 (The Passion): *Superman Returns*

Why? Like Jesus in John’s Gospel, Superman is sure of his mission to defend the defenseless, to love the unlovable, and to sacrifice himself for those to whom he was sent. In this 2006 revamp of the classic story, Superman must also prove that the world really needs a savior figure.



For even more ideas on how to incorporate media and pop culture into the Lenten season or other experiences of Scripture or Church, or for information on available Lenten media resources, please feel free to contact Paul Jarzembowski at (815) 727-6411, ext. 261. You can also check out his blog at www.spiritualpopcorn.blogspot.com.

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A New Year's Resolution for Youth & Young Adult Ministries

Paul Mach & Paul Jarzembowski

Paul and I would like to make a suggestion for a new year's resolution for 2008 when dealing with youth or young adult ministries. Please try not to call your ministry with these ages – "the youth group" or "the young adult group."

The two of us frequently get calls and requests from parishioners, staffs, and excited volunteers about wanting to start up or join up with either a "youth group" or a "young adult group." On the other hand, we also get calls complaining how a "youth or young adult group" has been struggling to survive, lost most of its core members, or has had a hard time recruiting new members.

The word "group" is not great for the future of youth or young adult ministries. It should be the past. Why? Because the "group" fostered a sense of exclusivity, creating a sense of who was in and who was out. Groups (clubs), in our society, have invisible walls. Words like "us" and "them" are common in group settings, advocating an artificial division among people. Often times, this exclusivity will lead to a comfortable-ness. Once a certain number of members have joined, groups get comfortable with those individuals; to break down those invisible walls would mean having to leave one's comfort zone and meet new people. And as the group ages or progresses, members leave for one reason or another. Without those new people, the group dwindles down to a small remnant.

The exclusive nature of the group phenomenon has no place in ministry. In addition, the group model is *not* the vision of Catholic youth or young adult ministry, and part of our continued reliance on this old framework might be the reason why churches are struggling to keep alive their "youth groups" or "young adult groups."

Catholic ministries are about developing holistic experiences of conversion, evangelization, and discipleship, not creating a social club. The first step in fixing this problem is to stop using the word "group" in our churches to define what our parish, cluster, or diocese is offering youth or young adults. Rather, call it a "ministry" or "outreach" because that's what it really is. The next step is to eliminate the notion of membership, since this fosters a spirit of exclusivity. Rather, look at the ministry your parish or cluster provides as a series of experiences to which you invite youth or young adults. These experiences (for which you can use a term like "registration" to get contact information) should bring people closer to God, the community of the Church, and their mission in the world; they should not exist to get people to join a group or club.

By making this transition, we will not struggle with members; instead, our concern will be how to evangelize in dynamic, exciting ways. And we won't be evangelizing them to the group, but to a deeper experience of God and the Church.

We must be humble enough to realize that youth and young adult ministry are bridges to a broader life in Christ. Bridges are not the end goal. No one joins the group to sit on a bridge; instead, they experience the bridge to get to the other side. And to keep the analogy going, if we rely and put all our weight on getting people on the bridge, that bridge will ultimately collapse. This has already started happening in our parishes and clusters.

Let us try to eliminate the word "group" in our way of explaining our ministry to youth and young adults. Only then, can we bring people closer to the experience of Christ, which is the most important goal of Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry in the first place.

