

UPDATE Plus +

Volume XVII Number 5

www.worcesterdiocese.org/religiouseducation

January 2010

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We hope to be back online by January 11th. You will find registration forms, schedules, calendars, *Update+* and other resources on our website.

TOWARD LENT 2010 . . .

ENDURING HOPE, PEACE AND JOY

During his homily at Midnight Mass this Christmas the pastor relayed the following story: While they were standing in church holding hands and admiring the crèche that lay before them, a young boy looked up to his father and asked, "Dad, where will Jesus live when Christmas is all over?" The priest then went on to affirm the reality that Jesus will continue to live in and through each one of us, every day of every year until the end of time as we know it.

Catholic Christians have a story to tell which points to an understanding of this reality. We celebrate this story through the Liturgical Year beginning with season of Advent as we hear that long ago the prophet Isaiah foretold the story of a virgin that would bear a son who would be named Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

On Christmas day we listened as The Gospel of Luke told of shepherds standing in awe as the angel of the Lord brought them Good News and heavenly hosts proclaimed "Glory to God in the highest" and promised "peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 1:1-20)

Now our liturgical story continues as we journey from kneeling before the babe in the manger to a fuller understanding of Christ's presence among us during Lent and the celebration of the Easter Triduum. Our history of salvation occurs through the Incarnation, *and* the Crucifixion, *and* the Resurrection. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, concludes: "But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace." (Ephesians 2:13-14)

Yet, in 2010 we still long for peace on earth and in our lives. Even the most cursory look at our world today reveals the pressing need for reconciliation with God, others and indeed all of creation. Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged this as he reflected back on the turbulent year of 2009. He spoke of the urgent need for deep

spiritual renewal, noting that "peace can only be accomplished if you reach interior reconciliation".

Being human can lead us to moments of fear, darkness, hurtful actions or despair. Even so, the Christ that lives within us can give us the strength and the courage to rise above our own circumstances and sinfulness. It has been said that there is no saint without a past and no sinner without a future. Therein lies our hope.

As we begin the New Year, perhaps it would be fitting to ask ourselves the question posed by Parker Palmer, noted author and educator. "Is the life I am living now the life that wants to live in me?"

– Laverne Bertin

For adult faith formation resources on the sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation and other Lent resources, see page 4 "Lent Resources"

**Only in souls
the Christ is brought to birth,
and there He lives
and dies.**

Alfred Noyes

EVENTS

- Jan 9 **Catechist Training*** 8:30 am - 12:30 pm
Introduction to the Ministry of the Catechist (1 - 3)
St. Joseph, Leicester
- Jan 20 **PASSPORT TO SUCCESS** 10 am - 2 pm
Maintaining Professional Balance
Ms. Patricia Gabree, *Presenter*
St. Anne Parish, Shrewsbury
- Jan 24 **RETREAT FOR ADULT CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES** 2 - 8 pm
Oakhurst Retreat Center, Whitinsville
- Jan 26 **Catechist Training*** 7 - 9 pm
Introduction to the Creed – Echoes of Faith+
Holy Cross, East Templeton
Elizabeth Marcil, *Instructor*
- Jan 27 **Catechist Training*** 6:30 - 9:30 pm
Introduction to the Ministry of the Catechist (1 - 3)
St. Anthony, Dudley
- Jan 30 **TRAINING FOR SMALL GROUP FACILITATORS** 8:30 am - Noon
LaVerne Bertin, *Instructor*
St. Mary Parish Center, Shrewsbury
\$15 per person/groups of 3 or more from 1 parish,
\$10 each. See registration form
- Feb 7 **CONFIRMATION CELEBRATION FOR ADULT CANDIDATES** 3 pm
Cathedral of St. Paul
- Feb 15-17 PREA Retreat
Mercy Center, Madison, CT
For information, contact:
sandystmarys@yahoo.com
- Feb 21 **RITE OF ELECTION** 3 pm
Cathedral of St. Paul
- Feb 24 **Introduction to Church History*** 7 - 9 pm
St. Joseph Center, Auburn
LaVerne Bertin, *Instructor*
Required for Master Catechist Certification
Open to all
- Introduction to Creed*** 7 - 9 pm
St. Joseph Center, Auburn
Christine Milner, *Instructor*
Required for Master Catechist Certification
Open to all
- Feb 28 **LENTEN RETREAT FOR CATECHISTS** 2 - 8 pm
Oakhurst Retreat Center, Whitinsville
(Open to all, required for *Intro to the Ministry of the Catechist*)
- Mar 3 **Introduction to the Creed* – Echoes of Faith+** 6:30 - 8:30 pm
St. Anthony, Dudley
Linda Brink, *Instructor*
- Mar 6 **YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE** 8:45 am - 4 pm
Hagan Center, Assumption College, Worcester
Sponsored by the Office for Youth Ministry

- Mar 16 **LENTEN DAY OF REFLECTION for School Principals and Catechetical Leaders**
- Mar 20 **DIOCESAN MEN'S CONFERENCE**
- Mar 23 PREA Meeting
Susan Landry, *Speaker*
St. Mary of the Hills Parish, Boylston
- Mar 30 **CHRISM MASS**
- Apr 5-9 NCEA/NPCD, Minneapolis
- Apr 11 **MULTI-PARISH CONFIRMATION** 3 pm
Cathedral of St. Paul
- Apr 18-22 NCCL, Las Vegas
- Apr 25 **MULTI-PARISH CONFIRMATION** 3 pm
St. Cecilia Parish, Leominster
- May 5 **Catechist Training***
Introduction to Scripture – Echoes of Faith+
North American Martyrs Parish, Auburn
Joan Sundstrom, *Instructor*
- May 6 PREA Meeting
Most Rev. Robert J. McManus, *Speaker*
St. Anne Parish, Shrewsbury
- May 8 **Catechist Training*** 8:30 am - 12:30 pm
Introduction to the Ministry of the Catechist (1 - 3)
St. Anna, Leominster
- May 23 **MULTI-PARISH CONFIRMATION** 3 pm
Cathedral of St. Paul, Worcester
- June 16 **PASSPORT TO SUCCESS** 10 am - 2 pm
Part IV: Mary and the Saints
Ms. Claire McManus, *Presenter*
St. Matthew Parish, Southboro
- June 25-27 **PASSPORT TO SUCCESS, Parts I, II, III & IV**
Summer Institute and Retreat
Immaculate Conception Retreat Center
Putnam, CT
- Aug 11-12 **NECDDRE ADULT FAITH FORMATION SYMPOSIUM**
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Worcester
Sponsored by NECDDRE
- Aug 25 **PASSPORT TO SUCCESS** 10 am - 2 pm
Catechizing for a Just World
Mr. Frank Kartheiser, *Presenter*
North American Martyrs Parish, Auburn

* Only 1st meeting of course is listed here. See registration materials for full course calendar and other details, or call (508) 929-4303.

Looking for **RCIA Training**,
bulletin inserts and other resources?
GO to:
TeamRCIA.com for web workshops and more.

Helping Teens to Articulate Their Faith

by Barbara Ramian

It seems like just yesterday when my son came home from his first parish religious education class. After asking him the usual questions (Who was in his class? Did he like his teacher?), I asked, “So what did you learn?” He didn’t hesitate at all before replying, “Nothing.” I pressed him a bit, saying that he surely must have learned something. He thought for a moment and replied, “I guess so, but I don’t remember.” Not one to let go of things easily, I pressed on, asking what the title of the lesson was. Right away he answered, “It was about community.” “So what’s a community?” I asked. He described community for me as a group of people who have something in common and who get together on a regular basis. I asked him if he could name any communities that he belonged to. He proceeded to name them: our family, our parish, his class in school, his religious education class, his soccer team, and on and on. By the end of our conversation, it was obvious that he had indeed learned something in class that morning.

That was about 20 years ago (he just turned 26!) but I have thought about that morning many times since then. One of the common cries that I hear over and over from those who work with adolescents in religious education is “But they don’t know anything!!” In fact they do, but as was the case with my young son, the burden of drawing forth what they know lies with us – the adults who teach them.

One of the more disturbing findings of the *National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR)* is that American teens are incredibly inarticulate when it comes to their faith. The study revealed that many have a meager, nebulous, and often erroneous knowledge of the content of their faith. At the same time, many of the teens who were interviewed as part of the study said that the interview was the first time any adult had ever asked them what they believed and what difference it made in their lives. So we might begin by asking them. I offer here several tips for helping teens to articulate their faith:

- As one who participates in handing on the faith to a teenager, whether as a catechist, a catechetical leader, or a parent, make a commitment to engage in ongoing faith formation for yourself. We cannot hand on what we do not know. One of the factors mentioned by the *NSYR* as contributing to teenage indifference about religion is the shortage of people who are qualified to teach the faith. Catholic schools and parish religious education programs are no longer staffed, as they once were, by priests and women religious who were immersed in the Catholic tradition; today many Catholics are educated in secular institutions of higher learning, and most, if not all, parish catechists are lay persons. Yet the opportunities for further faith formation abound!
- Ask students to articulate what they have learned. Statistics indicate that we remember 20% of what we hear, but 70% of what we say. It is not enough for teens to hear the catechist say it; they must be given opportunities to say it for themselves. Dr. Thomas Groome, religious education professor at Boston College, ends each class by asking, “So... what did you learn in school today?” He then calls on a student, who is expected to articulate what he or she learned in his class that day. I recently tried this at a workshop, giving an index card to each adult participant and asking them to write the answer to “So what did you learn in school today?” Their answers were rich and varied and helped me to evaluate myself as teacher.
- Provide a variety of venues for articulating faith. Some teens may be able to express themselves by saying aloud what they learned; some may prefer to write it; others may use art. When teaching a class of junior high students in my parish some years ago, we were learning about the Creed with a focus on the first statement: *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.* I instructed the young teens to draw a picture of God. I handed out crayons and colored pencils and put on some classical music in the background while they moaned about how the assignment was too hard. I didn’t give in to their complaints, and about 20 minutes later they produced some of the loveliest drawings I’ve ever seen. Each one was different from the others. Students were then asked to explain their images of God, which provided an effective entry into our discussion of God the Father.
- Ask questions that will enable teens to be comfortable talking about their faith. Confirmation interviews are a good opportunity for this. Asking only “factual” questions that require a set answer may be intimidating. Open-ended questions about their prayer lives or about what they perceive to be their own gifts and talents and how God might be calling them to use those gifts may help teens to open up and can provide an entryway to deeper discussion at a later time.
- “Build a higher thought.” Don’t let teens off the hook with a simple or one-word answer. Try to move them from simple recall to application, analysis, synthesis, and finally evaluation. In my long-ago conversation with my son, had he been a little older (or I a little wiser) I might have further challenged him by asking what difference it made for him to be a part of the many communities that he named.

The teaching techniques and methods that we use are significant in assisting teens in articulating their faith, increasing their comfort level in talking about their faith, and making a connection between their faith and the real experiences of their daily lives.

NEW RESOURCES

Confirmation Resource

CATHOLIC PARENT KNOW-HOW: PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR CONFIRMATION. Published by Our Sunday Visitor, 7 pages, \$1.95. This is a practical resource for families who have a teen preparing for Confirmation. It includes information on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, answers to questions about confirmation, and “starters” for family conversations about God. Its affordable price makes this a great resource for parishes to provide for families of confirmation candidates. – *BAR*

Young Adult

ASCEND: THE CATHOLIC FAITH FOR A NEW GENERATION. Eric Stoltz and Vince Tomkovicz. © 2009. Paulist Press. 229 pages. \$24.95. The authors, two deacons who are actively involved in parish ministry, provide readers with an exploration of the Catholic faith that is written in contemporary and engaging (high interest) language. Written primarily for young adults, *Ascend* is appropriate for all adults who want to learn more about their faith. A section with discussion questions is included at the end of the book for those using it in group settings such as a book club, faith sharing group, or for RCIA inquirers. – *BAR*

NEW MEDIA RESOURCES

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION: PAST AND PRESENT. Twenty-Third Publications. DVD.

Kathleen Chesto, D. Min. leads viewers through the development and history of the sacrament of Confirmation from the early days of the Church to the present. Her 25-minute presentation would be helpful background for catechetical leaders and confirmation catechists. Also included are five 2-3 minute segments focusing on the meaning of the sacraments and the Holy Spirit; these segments are appropriate for use with confirmation candidates.

LENT RESOURCES

In support of the 2010 diocesan-wide initiative on Reconciliation, the Office of Religious Education recommends several resources that can be used for Adult Education and Formation as we journey toward Easter. Bear in mind that it may have been quite a few years since many adults have experienced this sacrament of grace, mercy and restored unity. Ash Wednesday begins on February 17. It is not too early to invite others or begin the preparation process for the reception of Penance during Lent.

Faith-sharing Programs

RECONCILIATION: THE UNFOLDING MYSTERY OF GOD’S MERCY AND LOVE. Liturgical Publications Inc. is offering this faith sharing program which explores the multi-faceted dimensions of Reconciliation. It is designed with seven sessions and incorporates prayer, music, reflection and group discussion. The initial four sessions help adults come to a contemporary understanding of the need for absolution and renewal. The next two take place after the experience of sacramental penance. This is a mystagogical process that will help people reflect on the meaning of this experience in their lives. The final session takes place with a shared meal. For a look at the complete program and resources available go to www.CatholicFaithSharing.com

Please note: If you would like to begin this program in your parish the ORE will work with you and a team of volunteers to organize and implement these sessions. There is no charge for this service. Please contact lbertain@worcesterdiocese.org

GATHERED IN HIS NAME. St. Anthony Messenger Press has booklets that can be used for small groups of any type during Lent. Most are in a six-session format. The cost per book is \$3.95. A leader’s guide is available. The titles in this series are: *Lent and Easter, Making Connections, The Sacraments, The Old Testament, The Gospel of Mark, The Gospel of Matthew, Great Twentieth-Century Catholics* and *The Spirit of Vatican II*. These can be ordered at <http://catalog.americancatholic.org> (type in small group under search.)

Books/Brochures/Bulletin Inserts

DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR LENT 2010. Using the method of *lectio divina*, Daniel Harrington, S.J. guides the reader through Lent. This can be ordered through our bookstore.

Catholic Update – Brochures for Lent and Holy Week

A new 2010 issue, *Lessons of the Heart: Lent, Day by Day* is available along with 18 other topics that cover everything between Ash Wednesday and our holiest week.

Titles specifically on confession include:

- “Examining Your Conscience Today”
- “Guilt – a Tool for Christian Growth”
- “How to Go to Confession Using the New Ritual”
- “Sacrament of Reconciliation: Celebrating God’s Forgiveness”
- “Ten Tips for Better Confessions”
- “Why Confess My Sins”

This is an inexpensive way to educate and inform adults and young adults.

To order go to <http://catalog.americancatholic.org>

On-line Catechist Certification - University of Dayton

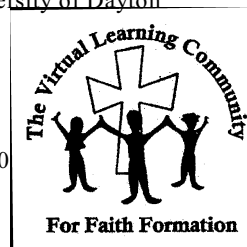
For information, call
LaVerne Bertin (508) 929-4305

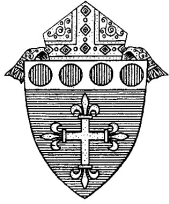
Visit vlc.udayton.edu

Cycle 2 February 28 through March 20
(Registration: 1/13/10 - 2/24/10)

Cycle 3 April 11 through May 15
(Registration: 3/2/10 - 4/7/10)

Cycle 4 May 30 through July 3
(Registration: 4/14/10 - 5/26/10)





OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
49 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609

Small Group Facilitator Training

- When? Saturday, January 30 – 9 am (8:30 registration) to Noon**
- Where? St. Mary Parish Center, Shrewsbury**
- Cost? \$15 per person/groups of 3 or more from 1 parish, \$10 each.**

What is Small Group Facilitator Training?

Notwithstanding all the technological advances we enjoy today, recent surveys have shown that adults learn best from face-to-face communication with others. This is especially true in Adult Faith Formation. Any effective form of AFF needs a means of listening, reflecting, questioning, discussing and determining a response to what has been learned. While solid content is important, the learner must also be able to comprehend what is being taught and incorporate it into his or her life.

Effective AFF cannot be left to happenstance or the occasional lecture or event. It must be intentional and ongoing and part of the overall pastoral vision in each parish. This takes time, planning and trained parishioners who understand what that vision is and what their specific role is in its implementation.

Recently there has been an explosion of small group learning and faith-sharing taking place in Catholic parishes and communities around the world. It is the foundation upon which many other pathways to mature learning and spiritual growth can be built.

That said, these groups are not meant to be purely social in nature. Effective adult faith formation has a dual purpose. Firstly, it is part of the mission and ministry of the Church, initially modeled by Jesus and his disciples. Secondly it is focused on the spiritual growth and ultimate well-being of the individual.

Every small group facilitator, or leader, plays a key role in all of this. Once the content and the method of delivery have been determined, **it is up to the facilitator to help foster learning and growth through a group process. This takes training and the gaining of knowledge and skills in order to help the group function at its best.**

The purpose of this workshop is to explore various ways of working with groups and to acquire the skills needed to be a good group leader. As part of the workshop you will receive a small *Handbook for Small Group Facilitators*.

Please duplicate registration form as needed.

Small Group

Deadline: Mon 1/25/10

Name: _____ Parish: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Please bill parish, OR include \$15 fee with your registration. Mail group registrations together. Make check payable to "Office of Religious Education" and mail to same at 49 Elm St., Worcester, MA 01609
For additional information, please contact: LaVerne Bertin – (508) 929-4305