



SAFE ENVIRONMENT: BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION

Whenever you get a new volunteer or hire a new staff member who will work with minors, the following is the current diocesan protocol. Please keep this information handy, so that you can continue to provide a safe environment for children and youth in parish programs



Screening Of Employees: Any new employee for the parish, school or religious education program is to be screened through *Premier InfoSource*. Contact Mr. Al Zernitz (888)440-1800 or (630)980-7000.

Screening Of Volunteers: Parishes, schools and religious education programs may select one of the following options to obtain background checks of volunteers:

Option #1: Premier InfoSource

(Components: State criminal search and Social Security number search)
Contact Mr. Al Zernitz (888)440-1800 or (630)980-7000.

Option #2: Illinois State Police and CANTS (Child Abuse & Neglect Tracking System). If this option is selected, then in addition to the Illinois State Police background check, a sex offender search is to be conducted via the Illinois State Police website. There is no charge for the CANTS screening.

Illinois State Police: See <http://www.isp.state.il.us/services/convictioninquiries.cfm>
CANTS: Log onto the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services web site: www.state.il.us/dcf. Click on *Forms*. Choose a form: (English) CFS 689 Authorization for Background Check for Programs not Licensed by DCFS or (Spanish) CFS 689/S Autorizacion para Verificacion de Antecedentes para Programas no licenciados por DCFS.

Option #3: ChoicePoint (Components: Social Security number search, sex offender search, criminal file search). Register online at <http://www.eapplynow.com/cm>.

(More Information on Page 6)

Are You a Media Center Member?

Brian D. Topping



The Media Center provides quality book, video, music, and equipment resources in support of catechetical ministry. Boasting over 10,000 book, video, and music titles (with new titles added regularly)



and professional quality audio/visual equipment, chances are the Media Center has what you are looking for. Becoming a member provides access to all of these resources. Member parishes can pay for items as they are rented, or pay an annual fee for unlimited rentals. For more information, see the Media Center brochure *inserted* in this issue of *Leaven*, check the website (www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo), or contact Brian Topping.

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**MARCH
2006**

UPCOMING CLUSTER MEETINGS

Please attend your local cluster meetings for assistance, support and information. The next meetings will be as follows:

Directors of Adult Faith Formation -
April 27, 2006 - 12 pm
SCPC, Romeoville

Ford-Iroquois CRE Cluster -
May 5, 2006 - 6:30pm
Location - TBA

Joliet-Will DRE Cluster -
May 18, 2006 - 10:00am
St. Paul the Apostle,
Joliet

Kankakee-Grundy DRE Cluster -
March 9, 2006 - 1:00pm
St. Paul, Peotone

Northeast Dupage DRE Cluster -
March 2, 2006 - 10:00am
Carmelite Retreat Center,
Darien (2 Days)

Special Needs Cluster - TBA

West Dupage DRE Cluster -
March 9, 2006 - 10:00am
SS. Peter & Paul,
Naperville

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A Time To Sow

Tom Quinlan
Director



The epic movie, Titanic, was shown numerous times on cable TV last fall. Each time I came across it, I could not help but watch at least part of it again. There was something compelling for me in the drama, almost making me a participant in the struggle for life in the aftermath of disaster.



Back in December I had the privilege spending a day with several hundred men and women participating in a spirituality day with Fr. Richard Rohr. During the course of the day, I found myself resonating and praying with an early image he offered. In simplest terms, life is like the ocean and each of us builds a lifeboat to protect ourself from drowning in it.

Fr. Rohr's image drew me into a reflection of how life, in all its vast terror and beauty, is very much like the ocean. The ocean is a paradox

of darkness and grace, danger and abundant life. It is wild, a force bigger than we can control. This of course, scares us, but also seems to attract us. Indeed, life is, in the grand scheme, like the ocean.

The lifeboat, the container as Fr. Rohr calls it, serves a necessary purpose. It protects us from the waves and the cold. Literally, it keeps our head above water. It provides us with a space to build, to problem-solve, to achieve. In our first half of life (the two halves of life is a major theme for Richard Rohr), the container is a very good thing.

However, the lifeboat inevitably starts to come apart at the seams, ravaged as it is by the forces of the ocean...or rather by the challenges that come to us all, the experiences of failure, diminishment, loss. There comes a time in every person's life where the container that so neatly protected us in the past no longer serves. We are then faced with a critical decision, a life crossroads experience. Do we frantically try to piece our container back together, in hopes that it can again serve in the way it had previously?

Rohr suggests that in such a moment of "crisis", we have the opportunity to transition into the second half of life. (This is not necessarily a matter of midlife crisis, as it can happen earlier or later than our midpoint of life. But it is of the same ilk, I think.) This second "movement" is the one where real wisdom, transformative grace and authentic living are to be found. But we cannot reach this second half without having left, or more often, having been thrown from the lifeboat that contains our self-delusions, our pettiness, our arrogance, narrowness and blindness...all that keeps us safe and warm and, perhaps, unable to be organically recreated by the radical, risky grace of Christ.

For some this echoes the truism that "you can't have resurrection unless you're willing to die". For others, particularly those who have experienced the destruction of their lifeboat and have been thrust into the ocean of life, this speaks to the dangerous, idolatrous nature of the human ego. From a theological perspective, it affirms that until one's heart, mind and will are profoundly oriented to God, we live, to varying degrees, in the isolation of the "shadows", as C.S. Lewis put it.

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Rohr invites us not to fear the splintering of our container and our immersion in the depthless mystery of life's ocean. Rather, he calls us to welcome the swells and the currents that will take us where, perhaps, we would not go on our own. Life and grace are best encountered in this holy ocean, not in one's personal construct of truth, meaning and...self-preservation.

The next time I have a chance to watch Titanic, I will have a new insight as to why I find it so compelling, why I so naturally place myself on the ship with all those passengers. Indeed, I am on a ship, one that is breaking up and destined to go down. That realization is a good place to start. Learning how to let go and learning how to swim...those hardest of life tasks remain ahead.

Harcourt Plans Junior High/Sacrament Event

As this newsletter "goes to press" we

have received confirmation from Harcourt Religion Publishers that they are planning a roll-out event for their new junior high and sacrament texts. Mark your calendar for Wednesday, March 22, 2006, from 9a.m.-noon for this event, which will feature Mike Carotta and Maureen Kelly. In addition, Mike will stay for a discussion of adolescent spirituality with youth ministers and interested others, from 1-3 p.m. The event will be at the St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center. Watch your mail for your invitation from Harcourt.



NCCL Conference & Expo

Arrives in Chicago
April 30 - May 4, 2006
Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel
Rosemont, IL



Sunday – A Day of Welcome & Transition

Pre-conference workshop; liturgy; opening reception sponsored by Harcourt Religion Publishers.

Monday – Extensive sessions on Catechesis & Culture: Challenge & Hope Keynotes; interactive panel discussions; evening celebration sponsored by William H Sadlier, Inc.

Tuesday – Learning Sessions; professional forum gatherings and two tracks of roundtables; Visit with Conference attendees at "Club NCCL"

Wednesday – Prayer with Francis Cardinal George; keynote; more learning sessions; NCCL Awards Banquet (honoring Bishop Joseph Imesch) and entertainment by Joliet Diocese native, Doug Brummel.

Thursday – Final keynote, "The Test for the Modern Church" followed by a ritual to close the conference.

YOUTH MINISTRY CLUSTERS

Senior High Youth Ministry Cluster

(Aurora, Bolingbrook, Lisle,
Naperville, Oswego)

March 9, 2006

St. Raphael, Naperville
2:00pm - 4:00pm

April 6, 2006

Our Lady of Mercy,
Aurora
2:00pm - 4:00pm

Junior High Ministry Cluster

(Aurora, Bolingbrook,
Naperville)

March 7, 2006

St. Dominic,
Bolingbrook
3:30pm - 5:00pm

April 4, 2006

St. Raphael, Naperville
3:30pm - 5:00pm

Joliet Cluster Youth Ministry

(St. Paul, St. Jude, St. Ray,
St. John, St. Mary Nativity,
Holy Family, St. Bernard,
SS Cyril & Methodius)

TO BE ANNOUNCED

South of the Border Cluster

March 22, 2006

Christ the King,
Lombard
10:00am

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EDUCATION OFFICE**

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**The Virtual Learning Community
for Faith Formation**

**Sponsored by the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at
the University of Dayton**

ARRIVES IN THE JOLIET DIOCESE JULY, 2006

Based on over 20 years of experience in multimedia and distance learning, in 1995 the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives team began exploring new alternatives for adult faith, catechist, and lay ecclesial leadership formation via the internet. In 1997, a preliminary grant from University of Dayton and support from the Marianist Foundation enabled the Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) to set in motion a rapidly growing e-learning reality for the Church. Today, the VLCFF has developed partnerships with dioceses across the United States and other countries around the world.

Watch for more information in the upcoming months. Please contact Helen Johnson with questions at (815) 727-6411 or hjohnson@dioceseofjoliet.org.



**GENERATIONS OF FAITH:
ROUND THREE TRAINING**

March 3, 2006

April 19, 2006

June 2, 2006

St. Charles Pastoral Center

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Contact: Brian Topping

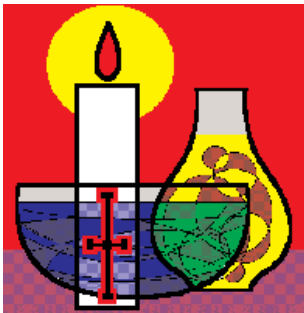
An In-Depth Look at the National Directory for Catechesis



The Religious Education Office Staff discuss the new National Directory for Catechesis at a recent staff development day featuring Dan Mulhall from the USCCB Department of Education in Washington, D.C. Mulhall will be the featured speaker at the October 2006 and March 2007 Leadership Days.

LITURGICAL CATECHESIS: Using Mystagogy to Make the Easter Season Real for Children & Families

By Joyce Donahue



After the Easter Alleluia has died away, the fire of the Vigil is cold and the baptismal water has dried, it is always a challenge to continue celebrating Easter for the next 50 days. Ask your local liturgist! We spend so much effort making Lent meaningful and then getting ready for the Easter feast that most of us are simply grateful for the opportunity to relax and let life get back to “normal”. That’s how it can feel to most of us in church ministry – so why are we surprised when children, youth and even adults have little understanding of what it means to celebrate Easter for 50 days?

Take a cue from the Easter Season Sunday readings from the Book of Acts. There, for our edification, is the image of the post-Pentecost community, joyfully and with great commitment, celebrating the presence and action of the resurrected Christ in its midst. Why would the Church have us read about how these first Christians lived during our own celebration of the Easter Season? Because they are a model for how a community lives out a spirituality of mystagogy.

Providing opportunities for children, youth and adults to engage in intentional mystagogy enriches and strengthens their identity as the Body of Christ. Here are a few idea-starters:

- Focus the parish’s attention on a different sacrament each week of the Easter Season, ending on Pentecost with a reflection on Holy Orders and the concept of the vocation to evangelize. Be sure to include opportunities to experience the sacrament when possible or to hear the life experience of someone who has, and then give opportunities for people of all ages to reflect on what the sacrament means to them.
- Discern the elements of the Book of Acts faith community – unity, celebration, sharing, serving, etc. and focus the parish’s attention on one element of this each week.
- Be more intentional about how the parish’s service ministries reflect those in the early Christian community – help people make the connections through reflection and sharing.
- Even though it may feel like the catechetical year (based on that pesky school-year model) is “winding down” as your parish celebrates First Eucharist and prepares to send students and families off for the summer, the Easter Season could be a great time to begin new adult or youth small faith-sharing groups – so people could use the summer to reflect on the connections between faith and life experience.
- Finally, don’t forget to “party on” – Easter is the biggest celebratory season of the church year. Now is the ideal time for pageants, dances, dinners, ice cream socials and other community gatherings. Such activities should be an intentional part of parish life during the Easter Season, because they reflect a spirituality of communal joy, our natural response to the gift of Paschal Mystery.

CAN YOU HELP?



We are in need of host sites for **Catechist Initial Formation Days - 2006-2007.**

The program begins at 9:00 am and concludes by 1:00 pm. The following dates are tentatively scheduled and available:

**September 2006:
9, 16, 23**

**October 2006:
21, 28**

**November 2006:
4, 11**

**January 2007:
13, 27**

If you are interested please contact Helen Johnson, 815-727-6411 ext 261 or hjohnson@diocese-ofjoliet.org as soon as possible.

HEAR YE,
HEAR YE...



2006-2007 Contract Renewal Materials for "returning" parish catechetical leaders are available on the REO website (www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo) in the password protected section.

Are you retiring? Changing ministries? Changing parishes? Please let the REO know of your plans. Contact either Helen Johnson, Catechetical Associate for Leadership & Formation or Tom Quinlan, Director.

If you know of someone who is interested in securing a parish catechetical ministry position advise them to contact Helen Johnson at 815-727-6411 ext 261 or hjohnson@dioceseofjoliet.org.

(Continued from Front Page)

In Case You Missed It...

The following reminder about diocesan policy for persons working with minors appeared in the February *JOB*:

Prior to beginning employment/volunteer service, all persons involved with minors on a regular, recurring basis, or those who would have the opportunity to be alone with children during parish, school or religious education sponsored events are required to present the following:

- Results of a criminal background investigation (subject to the conditions of the Diocese of Joliet).
- Written acknowledgement that the person has read and understood the Pastoral Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors and the Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors.
- Proof of attendance at a Protecting God's Children program. (Proof of previous completion of the program will be accepted.) Exceptions need the approval of the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools or the Diocesan Director of Religious Education.

Questions regarding these matters can be directed to Joyce Donahue or to Sr. Judith Davies.

Dead Theologians Society: Connecting Youth with Tradition

Joyce Donahue

Members of the Dead Theologians Society (DTS), a high school and young adult ministry at St. Mary in Paxton, pose in the prayerful environment of their darkened meeting room surrounded by candlelight, Gregorian chant music and incense. About 20 students from St. Mary, Paxton and Our Lady of Lourdes in Gibson City choose to participate in each month's gathering in lieu of that week's normal religious education class attendance.

The students gather to pray for the souls in Purgatory, learn the lives of the Saints, hear the Saints' inspirational writings and develop positive role models. Students receive a holy card and blessed medal of the Saint of the month at each meeting. In addition, members make use of traditional Catholic prayers, devotions and sacramentals. The group is led in their prayer and study by Judith Jepsen-Popel and Paul Sarantakos.

Fully participating members of the Dead Theologians Society are recognized in a hooding ceremony with a black hooded sweatshirt bearing the Society's emblem. Currently, fourteen teens from the Paxton-Gibson City group have been hooded by Father Denis White.

Currently, the Society reports 154 chapters of DTS in 32 states and Canada with over 3,300



members. DTS has just been named a collaborating member of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. More information on the Dead Theologians Society ministry can be found at www.deadtheologianssociety.com.

Photo courtesy of Judith Jepsen-Popel (St. Mary Parish, Paxton)

Planning to Meet Safe Environment Requirements for 2006-07

Joyce Donahue

In an effort to keep you as informed as possible about the upcoming requirements for Safe Environment Instruction of children and parents for the 2006-07 school year, we are providing you with the information we have at this time. As soon as we have any additional information on further requirements or deadlines we will inform you.

Our best wisdom at this time is to advise all program directors for religious education of children and youth who do not reside in public school districts providing safe environment instruction to plan to complete instruction as early in the school year as possible, to avoid the stress of having to move scheduled dates to meet our audit compliance.



Although the State of Illinois roll-out of the Child Lures program for grades K-8 may mean fewer religious education programs will need to instruct students themselves, please realize that there is no accompanying legal mandate from the State that public schools actually use the kit.

-
- Catechetical leaders must still inquire whether local public schools instruct students in self-protection from sexual abuse, and provide documentation to the REO if they do.
 - Those programs will again need to provide the REO with the number of students enrolled (or in the case of youth ministry – regularly participating) in their program and the number of those students who have been instructed in these matters at their public school.
 - All K-8 religious education programs in school districts not using Child Lures or another diocesan-approved program will need to provide safe environment instruction, with an option for parents to decline instruction for their children in favor of instructing them at home.
 - Those programs will need to provide the REO with the number of students enrolled or regularly participating and the number who receive instruction.
 - All high school youth ministry programs not "covered" by public school instruction will need to continue to provide instruction and documentation, as above. Instruction is encouraged as a pastoral care issue at the high school level.
 - Instruction will continue to be provided in Catholic elementary and high schools.
 - All RE programs, Youth Ministry programs, and schools must distribute the diocesan brochure for parents annually. Documentation that parents received it must be kept, in case parents decline instruction.
 - Informational and instruction sessions for parents should be *offered* each year by all programs in addition to the distribution of the brochure.
-

Parish programs providing safe environment must use diocesan-approved materials or presenters. All variances from established diocesan curriculum options must be submitted to the REO for approval.

Additional curriculum options – both video and book-based – are currently under review by the REO and CSO. We expect to be able to provide a list of such materials and opportunities to review them in late spring or early summer. As always, thank you for your patience and cooperation as we work together to protect our children.

REO Calendar

March 5, 2006

Rally Day

St. Mary Immaculate,
Plainfield; 12:30 pm
Contact: Paul Mach

March 16, 2006

Cathedral Day - Schools
10am - 12:45pm
Contact: Joyce Donahue

March 16, 2006

Parish YM Meeting
SCPC, 10am - noon
Contact: Paul Mach

March 18, 2006

Cathedral Day - REP
10am - 12:45pm
Contact: Joyce Donahue

March 22, 2006

Harcourt Publishing
SCPC, 9am - 3pm
Contact: Joyce Donahue

March 23, 2006

REO Board Meeting,
SCPC, 10am - noon
Contact: Tom Quinlan

April 6, 2006

Parish YM Meeting
SCPC, 10am - noon
Contact: Paul Mach

April 19, 2006

Generations of Faith
SCPC, 9am - 3pm
Contact: Brian Topping

April 27, 2006

Adult Faith Association
SCPC, Noon - 2:30 pm

April 30 - May 4, 2006
NCCL Spring Meeting
Rosemont, IL
Contact: Tom Quinlan

May 18, 2006

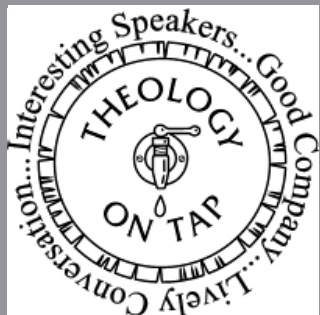
Parish YM Meeting
SCPC, 10am - noon
Contact: Paul Mach

May 25, 2006

REO Board Meeting
SCPC, 10am - noon
Contact: Tom Quinlan

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

(For those in
their 20's and
30's)



Is your Parish
interested in
hosting Theology
on Tap this
summer?

Theology on Tap will
be held this summer
for four weeks in July
beginning Sunday
July 9th.

If your parish would
like to consider being
a host site contact
Paul Mach in the
REO. We will work
with you to get you
started. This event
may also be done by
a region of parishes.

This is a great way
to reach out to the
20 and 30 year olds
in your parish.

Youth Leadership Conference 2006

YLC 2006 will be held at Lewis University, Romeoville from July 21-23rd. For more information and to register on-line visit our web page at www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo. If you have questions about YLC 2006 or need a hard copy of the forms, contact the REO. We have two great keynote speakers coming to YLC this year. See below for information about both.

MIKE PATIN - Affirm, Challenge, Encourage



Mike Patin uses energy, humor and stories to affirm the goodness of God's presence among us while inviting others (and himself) to take the "next step" in our journey with God.

Mike has had the privilege of speaking to close to 700 groups in over 70 dioceses, ranging from groups of 10 to 10,000. He has keynoted regional and national youth events, including the National Catholic Youth Conference, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' Youth Day and the University of Notre Dame's Vision program.

Mike has worked with teenagers and adults in a variety of settings since 1984. He has served as a high school religion teacher, campus minister and assistant coach. He also served in the CYO/Youth Ministry Office for the Archdiocese of New Orleans from 1990-2003. Since 2003, he has worked full time as a speaker and consultant.

Mike holds a Masters degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University of the South in New Orleans. He also has received a Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies from the Center for Ministry Development and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Pastoral Life and Administration from Loyola University.

Mike Patin lived in New Orleans, until Hurricane Katrina. He now lives just north of New Orleans with his wife, Marlene, and his daughter, Megan.

BEN GLENN – THE CHALK GUY

Back in the third grade, Ben Glenn was diagnosed as Learning Disabled. Later, he came to find out that he had Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder. Thus, an ordinary kid from Plainfield, Illinois, suddenly found out that he was 'special'. It wasn't the kind of special that he enjoyed very much and as with any label, Ben soon found himself the brunt of cruel jokes, self-esteem dwindling, wondering if perhaps God had made a huge mistake putting him together. Fortunately, Ben had a couple of things working for him. Parents who believed in him and supported him and a handful of teachers who encouraged and cheered him on to make the best of himself.

In 1991, at a camp, Ben met an elderly chalk artist by the name of Bill Leach who became his mentor and asked him to carry on his ministry, Living Art, when he became too ill to accept any more engagements. Bill passed away in 1994, leaving his legacy of dazzling chalk art and a heart for seeing lives transformed through Christ, to Ben. Fast-forward ten years.

Today, Ben is a highly successful and acclaimed public speaker, comedian and author, traveling all over the world to share an "updated" version of Living Art that he has re-named Chalk Media to reflect the stronger emphasis on utilizing the latest multi-media technology as part of his presentation. Currently, Ben, his wife and daughter, make their home in the modest and under appreciated city of Indianapolis.





Lastly, in a world where communications are increasingly based in technology, all possible methods of communication are to be used to pass on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The catechist should be competent in the technologies familiar to those being catechized. Not to worry, though. All catechetical endeavors take place through the grace of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, so have faith – you are not doing this alone!

- Learning through the Christian family – living within a small community of faith
- Learning by heart - memorizing the basic prayers and practices
- Making the commitment to live the Christian life – taking faith into the world
- Learning by apprenticeship – receiving mentorship and initiation
- Learning through the witness of the catechist – a disciple making disciples
- Learning within the Christian community – being a part of the parish as a vital learning community
- Learning by discipleship – living the call of Jesus
- Learning through human experience – connecting faith and life



So, what are the keys to an evangelizing catechesis?

All catechesis, the *NDC* says, should "aim to harmonize the personal adherence of the believer to God... and the contribution of the Christian message" It should support faith as it is celebrated, lived and prayed and aim at fostering conversion. At the same time it is faithful to God and divine revelation; it should respect the liberty and promote the active participation of those being catechized. (94) Nothing new there. This is straight out of post-Vatican II catechetical theology.

In the new *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC 91-107) we read that God has a plan for how people would learn about God, which was "most fully achieved in the person of Jesus Christ." ("Who has seen me has seen the Father," John 14:9)

GOD TEACHES, WE TEACH: CATECHETICAL METHODOLOGY, DIVINE AND HUMAN PEDAGOGY

Joyce Donahue

When we consider these seven needs we can form a program that works well for this age group. This group of young people is being shown attention more and more. St. Mary's Press now has an EAM category in their resource catalog, Harcourt is coming out with a new early adolescent program, Center for Ministry Development is coming out shortly with a Youth Ministry Access program for early adolescents (which provides lesson plans for weekly classes and other events), Life Teen now has encouraged a program called Edge Nights for early adolescents, and finally we here at the RCO of the Diocese have formed a visioning team for early adolescent ministry. This is just the tip of the iceberg for early adolescent ministry in the Diocese of Joliet; watch the Leaven for more information.

1. Physical Activity
2. Competence and Achievement
3. Self-Definition
4. Creative Expression
5. Positive Social Interaction with Peers and Adults
6. Structure and Limits
7. Meaningful Participation

Although there are many models of catechesis, it is critical that we keep in mind the seven developmental needs that must be considered in a youth program for this age:

(From an essay by Brian Reynolds in the book *Access Guide to Youth Ministry with Early Adolescent Ministry*)

(Continued from PAGE 3)



(Continued from PAGE 2)

Planning for successful ministry aligns the practices of an organization with its purpose. This is done through Strategic Planning, the simple goal of which is to identify the three P's: Purpose, Process, and Payoff. This can be done at any level of an organization. The parish is a multi-level non-for-profit organization that has a purpose, identified or not. For many parishes, this purpose is identified in their mission statement. Each ministry has a specific purpose within the broader purpose of the parish. Accomplishing the purpose of each ministry helps the parish accomplish its mission.

Do you think your ministry does a good job aligning its practices (what happens) with its purpose? Your ministry is perfectly aligned to get the results you are currently getting. If those results come from a clear set of practices, intentionally planned to accomplish a specific purpose, read no further. If not, strategic planning can help. But like any tool, you have to decide to pick it up and use it. This article is the first in a series that will explore the concept of strategic planning and provide tips on how to implement it in a way that is easy, simple, and effective. Take a look . . .



Step #1 in Strategic Planning – assess your current ministry. Since you are perfectly aligned to get the results you are currently getting, what are those results? Ask the important question - what is the result of a person (child, teen, adult, etc.) participating in my program? Be brutally honest with yourself and let the results stand for themselves. Do not defend them – they are what they are. (We will deal with the reasons later on in the series.) Once you know the results, identify what it took to get those results. In a catechetical program, this refers to how many catechists, how much recruiting, how many learning sessions, what kind of expenses, advertising, staffing, etc. Once you know where you are and what it took to get there, you are in a great place to take the next step.



Step #2 in Strategic Planning – identify your purpose. Many organizations think of this as a mission statement. Whether it is a mission statement, purpose statement, charter, or primary goal, identifying a purpose provides the direction for your efforts. Since identifying your purpose is the foundation for the rest of strategic planning, the next issue of Formation Wheel will explore how to do this effectively.



WHERE DO THEY BELONG?

Paul Mach

Some call them Jr. Highers, some call them Middle Schoolers, but whatever you call them, those who are between the ages of 10 to 15 are served by Early Adolescent Ministry. Each parish treats them a different way: for some it is part of the Religious Education program, for others they are part of Youth Ministry, and for others they are young people going through Confirmation. Whichever way they fit into the Parish system we need to make sure we are reaching them in a comprehensive model of ministry. Besides catechesis, which should be the center of our web of ministry, there are other areas such as: building community for them, prayer and worship experiences, justice and service, and guidance in life provided. These four areas should surround the catechetical experience to give a deeper faith component. The catechetical model may be presented in different ways: classroom, monthly retreats, gender specific gatherings, parent/teen sessions, small groups, intergenerational, and mentors.



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WHAT DISCOURAGES VOLUNTEERS?

Frederick Herzberg conducted a study to find out what motivates and discourages workers at their jobs. One of the questions he asked "What makes you the most unhappy in your job?" Their responses included:

- Policy and administration
- Supervision
- Working conditions
- Interpersonal relations
- Salary dissatisfaction

In volunteer terms, we can say that volunteers are discouraged when there is conflict with the organization's policies and administrators, and either too much, too little or inadequate supervision. Poor working conditions, co-workers who compete and argue, and inadequate rewards add to the struggle.



What might this mean to our volunteer workers specifically? One possible discouraging factor might be little contact between the volunteer and the leader or confusion about the actual task. Supervision might be inadequate because the leader assumes that the volunteer knows what to do and how to do it. The main contact the volunteer has with other volunteers in the ministry area is hearing complaints and problems, as those who are unhappy are often the most vocal. No meetings, no thanks and no evaluations to let the volunteer know how he or she is doing. Furthermore, the coffee pot has been broken for a month! It won't be long before a volunteer in a situation like this will look elsewhere for a place to be of service.

It's easy to forget about the volunteer once you have secured them for service and believe that all those wonderful people who care also have the patience of saints, unlimited time, unlimited resources, and unlimited tolerance for discomfort. However, to make volunteering positive and productive, leaders must pay careful attention to the factors that motivate and discourage people in their work. If we are attentive to what each volunteer personally needs and see that his or her work is rewarded abundantly, we are on the path to success. For example, a person who loves to socialize and be with people would probably not consider working in a records office; nor would it be a good match to put a shy person on the welcoming committee; or ask people to shop for supplies if reimbursement only comes upon presentation of a receipt. There are no firm rules. The point is that you, the leader, must learn what makes the volunteer experience work for the people in your ministry area.

What are some factors that motivate and/or discourage volunteers in your particular ministry at your parish?

Once identified, how can you ensure that the positive factors continue and the negative factors are eliminated?



PLANNING FOR A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY

Brian D. Topping

There is a big difference between planning for ministry and planning for successful ministry. Consider the difference between running a program in support of a greater ministry purpose, versus running a program just to have a program. Both require planning. Both require implementation. However, only one reaches beyond itself in service of something more. It has a purpose beyond itself.

What is the purpose of your ministry? Can you name it in two sentences or less? Would parishioners give the same definition? Better yet, is your ministry successful? How do you know? How does your ministry serve the parish as a whole, really? If the tasks you engage in on a daily basis were like balls in the air, which balls could fall without any negative impact on the purpose of your ministry? If you could not answer these questions definitively, without placing qualifiers on them, it is likely you need to plan for successful ministry.





If we as leaders can understand the motivation of a volunteer, we can know better what we can ask of a volunteer and what he or she needs, not just to do the job but to flourish personally. As individuals grow and are enriched, so too does the whole community of which they are a part.

- Enriching experiences where they can learn new things.
- Skill reinforcement where they can demonstrate knowledge they already have.
- Enjoyable experiences where they feel they have a contribution to make.
- Involvement with others.
- Affirmation for who they are as a caring person who belongs to the community.



People who volunteer like to feel their time and efforts are well placed. Knowing this, we are aware that we need to support the volunteer's commitment by offering worthwhile opportunities for service. Volunteers seek one or more of the following:

WHAT MOTIVATES VOLUNTEERS?

Indeed, those who hope to find volunteers must be in touch with the fact that volunteers are people who care and then find out what it is that particular people care about that brings them forward. In this way we can begin to meet people's expectations about the volunteer task and help them along the road to a good volunteer experience. The hope is that both parties will benefit – the volunteer and those who are the recipients of the volunteer's work.

Sometimes people volunteer because they care about the leader. They come forward to help because they are your friend, or they feel sorry for you, or they think they could do a good job. They volunteer because they love God and the church, and they want to give back in gratitude for what they have received. They volunteer because they can't afford to give money so they give time, or because they feel guilty about only giving money if that is easy for them.

What lies behind this caring varies, for certainly none of us is completely altruistic. When volunteers say they care about others, at the same time they may be fulfilling their own needs to be helpful, to be useful, to fill time, to fight boredom or to socialize. The fact that volunteers choose to meet their internal needs by being of service to others is a good thing. Volunteers care about the state of the world as seen in their local parish or neighborhood. At the same time, like all people, volunteers like to do what satisfies them, makes them feel good, as well as offers a sense of purpose and goodness. Volunteers want to be helpful; they want to learn and grow; they want to engage in healthy relationships. We all do these things because we care about ourselves and all these reasons for volunteering are very good.

What type of person volunteers? Are there certain characteristics we should look for? Or avoid? The answer seems to be that a volunteer is simply "someone who cares." Volunteers care about others and they care about themselves. In the Church, you may hear that the volunteer cares about the senior citizens, or the high school teens, or their child's religious education learning experience. In short, the volunteer cares about the parish community.



WHO IS THE VOLUNTEER?

The National Conference of Catechetical Leadership in partnership with Loyola Press has produced a skills development series that address leadership competencies for effective catechetical ministry. The material is based on the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers. Authored by experienced catechetical leaders, the material provides practical advice, proven methods, and specific procedures for carrying out the many essential tasks of directing parish catechetical ministry. As springtime approaches and planning for the next year begins, I thought we could focus on Volunteer Management.

Helena Johnson

