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Holy Spirit: Gift and Giver

By: Jeanne Heiberg

Our human minds are wonderful but limited; experts tell us that most of us hold in our consciousness only a few thoughts at a time. I learned to be a good speaker from listening to other good speakers: to carefully line up ideas so that one idea leads into another, and not to give too many ideas at once. It's also good to repeat ideas in different ways, with different examples, to make an impact on the conscious awareness of students.

A single thought or idea doesn't stay in the conscious mind very long. So where do thoughts and ideas go when they leave? Some may get lost, forgotten—permanently. But those ideas that make a dent in our students' awareness (our goal as catechists) go into memory banks, the unconscious. If those ideas are not called back often, they settle into the deep unconscious mind where they can stay for years.

Sometimes a new thought, face, object, sound, or experience will call those ideas back. But there is one Gift we can always count on to call them back when we really need them—the Gift of the Holy Spirit that descended on the Church at Pentecost.

A Trinity of Giving

Jesus was filled with God's Holy Spirit. With his sacrifice on the cross and his Resurrection, Jesus paves the way for us to return to the heavenly Father who created us. He invites us into the very unity and harmony of the Trinity —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not just a unity like living side by side or in the same house or belonging to the same club or being on the same team. In the Trinity, there is a unity in the outpouring of love and life.

When we accept the Gift of the Holy Spirit, we become part of this wonderful unity. We are filled with God's Holy Spirit because, at the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit

descended on the Church and filled it with the Gifts of knowledge, understanding, counsel, courage, piety, wonder and awe, and wisdom. These are the Gifts that help us learn about our Catholic faith as well as retain and live what we learn. All our learning and life experiences can be used by the Holy Spirit to help us grow and become joy-filled and faith-filled people. On Pentecost, we celebrate the Holy Spirit and all the Gifts of the Spirit.

Say to the Children

Do you like to receive gifts? Is it exciting to have one handed to you all wrapped up in colorful paper and ribbon so you can only see the outside but not the inside? Do you wonder what is inside? Do you sit and wonder for a while before you open the gift, enjoying the anticipation...or do you tear off the wrappings and open it as fast as you can?

Gifts in wrappings and ribbons that you can see are not the only kinds you receive or give. Think about compliments, hugs, helping hands, warm thank-yous, shared snacks, and playing games and working on projects with others. What about the friendship and/or love that prompted someone to give you a gift or that inspired you to help or give a gift to someone you care about?

Sometimes the best gifts we receive are so ordinary that we don't even notice them as gifts: good nutritious meals, a friend listening to us tell about an exciting time we had, laughter shared with those we love.



Spiritual Gifts

It's a little like that with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we hardly noticed the Gifts coming our way because we are so used to them and because they often come to us through the people around us every day. Yet,

the Spirit comes with countless Gifts, more than we can name, be aware of, or hold in our limited, finite minds.

The Church has traditionally named seven special Gifts of the Holy Spirit—all important, all that we can look for, ask for, and open ourselves to receive.

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Knowledge: This Gift enables you to use the wonderful mind God gave you to study, read, and gather information and facts and use them to make informed decisions and choices. You will quickly reach out to help others and you will have more success in life as you use this Gift if you include faith facts and knowledge in your studies. Scripture, Tradition, history, and stories of saints can help you understand our Catholic faith and remember that God must always come first. Knowledgeable people are respected and have much to give. Find people of knowledge and learn from them. Search out their writings and their examples. (See Psalm 119:66; Proverbs 1:7; 2:10-11; 19:27.)

Understanding: This Gift calls on your heart as well as your mind to search out God's truth and revelations in Scripture. It opens you to the feelings and needs of others, helps you to be inspired by the lives of saints and other good people, and lets you see how God is working in your own life, even through difficulties and challenges. Understanding provides insight into the mysteries and truths of faith. In a culture full of messages far from God's ways, understanding helps you to know the right thing to do and the way to do it. This Gift enables you to relate well to God and others, and to live as a person of faith. (See Proverbs 9:10 and 24:3-5; Job 28:28.)

Counsel: This Gift, sometimes called *right judgment*, enables you to tell right from wrong, avoid sin and other costly mistakes, and live according to the teachings of Jesus. It opens you to the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of others. It helps you interact with others as you plan, solve problems, and make decisions. As a young person with good counsel, you will look for and find good people to inspire and guide you to know the right thing to do in different, sometimes difficult, situations. It's good to make quiet time for God to ask for guidance and to listen to what God says. It also is good to consult with wise people of faith. (See Sirach 32:16; Proverbs 15:22.)

Courage: This Gift, sometimes called *fortitude*, enables you to follow your convictions and stand up for what is right no matter how difficult it may be. Sometimes a

person of faith must go against the tide, take an unpopular stance, and endure rejection and abuse to speak out for what is right. Fearlessness was seen at the first Pentecost, when Jesus' disciples dared to speak out boldly about him. They were convinced that people would receive the benefit and joy of hearing the Good News and transforming their lives. Today, the Spirit wants to help you be brave, strong, and persistent in faith and love. (See Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 27:1-3; Philippians 1:12-14; Acts 4:31.)

Piety: This Gift, sometimes called *reverence*, helps you respect and honor God and the things of God: Scripture, the Church, the Eucharist and all the Sacraments, and Tradition. It also helps you to honor God's creation, to treat it responsibly, and to help sustain its beauty and availability to the needs of all. Piety helps you to be a gentle and humble person. It inspires you to honor God as the source of all that is good, of all that you are, and of everything you have. As a result, you rely on God and grow in trust. Piety calls you to prayer, worship, and communion, as you learn of God's perfect love for you and all creation. (See Psalm 104:33-34 and 119:2, 15; Acts 2:43-47.)

Wonder and Awe: This Gift, also called *fear of the Lord*, helps you to be amazed by God and his awesome creation. God is love, and perfect love casts out fear. So the only thing to fear is separation from God's goodness through ignorance, sin, self-will, and disobedience. With wonder and awe, you understand yourself to be a created, finite (and wonderful) being in right relationship with the all-powerful Creator on whom you totally depend. When you realize that God listens to you, loves you, and helps you to realize your dreams, what response can there be but wonder and awe? (See Psalm 8; Isaiah 40:28-31; Sirach 32:13; 43:29-35.)

Wisdom: This Gift helps you to give first place to spiritual realities. Wisdom comes through praying, studying Scripture, and developing a personal relationship with God. Wisdom, considered the highest of all the Gifts, ties the others together. The Gift of Wisdom comes to fullness over time as faithful people open themselves to the Holy Spirit and work to grow in all the Gifts. (See Wisdom 7:7-12; Sirach 1:1, 23 and 14:20-27; Proverbs 4:5-9; James 3:16-18.)

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The Cross

A New Look at an Ancient Icon

by: Melannie Svoboda

One of the oldest symbols of our Christian faith is the cross, a sign recognized virtually all over the world. Lent is an ideal time to take a look at this ancient yet ever-new icon.

History of the Cross

Because crucifixion was such a gruesome way to die, the earliest believers did not use the symbol of the cross. It wasn't until the early fourth century that the cross was adopted as a Christian symbol. The sixth century saw the appearance of the first crucifixes, that is, crosses with the three-dimensional image of Jesus on them.

What the Cross Symbolizes

The main reason Christians venerate the cross is because it symbolizes Jesus' great love and sacrifice for us. When we look at a crucifix, we think how much he suffered for us. And more importantly, we recognize how much he *loved* us!



Although the cross looked like the end for Jesus, it wasn't. That's why we must teach children that the cross is also a symbol of hope. We believe he rose again after three days, thus transforming apparent defeat into glorious victory. The cross is also the sign that God forgives us of our sins no matter how serious they may be. The writer John Stott notes, "The gospel is the good news of mercy to the undeserving. The symbol of the religion of Jesus is the cross, not the scales."

The Sign of the Cross

Catholics remember the cross by tracing a small cross on our foreheads with our thumbs. This practice was so popular in early times that Tertullian, one of the church fathers said, "We Christians wear out our foreheads with the sign of the cross."



We also make another form of the sign of the cross that dates back to the ninth century. Using our right hand, we trace a large cross from our forehead to our chest and then our left shoulder to our right shoulder. As we do this we say the words, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." In doing so, we give honor to the Blessed Trinity as well as the cross.

In addition, we use the sign of the cross in our worship. As we enter the church, we dip our hand into holy water, making the sign of the cross in remembrance

of our baptism. Both priest and congregation begin each Mass with the sign of the cross. During Mass, before he reads the gospel, the priest traces a small cross on the *Book of the Gospels*. He repeats the gesture on his forehead, lips, and chest. We do the same as we silently say the words, "May Christ be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart." At the end of Mass, the priest blesses the congregation while tracing a large cross in the air with his right hand.

Living the Cross

As the main symbol of our Christian faith, the cross commemorates the profound mystery upon which our faith rests: in the person of Jesus, God became a human being and suffered and died for us. But we must do more than decorate our churches with the cross, wear it around our necks, or use it as a gesture in *prayer*.

We must first *live* the cross. Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). This means first of all that we are called to share in the sufferings of Jesus. Sometimes these sufferings can be great. But more often they are simply the small pains, inconveniences, misunderstandings, anxieties, and trials of daily life. In addition, we must share in the *love* of Jesus. This loving can be dramatic, but most of the time it consists in performing our daily duties faithfully, generously, creatively, and with joy.

6 Reasons

Why We Make the Cross

1. to profess our faith
2. to proclaim our discipleship
3. to renew our baptismal commitment
4. to renounce selfishness
5. to suffer for Jesus
6. to defend ourselves against evil

by Catholic Author Bert Ghezzi

Melannie Svoboda, SND, has served as a teacher, novice director, congregational leader, and retreat director. The author of a dozen books, she writes a blog called "*Sunflower Seeds: Celebrating Everyday Spirituality*."

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Proclaiming a Person

Leading Children, Not into a Method but into an Encounter

By: Joe Paprocki

Investing your money is wise, but it also involves risks. Likewise, we need to invest our energies, time, commitments, and dreams wisely. The invitation to the alternate reality that we call the kingdom of God requires an investment, one that sounds risky at first glance. Can this kingdom be trusted? Who is the face of this kingdom? It might be wise to set up an appointment to meet this person in the flesh.

Luckily, when it comes to investing in Jesus Christ, we truly can meet him “in the flesh”—especially in the Eucharist. As catechists, it is our job to introduce young people to Jesus “in the flesh” and invite them to invest their lives in him.



Encounter the Living God

This means that we are not introducing them to an idea, a philosophy, a pattern of behavior, or a method—we are introducing them to a Person who is alive and in our midst. If catechesis was simply about *information*, we could simply give the textbooks to our young people, have them digest the contents, and test them on their comprehension. However, catechesis is about more than information. It is about *transformation*.

When we limit catechesis to the acquisition of information, we reduce it to a subject like all the other subjects young people study in school all day: social studies, science, history, mathematics, and so on. We catechists, however, are not teachers of a subject. We are facilitators of an encounter—an encounter with a living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Church teaches us that the purpose of catechesis is to “put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 80). Intimacy is not achieved solely by reading a book. The *GDC* goes on to tell us: “When

catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit” (85).

Climate of Prayer

In other words, the most effective setting for this transformative catechesis to take place is within a climate of prayer, and to establish this climate of prayer, we can take our cues from the liturgy where we meet Jesus in the flesh.

In many ways, faith formation can be compared to acquiring a second language. As catechists, we are teachers of a second language, a language of mystery. This language involves more than words—it relies on signs, symbols, images, rituals, actions, gestures, and song—all ingredients, so to speak, of the prayer we call the liturgy. When we teach faith as though we are teaching a second language, we increase not only the brainpower of our learners but also their heart power. When we learn a second language, we become more capable of integrating ourselves into a new and different culture. When we learn a language of faith in a climate of prayer, we become capable of integrating ourselves into the “culture” of the kingdom of God. When we are integrated into the kingdom of God, we encounter the Person of Jesus Christ in the flesh.



Joe Paprocki DMIN is the national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press and author of *Beyond the Catechist's Toolbox: Catechesis that Not Only Informs but Also Transforms*. Joe is a 6th grade catechist and blogs about his experience at catechistsjourney.com.

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Six Ways to Strengthen Families in Your Parish

by: Karen Pesek

The Bishops want it. Your own Bishop has stressed it. Your pastor is talking about it. You know you need to do what you can to help strengthen families in your parish. But how?



Consider incorporating at least one of the following ideas into your plans for next year:

1. LISTEN

Stop before you create one more program or another calendar of activities! Do you really know what the families in your parish need to raise faith-filled disciples? Have you intentionally sought out those who are missing from your catechetical programs and asked them why they are not participating? Try a variety of methods to elicit a response. Listen with compassion, not defensiveness. After all, catechists are to serve the parents in their role as the primary educators of their children. Be open and creative in "listening" the whole year, not just for a few weeks.

Consider surveys in the pews, e-mail, or text links to online surveys which are well crafted. Invite several parents at a time for informal conversations, choose a few families per week to phone, and visit families in their homes when possible. The important point here is to listen to their hopes and needs, and then partner with the parents. Parishes don't need to create "consumers" of services parishes provide. Religious educators have often created situations where we are the experts and dispense the knowledge necessary for faith formation. Research tells us that the most powerful influence on the faith of children is the faith and spiritual practices of the parents. Catholic parents are no longer supported by close-knit communities which provide social and spiritual support. Those parents who do show up at our parishes are seeking meaningful, relevant experiences for themselves and their children. These experiences may not look like the same events that shaped most of us currently in ministry. The Good News is the same. The ways people hear and experience this message needs to change.

Take the parish census and create a list of all the families with school-age children who are registered. Take out the families who send their children to Catholic school and who actively participate in the

parish religious education program. Begin contacting each family left on your list. Find out about their family situation. What would bring them back? If you have to discontinue an existing program or project to make time for this, do it!

2. EDUCATE YOURSELF

What do some of the major documents of the church say to us regarding Catholic families? How does this impact your ministry? Could you take time at each staff meeting to reflect on one of these quotes? Here are a few passages to get you started:

The catechesis given by parents with the family 'precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.' When children are baptized, parents accept the responsibility to bring up their children in the practice of the faith and to see to it that the divine life that God gives them is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts. At the same time, the Church promises to help parents foster their children's faith and assists them specifically in their role as catechists of their children, whether they assume complete responsibility themselves or look to the parish school or religious education program for help and support. (*National Directory of Catechesis*, 235)

The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that parents hand on to their children by education. Parents are the principal and first educators of their children. In this sense the fundamental task of marriage and family is to be at the service of life. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1653)



In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are 'by word and example ... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.' (CCC, 1656)

The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced

solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation. *The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.*' The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable. (CCC, 2221)

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first *by creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. (CCC, 2223)



The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth. You will find major projects on marriage and family

life at this site: www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth.

Read one of the recent books on the challenges the church faces in the United States today:

- *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry A. Weddell
- *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton
- *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* by Christian Smith with Patricia Snell
- * *Rebuilt* by Michael White and Tom Corcoran

Caution: Reading these books and reflecting on the teachings of the church may create a paradigm shift in how you work with families. Are you open and ready for this?

3. TAKE A FAMILY CENTERED APPROACH



Ministries of the parish should support the family. Think of the family as a unit, and not as individual members of the parish. For example, are the children scheduled to serve at a different Mass from the parent who lectures, ushers, or serves as Communion minister? Are religious education classes for various age groups scheduled at different times or days, requiring parents to travel to and from the church more than

once? Are meetings or activities scheduled during meal times, especially during the work week? Could a preparation meeting for first Eucharist include a family activity instead of requiring the parents to either split up or hire a sitter for the evening? Do parents with special needs children feel welcome and supported at Mass and catechetical activities? Could Wednesday evening catechetical sessions begin with a family meal that includes the catechists? How are new parents supported by the community after they present their child for baptism? Are there ways for new parents to connect with experienced parents so they learn good Catholic parenting? Find creative ways to connect families across generations. Does the parish as a whole focus on supporting family life? Are there opportunities for families to engage in service to others? Are parents shown how to pray with their children at home, and in a variety of ways to meet the developing needs of their children. Do couples raising children feel supported and encouraged by the faith community?

4. HONOR YOUR OWN FAMILY

Lay ecclesial ministers are normally hard working and generous folks. Is your family time sacred? Be sure to tend and water the garden of your own family so that it is a sacrament and not a counter sign to the community. Take regular time off to be with your family. Practice what you preach!



5. THE EIGHTH SACRAMENT

On March 25, 2013, Pope Francis gave a homily on the Gospel reading from Mark 10. In this reflection, the Holy Father explained, "Christians who ask to be let in should never find doors closed. Churches are not offices where documents and letters are presented when someone is hoping to enter God's grace." He gave two scenarios to illustrate this. First, a young couple goes to the church office to ask about getting married. Instead of being welcomed and congratulated, they instead receive a list of requirements, costs, and the documents needed to get married in that parish.

In another example, he describes a young single woman who goes to the parish to request baptism for her infant. She is denied because she is not married. Pope Francis continues, "Look at this girl who had the courage to carry her pregnancy to term" and not to have an abortion. "What does she find? A closed door, as do so many." This is not good pastoral zeal; it distances people from the Lord and does not open doors. So when we take this path... we are not doing good to people, the People of

God." He says this is the eighth sacrament, "the sacrament of pastoral customs."

Now, read your bulletin announcements and any communications regarding your catechetical programs.

Even if you are able to do nothing else, consider rewording communications from the parish. Is the parish a "guardian of the Truth" or are the doors of faith wide open, inviting people to experience the love of Christ? Do the descriptions of the catechetical programs sound like activities a newcomer would be eager to join? Accept families where they are on the journey of faith, and walk along with them. Inspire them to holiness by your words and example. Sometimes a catechist needs to be a coach. We give those with whom we work support and encouragement, showing them various ways to reach the goals they seek.

Yes, ministry is messy. Just one family returning to the church may require special sessions for the children who missed one or more sacraments, an annulment for a parent, RCIA for another parent, and a lot of guidance and patience. There will be people who don't fit into the schedules and programs you have carefully created. Most people probably don't register when we expect them to, fill out forms correctly, or even show up to events which we consider "required" to celebrate a sacrament. But if "the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ," (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 80) then at least our communication, both

written and verbal, should sound like we believe this with all our hearts.



The next step is to meet as a staff and talk about the

**"Christians who ask to be let in
should never find doors closed."
– Pope Francis**

attitudes and approach you want to convey. How is this "eighth sacrament" lived out at your parish? Help the parish secretary understand the great importance of her role; she is frequently the greeter at the door of faith! Is the

door opened with a smile and warm welcome? What would it take at your parish to make this happen?

6. YOU ARE NOT THE CONDUCTOR

It has been joked that if you cut an American Catholic, he bleeds Pelagianism. Pelagianism is the 5th century heresy that we can achieve our own salvation. If we just work or pray hard enough, we can achieve anything. It's a part of the American "can do" attitude that is the envy of other nations. If we translate this into church ministry, it becomes a common trend among us: if we just do the right things, our parishes will be blossoming, vibrant communities. In a quote attributed to St. Augustine, "Pray as if everything depends on God, work as if everything depends on you." So take heart and relax a bit. When asked what to do about a teenager who quit going to church, a wise Benedictine replied, "If he comes around to the church before he dies, that will be time enough." We have an important part to play in God's orchestra, but we aren't the conductor. If we love our parish families rather than seeing them as problems to be fixed, God can do great things through us.

Karen M. Pesek is the director of the Office of Religious Education for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

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Diocesan Youth Rally

Grades 7-12

Living the Sacraments with Mr. Courtney Brown

March 26, 2014

5:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Music, Reconciliation and Mass with Most Rev. Peter F. Christensen

St. Bridget Parish, River Falls

Contact: mnoll@catholicdos.org

Celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony

A Dynamic Overview and How All Can Relate to This Sacrament

By: John Bosio

When I think of the sacrament of matrimony, the first image that comes to mind is that of a wedding. Weddings are joyous events. They are joyous because in these festivities we celebrate love and life. We celebrate the love of husband and wife visible in the bride and the groom. And, we celebrate the promise of life that will come from their union.

God's Love Story

However, when I look at a Catholic wedding through the eyes of faith, I can see another dimension. I see a couple that is taking their love story to the altar and asking God to join it to his eternal love story. The Bible tells us about God's love story with humanity. In it, God is the lover and we his beloveds. This story began at creation, was formalized in the covenants of the Old Testament, and reached its fullness in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today, God's love story continues and married couples are called to play a role in it.

A Sacrament of God's Love

Through the wedding promises, spouses join their lives to each other and to God. They accept a role in God's love story. They become a sacrament of God's love. In their love for each other, they make the goodness of God's love present and visible to one another, to their children, and to anyone who comes in contact with them.

This is why the Catholic Church considers marriage one of the seven sacraments—a human sign that through the actions of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit makes present efficaciously the graces that it signifies. To be a sacrament of God's love is not easy. Because of this, Christ stands by the spouses. He touches them with his graces. He helps them when they become discouraged. He

gives them strength to forgive one another. He is their model of how to love.

Preparing for Marriage Begins Right Now

To live a happy life as a couple, the spouses need to prepare for it long before the wedding. Loving is learned even at a young age at home and at school. It is learned by showing respect for others, being honest and dependable, being willing to make sacrifices, being generous in forgiving, and by helping others. In this preparation, prayer is also important. It keeps us mindful of God and of his plan for marriage.

An Obstacle to Learning

One of the obstacles we face today in teaching children the sacrament of matrimony is the fact that one fourth of the students in our classes are likely to live in a single-parent home. It is very likely that these children do not experience the goodness of God's love in the spousal love of their parents. As catechists, it is important to expose all students to a joyful vision of marriage; a vision that represents what God intends for the relationship of husband and wife.

Fortunately, none of us lives in isolation. Students who live in single-parent homes may be touched by the graces of the sacrament through the marriage of their grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, friends of the family, the parents of their classmates, and your own marriage.

John Bosio is a husband and father, a seasoned family life educator and author. His latest book is Happy Together: The Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage (Twenty-Third Publications).

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Activity: Read to the class the following promises from the Catholic wedding ritual. Then ask the students to discuss what they think spouses are promising each other. Ask them to be specific, and to give examples from the lives of married couples they know.

"I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad. In sickness and in health."

"I will love you and honor you all the days of my life"

Invite the students to write a prayer asking God's help in learning to love by: showing respect for others, being honest and dependable, being willing to make sacrifices, being generous in forgiving, and by helping others. In the prayer the students can also ask God for guidance in choosing a vocation. If marriage is to be their vocation, they can ask God to help their future spouse prepare for marriage by learning to love.



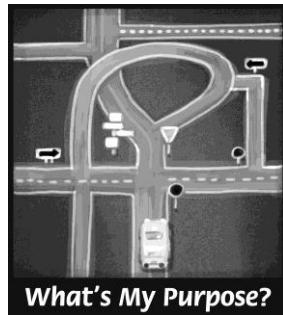
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
Ecclesiastes 4:12, NIV

A Discipleship University for High School Youth

By Megan Noll

"Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission!" Pope Francis exclaimed this to youth of the world in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Young people want a mission. They want to know:

- Where am I called?
- What is my *personal* mission?
- Who should I follow?
- How do I get there?



As Christians, each of us is called to follow Jesus Christ. On the seashore, Jesus asked ordinary people like you and me to follow him. The original "twelve" became disciples. In modern language they went to Discipleship University, a place designed for instruction and prayer. With the Teacher, they gained the know-how to fulfill the mission of the Father. Jesus showed them how to be witnesses of love. He showed them how to share their faith with others. He showed them how to be leaders.

Each person is called to be a disciple. Like the first disciples of Jesus, we have been called to a particular and personal mission. This mission starts with knowing Jesus. We spend time with Him. It could be at Mass, through serving others, working and more. Concretely, we must communicate with Him through a daily prayer life. From this time together, He gives us instruction to live, ways for us to be sent. This is how we know His call and where to go.

Disciples follow Christ wherever He leads. When He says "Come," we choose to "Go" also. By following, we discover our mission. This is how Jesus built His Church. As the Leader, he built other leaders. His disciples become leaders in the Church. He equips us to lead. Because it is not easy to lead, we need training. We need to enroll ourselves into Discipleship University. A key leader in the early Church was St. Paul. He was personally called to lead. His advice applies to Disciples of Jesus:

"Train yourself for devotion, for while physical training is of limited value, devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds a promise of life both for the present and for the future." (1 Tim 4:7b-8)

Let's now apply this to the mission of youth leadership. As they gain a deeper relationship with Jesus, they desire

more and more faith opportunities. This eventually leads to a desire to serve more fully. They thirst for ways to follow Jesus. From an initial conversion, young people thirst for depth to their faith.

You may notice, high school leaders want to:

- 1) Lead social activities.
- 2) Share musical talents.
- 3) Organize a small event.
- 4) Collaborate with others.
- 5) Lead prayer or give talks.
- 6) Volunteer with younger youth, e.g., middle school youth or primary aged children.

High school youth are looking for leadership opportunities as they pursue their dreams and goals, as they discover their *personal* mission. As new found disciples, we may be tempted to run ahead of God's grace. This is why **training is essential at this stage.**

With the development of healthy junior high youth ministry, it is time to invest and build high school leaders. To build up the Church in the Diocese of Superior, we need youth leadership to be formed by the chief teacher of the faith, our Bishop. Starting this spring, the Diocese of Superior is seeking youth leaders from each parish. Each parish cluster is hoped to be represented. Youth leaders need a recommendation from their pastor and/or youth minister, e.g., CRE. Youth must be attending Mass weekly and act as authentic witnesses of the faith. We ask they "come" to the diocesan high school training*. It will be our Discipleship University. It will prepare them to live their faith after graduation and further them to be living disciples. Let them "come" so they can "go" out and make disciples (Cf. Mt 4:19; Mt. 28:19).



Megan Noll is the Director of Marriage, Family and Youth for the Diocese of Superior.

*NOTE: The specific dates and location for the Discipleship University have not been finalized. Please keep your eye on the diocesan website for the release of this information.

Forming Effective Disciples Elevated Level and Updated Standards Announced

By: Kathy Drinkwine

The second level of the Diocese of Superior's new catechetical certification program, *Forming Effective Disciples*, along with revised *Policies for Personnel in Catholic Schools and Parish Religious Education Programs (called Standards)* have been announced. Both were made public in December 2013. Materials were mailed to all pastors, parish directors, parish life coordinators, and catechetical leaders. All information is also available on the diocesan website.

The new Elevated level requires six online courses through the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) and a service project. Five of the online courses are required of all participants. The sixth course may be chosen from a list of electives. The service component is designed by the participant. (See below.)



Using an online program has many advantages:

- *It fits into the busy lives of catechists and catechetical leaders.* The format requires frequent logging in and responding but it can be done when time allows.
- *It is cost effective.* There are no travel costs involved. There are no child care costs for those with young children because the work can be completed from office or home. Additionally, the Diocese of Superior has entered into a partnership with the VLCFF program which also reduces the cost of each course to just \$40.
- *It is consistent.* The course and content is the same whenever the course is taken.
- *It is responsive to the needs of the people of the diocese.* There were many requests from across the diocese for an online program.

There is one advantage specific to the VLCFF program that streamlines the certification process for those working towards Elevated. All certificates of completion will be sent to the diocese first. This allows the diocesan staff to copy the certificate and record the completion of each course. Participants will have to file an "Intent to Begin Elevated Level" form with the diocese but will not have to file an annual certification application while working on Elevated. When participants get their certificates in the mail, all information is already on file with the diocese. When all courses and the service component is complete, the Elevated certificate will be issued.

Another bonus to working with VLCFF is that the annual partnership fee is the same no matter how many people participate in the program. Interested parishioners can take courses for their own personal enrichment and catechists can use VLCFF courses to meet Continuing Formation requirements - all at the same reduced cost.

The revised Standards now allow five years instead of three for completion of Continuing Formation requirements. The document itself has been reformatted to make the requirements for each group much easier to understand. It is found on the diocesan website.

The development of a content-based program has been labor intensive and long, but it is all well worth the effort. The consistency and accessibility of both levels, Foundational and Elevated, will have a very positive impact on the Diocese of Superior, creating a body of catechists and leaders who are even more prepared to share the Word of God.

Kathy Drinkwine is the Coordinator of Administrative Services for the Diocese of Superior.

Elevated Level Requirements

- FED Foundational level or Ministry of Catechesis Basic level must be completed prior to beginning Elevated level work.
- All participants must file an "Intent to Begin Elevated Level" document with the diocese.

Required Courses:

- Survey of Catholic Doctrine
- Images of Jesus
- Church History I
- Introduction to Practical Morality
- Vocations, Spirituality and Discipleship of Catechesis

Elective Courses: (choose one)

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Evangelization and Discipleship
- Theological Reflection: Key to Connecting Faith and Life
- Ecclesiology: Reframing Church
- Administration in Ministry
- Leadership in Ministry
- Marianist Studies: Prayer

Service Component:

- Obtain approval from the diocese prior to beginning this project
- Complete 20 hours of service
- Teach a one-hour session to adults regarding Major Themes of Catholic Social Teaching
- Write a 3-5 page reflection paper regarding your service component

Go to www.catholicdos.org - Click on Catholic Formation – Forming Effective Disciples – Elevated Level for full details.



Calendar

Visit our website @ www.catholicdos.org

February 2014

- 2:** *The Presentation of the Lord*
7: **WCRIS Schools Conference**
Onalaska Convention Center
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss
7-8: **School of Servant Leadership**
St. Anthony Parish, Tony
Contact: Chris Newkirk
9: **World Marriage Day**
Contact: Megan Noll
13: **SUMMIT**
St. Peter, Cameron
Contact: Justin Steele
jsteele@holyroarymedford.org
27: **Principal Meeting**
St. Bridget, River Falls
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss
28-Mar 2: **Life in the Spirit Retreat**
St. Bridget, River Falls
Contact: Megan Noll

March 2014

- 5:** *Ash Wednesday*
6: **GOAL Workshop**
Ladysmith Public Library
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss
7-8: **School of Servant Leadership**
St. Anthony Parish, Tony
Contact: Chris Newkirk
14-16: **N.E.W. Koinonia Retreat**
Holy Rosary, Medford
Contact: Bluetette Puchner
onthelake@centurytel.net
19: *Feast of St. Joseph*
25: *The Annunciation of the Lord*
26: **Youth Rally**
St. Bridget, River Falls
Contact: Megan Noll
30-Apr 5 **Diocesan Catechetical Week**
"Come Holy Spirit"
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss

April 2014

- 5:** **Couples Retreat**
Our Lady of Sorrows,
Ladysmith
Contact: Megan Noll

- 8:** **Chrism Mass**
Cathedral of Christ the King,
Superior
10: **SUMMIT**
St. Peter, Cameron
Contact: Justin Steele
jsteele@holyroarymedford.org
11-12: **School of Servant Leadership**
St. Anthony Parish, Tony
Contact: Chris Newkirk
17-19: *Holy Triduum*
20: **Easter Sunday**
22-24: **NCEA Conference**
Pittsburgh, PA
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss
24: **Professional Development Day**
St. Joseph, Hayward
Contact: Chris Newkirk
27: *Divine Mercy Sunday*
29: **Principal Meeting**
TBD
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss

May 2014

- 1:** **Parish Leadership Day**
St. Anthony, Tony
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss
TBD: **High School Leadership Training**
Contact: Megan Noll
TBD: **Extreme Faith Camp Training**
Contact: Megan Noll
18-22: **NCCL Convention**
St. Louis, MO
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss
29: *The Ascension of the Lord*
30-Jun 7: **Totus Tuus Training**
Winona, MN
31: *The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

June 2014

- 8:** *Pentecost Sunday*
8-13: **Extreme Faith Camp**
Crosswoods, Mason, WI
Contact: Megan Noll

9-Aug: Totus Tuus in Parishes

- Contact: Megan Noll
15: *Corpus Christi Sunday*
20-22: **Agapè TEC**
St. Anne, Somerset
Contact: Gwen Nies
gnies77@lakeland.ws

September 2014

- 12-14:** **N.E.W. Koinonia Retreat**
Holy Rosary, Medford
Contact: Bluetetter Puchner
onthelake@centurytel.net

October 2014

- 24:** **Fall Conference**
St. Joseph, Rice Lake
Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss

November 2014

- 7-9:** **N.E.W. Koinonia Retreat**
St. John, Edgar
Contact: Bluetette Puchner
onthelake@centurytel.net

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The Gift of Marriage

A Day for Married and Engaged Couples

April 5, 2014, 9:00-5:00 PM

Our Lady of Sorrows, 611 1st St S, Ladysmith, WI

Day Includes:

Continental Breakfast & Lunch

Mass & Adoration with Bishop Peter Christensen

Keynote Presentations

Reconciliation & Couple Time

Early Bird rate only \$30 per Couple by March 28