

CELEBRATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



“Master, I want to see.”
– Mark 10:51

Bound to one another

BY ELIZABETH A. MARCIL
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Anniversaries are important to our lives. They do more than mark time. Some, like birthdays, class reunions, and wedding anniversaries strengthen the bonds of friendship and family life. Anniversaries help us reflect on what we have shared and how this sharing has affected our journey. We also mark the passing of those who were part of our lives but are no longer with us. The feast days of saints are often chosen to mark the day when they were born into eternal life.

In his 1998 apostolic letter *Dies Domini* (On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy), St. John Paul II reminds us that “Sunday recalls the day of Christ's Resurrection. It is Easter which returns week by week, celebrating Christ's victory over sin and death, the fulfilment in him of the first creation and the dawn of ‘the new creation.’ It is the day which recalls in grateful adoration the world's first day and looks forward in active hope to ‘the last day,’ when Christ will come in glory and all things will be made new.” (DD #1)

Civic anniversary celebrations are also important – especially centenary ones. The country unites to focus on events that lay the foundation of our values, our purpose and our identity. One 400th anniversary that went unmarked last year because of the pandemic was the landing of the Mayflower in November 1620.

While these pilgrims had a number of objectives in undertaking this perilous journey, they recognized that, in the New World, they would have to depend on one another to survive. The Mayflower Compact which they all signed as they planted a new colony reads that they “solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation ... and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”

While they prized freedom and were willing to leave behind the comforts they had known in order to secure it, they also recognized that, if they wanted to succeed, such freedom would have to be exercised in the context of the general good. Today, we too must recognize that while we are individually free, we are also bound to one another and have responsibilities for one another.

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, that Pilgrim feast, let us reflect on the value – indeed the necessity – of community. We reflect on the sacrifices that are necessary to strengthen community, but also on the blessings community provides.

Keeping our children safe with *Circle of Grace*

BY MARY PAT HEELAN
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

I've noticed a new custom is emerging. Everywhere I go, people are encouraging me to stay safe. A grocery store clerk said, “Have a good weekend and stay safe!” I received an email yesterday that ended with, “Have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving.” We are reminded that, to some extent, we can try to live “safely.” We look both ways when we cross the street. We wear our seatbelts. We try to be prudent – that old-fashioned word that the Catechism defines as, “... the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it” (*CCC 1806*). But how do we help our children to stay safe, to recognize un-safe situations, and to know what to do if they find themselves in an un-safe situation?

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops signed a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Article 12 of the Charter called for safe environment education in all Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. In 2007, the Diocese of Worcester published a curriculum which has been used throughout the diocese ever since. However, many things have changed and many of the resources used in those lesson plans are no longer available.

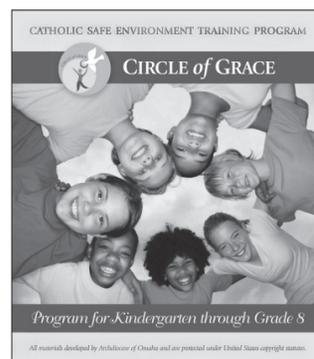
On June 1, 2021, Bishop McManus announced that the Diocese of Worcester would be adopting *Circle of Grace*, a curriculum developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska. *Circle of Grace* is described as “a program which in-

cludes teaching a culture of respect that goes beyond mere protection. This program helps children and young people understand their own sacredness, the sacredness of others and how to seek help in their relationships with trusted adults.” (*Circle of Grace Introduction*)

It is implemented through our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. Children in grades K-12 will take part in lessons meant to engage their particular level of child development. Children will be taught about our circle of grace. The term circle of grace is “a metaphor for the love and goodness of God that surrounds us and all others. It is the recognition that God is with us always and there to help us in difficult situations.” Through a detailed lesson plan and take-home activities, Catholic educators, together with parents, will use this wholistic approach to help children identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional spiritual and sexual boundaries.

Children will also learn concrete ways to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated. Some of the lesson plan titles for Grades K-8 are: What is the Circle of Grace, Internet Safety, Understanding the Media on our Circle of Grace, Saying “No” to Disrespect-Honoring Other's Circle of Grace, How to be Morally Responsible in Today's Culture.

For Grades 9-12, students will concentrate on our *Circle of Virtue* – our response to God's call, including an opportunity to start discerning one's vocation. Lesson titles include: Commu-



SEE BOUNDARIES, 9

THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



congratulates the following people
who achieved certification this year.

CATECHETICAL LEADERS

Director of Religious Education

Karla Reuter – Holy Family & St. Stephen Parishes – Worcester
Jessica V. Smith – Holy Family of Nazareth Parish – Leominster

Coordinator of Religious Education

Amy Donahue – Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish – Milford
Mary Jo Kriz – St. Joseph the Good Provider Parish – Berlin

Administrator of Religious Education

Lisa Burkitt – North American Martyrs Parish – Auburn
Marybeth Hay – St. Mary Parish – Uxbridge
Michelle Herbert – St. Joseph-St. Pius X Parish – Leicester
Kathleen Huggins – St. Mark Parish – Sutton
Pamela Smith – St. Joseph Parish – Charlton
Carmen Tomlinson – St. John Parish – Worcester
Nicole Werbecki – Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish – Webster

CATECHISTS

Master Catechist Certification

Patricia Farhat – St. Denis Parish – Ashburnham

Basic Certification

Auburn, North American Martyrs Parish
Maryellen Paquette
Leominster, Our Lady of the Lake Parish
Theresa Allen Anne Andrews
Deborah Dionne Judith Ledford
April Llewelyn Joan Martel
Elaine Owens Lynn St. Germain
Dawn Whynot

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Certification

Kathleen Huggins
Joanna Kicilinski
Gina Kuruvilla
Jaclyn Penny
Joan Sundstrom

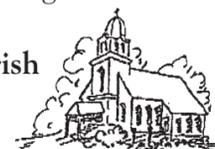
We also congratulate **Annette Gion** who retired this year.
May the Lord bless her for her many years of service.

And may the Lord grant eternal rest unto

Jeannette Emond – Holy Name of Jesus Parish – Worcester
Sr. Ann Marshall, RSM – St. Peter Parish – Worcester

The Staff and Parishioners of
St. Anne - St. Patrick Church wish to recognize
and thank our directors, Rev. Jerome Lively, AA
and Terry Johnson and all our volunteers for
their service and dedication to our
Christian Formation Program.

St. Anne - St. Patrick Parish
16 Church Street
Fiskdale, MA



WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL TO GOD
FOR OUR TEACHERS AND STAFF

“TO TEACH
AS
JESUS CHRIST
TAUGHT”

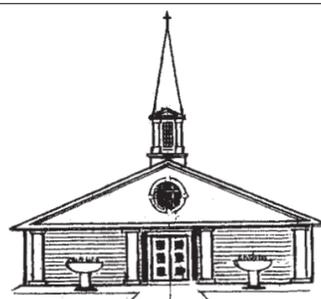
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The priests, deacon and people of St. George Parish are thankful to God for the witness of faith of their religious education teachers and staff. They are engaged in the most noble of endeavors, the religious education and formation of young people. May God continue to bless their ministry in our parish.



Prince of Peace Parish
Princeton

Congratulations
and Sincere Thanks
to all of our
Religious Education
Teachers, Coordinator
and Volunteers
for your dedication.

CELEBRATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



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Parishioners at St. Mary in Shrewsbury create sacred space for little children

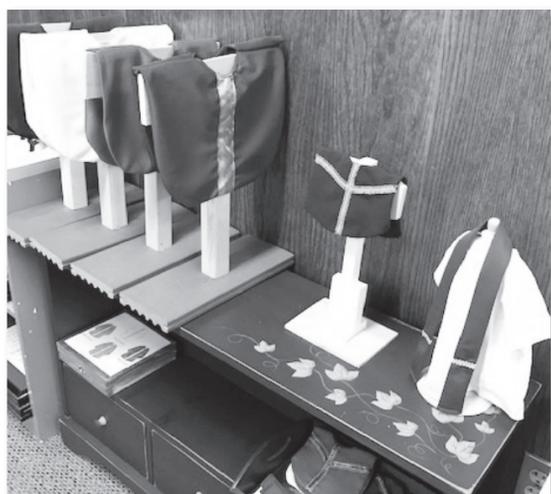
BY GINA KURUVILLA
ST. MARY PARISH, SHREWSBURY

As I reflect on my experience of starting a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Level I atrium for pre-school children at my parish, I am reminded of the limitless possibilities that open up when one says “yes” to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

My first awareness of CGS was at a presentation of the parable of the Good Shepherd by Mary Pat Heelan at the Chancery. In the time it took her to put the last little wooden lamb into its fold, I was irrevocably smitten. Inspired by this method of catechesis in which the child is encouraged to ponder and delve into the mysteries of our faith and come to a joyful and deeply personal discovery of Jesus the Good Shepherd, I wondered whether we could start an atrium, a specially designed place of prayer for young children, at St. Mary Parish in Shrewsbury.

I started to pray about it. In 2020, I “retired” from my position at St. Mary and planned to spend an extended period of time in India with my elderly father. But COVID struck, the borders closed and ... I completed 90 hours of training for Level 1 of CGS, which is for children ages 3-6. (We wore our masks, and ate in our cars, following COVID safety protocols, but every minute of it was a joyful experience.)

I asked my pastor, Msgr. Michael F. Rose, whether we could offer CGS at St. Mary and was so grateful when he said, “Yes.” Next, I asked Agata Hannoush, a fellow parishioner, who had also completed CGS training, whether she would co-teach with me, and she said, “Yes.” Then I asked my friend Martha Serafin, a catechist of many years, if she would assist, and she too said, “Yes.”



Parishioners Kristen Hastings and Jane Marie Ouellette made vestments of the priest, child sized.

So now, I had space, and teachers but no furniture or materials. I started to look at every “thing” differently. All manner of treasure and junk received my careful consideration – would this work for the atrium? A friend who stopped by my house on her way to bring items to Savers thrift store was puzzled when I pounced on her ancient

wooden video rack (it now houses Practical Life materials) and her small wooden turntable (perfect as a base for the Paschal candle and additional votives for the Pentecost celebration). Another friend scouted around for a free shelf unit and the two of us carried it huffing and puffing down four flights of stairs and drove it to church with one half sticking out of the trunk of my car, praying that the cords holding it in place would not give way.

Frank St. Pierre, a holy and faith-filled parishioner, made all of the wooden catechetical materials. He celebrated his 80th birthday in between the Annunciation and Visitation dioramas! In addition to being a skilled woodworker and a perfectionist, his natural tendency is to work at the speed of light. Nearly everything I needed for the Level 1 atrium was patiently and lovingly created in the span of 3 1/2 weeks.

Frank’s wife, Rita St. Pierre, sewed all of the tablecloths for the prayer table and the model altar. Marti Page wrote all of the Scripture cards in beautiful calligraphy. Kristen Hastings and Jane Marie Ouellette made all of the vestments of the priest (child sized!). Jeanne Vaccaro painted 12 wonderful wooden apostles. Kelly Jefferson offered additional help. Piece by piece, one loving gesture of faith after another, the atrium began to take shape.

Before we opened, we held a little thanksgiving service in the space, for all those who came together out of love for the one we know to be the Alpha and Omega - the beginning and the end - and our Good Shepherd. When we allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit, beautiful bonds are forged, a faith community is created, and workers for the vineyard are found.



Important for catechetical leaders to have a listening heart

BY DARLEEN FARLAND
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Recently I attended a retreat that was held for staff members of the parishes where I am a director of religious education. It was an opportunity to come together as we journey toward a more collaborative effort in the future. Father Richard F. Trainor, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Worcester, was a wonderful facilitator for our day. I came away with a greater appreciation for the importance of having a listening heart throughout my ministry. This also

brought to mind a quote from one of my favorite children’s books, “The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupery: “And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

So often catechetical leaders find themselves in the middle. They can be a wonderful “link in a chain,” or “bond of connection between persons,” as one of my favorite heavenly friends, St. John Henry Newman once prayed. Especially when they can “put people not only in touch but in communion,

in intimacy, with Jesus Christ” which according to Catechesi Tradendae, (On Catechesis in Our Time), an apostolic exhortation by St. John Paul II, is the definitive aim of catechesis.

At other times they can find themselves in the middle of conflict and challenged to be instruments of God’s peace, and somehow facilitate greater harmony in that particular situation.

Author Ann Garrido in her book, “Redeeming Conflict,” writes that “in times of conflict the capacity to listen is easily lost.” She shares a concept developed by Chris Agyris, a Harvard Business School professor, known as “the ladder of inference.” Ms. Garrido explains that “in times of conflict, our conversations tend to start at the top of the ladder. We stand on the highest rungs trading our conclusions and beliefs.... The most

I came away with a greater appreciation for the importance of having a listening heart throughout my ministry.

effective thing we can do is move backward down the ladder and be curious about what’s happening at each other’s lower rungs.... We can neither control nor change how anyone else sees the world.

Nor do we have the power to make our way of seeing the world understood by others. The only power we really possess – a power that, since Pentecost, has never been taken from us and always awaits our engagement – is the power to listen and understand.”

(Our diocese is blessed to have Ann Garrido with us on Nov. 12. She will share additional wisdom on this topic when she speaks at a day of enrichment for Catholic school teachers and parish catechetical leaders which is sponsored by our diocesan Office of Religious Education.)

Maybe it is not coincidental at this time that Pope Francis is calling for the

16th Synod of Bishops. Listening is such a critical element in the synodic model that Pope Francis espouses. In coming together to listen and discuss, we are better able to hear and discern where the Holy Spirit is leading the Church. “The Synod then offers us the opportunity to become a listening Church, to break out of our routine and pause from our pastoral concerns in order to stop and listen,” Pope Francis

said in his address for the opening of the Synod on Oct. 9, published on the Vatican website, vatican.va.

Wisdom for our journey as catechetical leaders comes from various and sundry places. May our ears always be open to the voice of the Holy Spirit guiding and directing us on the journey ahead.

“Speak Lord, your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10).

BOUNDARIES: Circle of Grace

FROM PAGE 8

nion of Saints-Mary and Joseph, When the Circle is Broken, Levels of Intimacy and Influence, When Boundaries Go Wrong, Love and Theology of the Body.

In St. Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians he writes, “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.” 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6.

Together, with the help of the Holy Spirit, may we be guided in knowledge and wisdom to help provide the safest environment for God’s beloved children.

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Terry Ann Renaud

Give Thanks to God for the volunteer catechists, aides and office staff,

who under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

live out their Baptism as disciples of Christ.



The priest and people of St. Bernadette Parish are thankful to God for the witness of faith of our parish families, religious education teachers and staff.

Engaged in the most noble of endeavors, the religious education and formation of young people, may God bless this holy work and ministry.

ST. BERNADETTE CHURCH
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