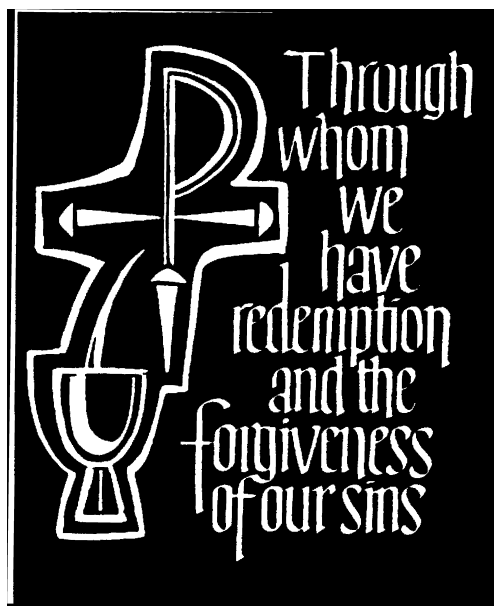


# UPDATE Plus +

Volume XVII Number 6

[www.worcesterdiocese.org/religiouseducation](http://www.worcesterdiocese.org/religiouseducation)

February 2010



*As we continue our Lenten journey,  
may we lend prayerful support to the*

*102 Elect*

*43 Candidates for Reception into the  
Full Communion of the Catholic Church  
and*

*88 baptized Catholics*

*who are preparing for Easter sacraments.*

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## **Adolescent Catechesis: Catechizing for a Living Faith**

by Barbara Ramian

Many years ago, I listened with amusement to a conversation between my mother and her sister Mary. My mom was disappointed because there had been no homily at Mass that morning. My aunt replied, "We don't need a homily. We have the faith!" Mom and I both disagreed with her. Though my Aunt Mary was a woman of great faith, this particular remark made it seem to me as if she was reducing that faith to something finite, akin to a tangible object that could be put in a box and stored away. As one who looks forward to the homily each week, always curious to see from what angle the homilist will approach the readings, I understood well my mother's frustration.

There is a lesson here, I think, for those of us who work in adolescent catechesis. Do we view the Catholic faith in the way that is implied in my aunt's remark, as something that we already "have" and thus have no further need to explore? Do we present it as information to be handed to our students to be stored away like a box of stuff that we put in the attic in case we need it someday? Or do we present it as something living and active, something that we can continue to explore every day?

One of the more striking findings of *The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR)* is the way in which teenagers view their faith as something that will someday be useful, but that has little relevance for today. One teen is quoted as saying "I'll definitely come to more conclusions about what God is as I get older. For now, I don't need anything definite." Another said, "At the moment, religion's not that important. I guess when I get older it might become more so, but right now being with my friends and having fun and being a teenager is more important to me." Still another described religion this way: "It doesn't really feel interesting. I think maybe when I get older it will be different."

It should come as no surprise that the review literature emphasizes that effective catechesis with adolescents includes practical skills for living the Catholic faith today, shared dialogue between the life of the adolescent and the wisdom of the Catholic Tradition, and real-life applications of learning. It must engage youth and connect to their daily lives. I offer here three strategies for helping teens to see their faith as relevant today, and not as something to be put on a shelf for sometime “when they’re older”.

- Pay attention to catechetical process. Good catechetical process begins with life, moves to faith, and returns to life. Religious educator Dr. Thomas Groome asks if we are treating young people as ‘agents’ of their faith, “or are they simply dependents on us and our wisdom?” He emphasizes that pedagogy needs to enable people to bring their lives to their faith and their faith to their lives. As I write this, the analogy of a sandwich comes to mind. The filling, whether it’s tuna, turkey, or peanut butter and jelly, is what gives the sandwich its “meat”. But without the two pieces of bread, the filling has nothing to hold it in place. We might think of the catechetical process as a sandwich. The filling is the faith content of the lesson, the wisdom of the Tradition, and the slices of bread on the top and bottom are the life experiences – that which enables the lesson to “stick”.
- Always ask, “So what?” This is one of the most, if not *the* most important question in any lesson. The faith content of a lesson, in and of itself, is not enough. We need to ask what it means for our everyday living. How will what I just learned impact my lifestyle? Will it require any action on my part? Perhaps I’ll need to change a particular behavior or attitude. One of the statements made by many of the teens interviewed in the *NSYR* was that the interview was the first time anyone had ever asked them what they believed and why that made a difference. Asking the teens with whom we work, “So, what difference does this make?” is an integral part of each lesson.
- Reflect on experience! Service projects are a wonderful way to foster a connection between faith and life, but for many teens they are little more than a hoop to jump through on their way to Confirmation. They are often perceived as just another requirement, a set number of hours to check off the list when completed. Before beginning a service project, be intentional in making the connection to the Catholic Tradition. Most teens understand that serving others is what Jesus asked us to do, but are most likely unaware that there is such a thing as Catholic Social Teaching. A service project provides an opportunity for systematic catechesis on this topic, followed by action. At the completion of a service project, take time to reflect with the students on their experience. Some years ago, I accompanied a group of teens to the Mustard Seed. When we returned home, we sat in a circle and I asked them to complete the sentence, “While we were at the Mustard Seed, I felt . . .” Their answers ranged from fearful to grateful, and everything in between. One young woman said she had been apprehensive about going, because she was afraid that she would cry. She had expected to find a room full of sad and depressed people. What she saw instead was a room filled with animated conversation and a sense that this was a welcoming “home” for many. The young people’s various reactions led us to deeper discussion about some of the assumptions that we make regarding the poor or the homeless.

Before attempting any of the above, the catechist must first be attentive to her own life experience and how it relates to the topic that she is teaching. One of the principles of good teaching is that the teacher does not ask the students to do something that the teacher himself cannot do. If we as catechists do not take the time to reflect on how the lesson relates to our own life experience, we will have a hard time helping young people to see how it relates to theirs. Taking time to enter into a personal conversation with the lesson before walking into the classroom to teach it will prove fruitful in the long run.

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## **NEW RESOURCE:**

Lifelong Faith, published by LifelongFaith Associates, is a quarterly journal that focuses on the theory and practice of lifelong faith formation. The current issue, Winter 2009, Volume 3.4, focuses entirely on Youth Ministry & Adolescent Faith Formation. The four articles and the special report on Youth Ministry will be especially helpful to parish catechetical leaders, youth ministers, and pastors who are interested in assessing how their parish ministers to its youth. It is not a “how-to” manual; the articles provide some substantial information regarding foundational principles for successful ministry to youth, and an assessment tool that involves the entire parish in discovering its role in the lives of young people. Subscribe online at [www.lifelongfaith.com](http://www.lifelongfaith.com) or by mail at LifelongFaith Associates, 40 Brighton Road, Naugatuck, CT 06670. For more information, call (203) 729-2953.

# EVENTS

- 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 26 (repeated Feb 27)  
**GREAT EXPECTATIONS: COACHING PARENTS**  
 Leisa Anslinger, *Presenter*  
 Fri - 9:30 am -2:30 pm, St. Ann Parish Raynham, MA  
 Sat - 12 - 4:30 pm, St. Mary Parish, Fairhaven, MA  
 For information, go to:  
[www.fallriverfaithformation.org/calendar](http://www.fallriverfaithformation.org/calendar)
- Feb 26 **AUTISM: FORMING FAITH THROUGH A COMMUNITY OF INCLUSION** 9 am - 3 pm  
 Sue Swanson, *Presenter* (Grant from Boston College/STM) co-sponsored with the Boston ORE  
 Pre-registration required.  
 Register at: [www.bc.edu/stmce](http://www.bc.edu/stmce)
- Feb 28 **LENTEN RETREAT FOR CATECHISTS**  
 Oakhurst Retreat Center, Whitinsville 2 - 8 pm  
 (Open to all, required for *Intro to the Ministry of the Catechist*)
- Mar 3 **Introduction to the Creed\* – Echoes of Faith+**  
 St. Anthony, Dudley 6:30 - 8:30 pm  
 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**  
 with Carole Eipers at Assumption College
- 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 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of course is listed here. See registration materials on-line for full course calendar and other details, or call (508) 929-4303.

Would you like to download a **daily prayer reflection** on your ipod? If so, visit [www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org). This website, offered through the Jesuits, has a downloadable meditation for Monday through Friday each week. You can click on to the meditation for a particular day or download the meditations for one week or two weeks at a time. Each meditation includes a brief meditative piece of music, the reading of the day's gospel, and one or two reflection questions.

On-line Catechist Certification - University of Dayton  
 For information, call  
 LaVerne Bertin (508) 929-4305

Visit [vlc.udayton.edu](http://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)



## NEW RESOURCES

**HOW WE WORSHIP: The Eucharist, the Sacraments & the Hours.** Rev. Lawrence E. Mick. © 2009. Liguori. 142 pages. \$14.99. This is a most valuable resource for many audiences – catechists, RCIA teams, neophytes, liturgy teams, and adult faith formation discussion groups. Organized in four parts – (1) Gathering God’s People, (2) Encountering God’s Word, (3) Enacting the Ritual, and (4) Sending Forth God’s People – this volume also treats many core topics such as conversion, paschal mystery and mission. Church music and architecture, the liturgical year and the new translation of the Roman Missal are also discussed. At the end of each of the twelve short chapters, two short reflections from different perspectives help to engage the reader – “Joe’s Journey” describes the growth of a catechumen, and “Mary’s Journey” reflects the experience of a widowed cradle Catholic. Each section also includes questions for reflection and discussion, and a carefully selected bibliography.

**INVITATION TO CATHOLICISM: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices.** Alice Camille. © 2001. Acta Publications. 234 pages. \$ 9.95. This book is thoroughly engaging from the Introduction to the last paragraph: “So here we are, at this particular X on the map, in this generation, on this patch of planet, with a handful of years belonging to us. What will *you* do with *yours*? And, whom, finally, will you serve?” Twelve chapters cover the Creed, sacraments, prayer, Mary, morality and eschatology. Each chapter is enhanced with “Questions to Explore” and “Faith Response” (suggestions for action). The simplicity and style of this book make it a wonderful option for inquirers but catechists and RCIA teams will also find in it artful approaches to opening the mysteries for students. Imagine challenging a confirmation candidate with this: “So you’ve been watching a trial on television for weeks. The prosecution has been hard on the defendant, and it looks like the accused doesn’t have a chance. All along, the defense has been murmuring about the surprise witness . . . whatever he or she reveals or withholds will spell life or death for the accused. And then the day arrives. The . . . witness is called. And that witness is *you*.” (p. 113)

**WHEN THEY COME HOME: Ways to Welcome Returning Catholics.** Melanie Rigney and Anna M. Lanave. © 2009. Twenty-Third Publications. 86 pages. \$ 9.95. The authors are both returnees and involved in the *Landings* program in St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Arlington, VA. It has been over 20 years since *Landings* was first developed and the authors acknowledge that much has changed – especially the diversity of the target group. Chapter 1 describes the over 40 million inactive Catholics in the US, “the second largest ‘Church’ in the country.” There are chapters on team preparation, the “first meeting,” and suggested formats for sessions. Perhaps one of the most valuable chapters is on the use of the internet and e-mail. While the authors have adapted the *Landings* program for their own use, they also give an annotated bibliography of eight other programs for returning Catholics. Whether or not a parish adopts a particular program, this small book will convince readers that parish ministry to returning Catholics is a requirement of today’s Church. This small volume could easily be put in the hands of interested lay people who might be willing to run with it.

**12 KEYS TO SPIRITUAL VITALITY, THE: Powerful Lessons on Living Agelessly.** Richard P. Johnson, Ph.D. © 1998 Liguori. 168 pages. \$14.95.

Richard P. Johnson challenges our cultural bias and fear of aging in this short but insightful book. This is a good read for any adult, but it specifically addresses “renewal stage” adults (age 50-75) and “elders” (age 75+.)

The author simultaneously discusses the way to live agelessly and the way to live with spiritual vitality. Stating that “Your attitudes are the mother of all your actions,” Johnson insists that Christian adults begin by transforming their attitudes about aging. For him, age is not a thief in the night. Properly understood, age is a master teacher of the wisdom and grace that comes from God’s promise of abundance.

In numerous ways, the author invites the reader to recognize that aging is “all right.” It is part of God’s plan for us. As the physical body slowly becomes stripped of its supple beauty, graceful flexibility, strong stamina, and quick response, God provides a magnificent opportunity for spiritual development and mature discipleship.

Right through each of the 12 Keys, Richard Johnson couples passages from Scripture and Church teachings with his vast experience in gerontological counseling and his extensive work with religious groups all over the U.S. and Canada.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Key, for example, takes a candid look at ways in which the inability to forgive, or to seek forgiveness, can not only age us physically, but also make us sick in spirit. Pain, doubts, anxiety and fears form the chains that lock us away from experiencing the love of God and others. In this chapter, Johnson presents four pragmatic steps toward forgiveness.

This book provides adults with a solid basis for individual spiritual/theological reflection. It would no doubt bring about some lively discussion in parish book clubs (local or virtual) or in small faith sharing groups. It would also be a very useful resource for those who wish to develop a workshop/session on adult spirituality.

## NEW MEDIA RESOURCES

### P 200 PREPARING CHILDREN FOR RECONCILIATION IN FOUR CREATIVE WAYS

23<sup>rd</sup> DVD format 40 P I A

1. *Handle with Care* (9) Five open-ended stories or moral dilemmas that involve younger children in discussion about right and wrong. Conscience formation
2. *Ricky’s First Reconciliation* (9) Gwen Costello walks children through the Rite – both individual and communal forms.
3. *Kevin’s Temptation* (8) Like Jesus in the desert, Kevin is tempted three times. The goal of the story is to help the children understand the concepts of temptation, conscience, and courage.
4. *Reconciliation: Celebrating Forgiveness* (14) by Peg Bowman takes place in a family home where a discussion is underway about first reconciliation. The father in the family learns from his son that reconciliation is a sacrament of joy and not of fear or embarrassment.

Includes discussion guide and outline for a parent meeting.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Christ the King Parish, 1052 Pleasant Street, Worcester, is seeking a DRE or CRE who will be responsible for coordinating Religious Education Program for grades Pre-K through high school. 1,750 households; 300+ children enrolled in Religious Education Program. Full-time: Saturday through Wednesday, with some flexibility. Would like candidate to begin to get acquainted with parish in May, with position beginning in July or August. Contact: Rev. Thirbuse Millott, pastor at (508) 754-5361

### Adult Faith Formation Opportunity

“Catholics Going Green” at St. George Parish, Worcester

Open to all adults  
Cost: \$5.00 (Includes text)

February 23, March 3, 16, 23, April 6, 13  
7:00-8:30 pm

*How are Catholics called to be environmental stewards and advocates for justice?*

Discover the answers in a six-session interactive discussion series designed to raise awareness of the gifts of Creation and explore the connections between our faith and the environment.

Each session will include Scripture readings, guest speakers on a diversity of environmental topics, spiritual reflection, and a sharing of ideas and solutions.

Call Annie Doyle at (508) 853-0183 or email [adoyle@saintgeo.com](mailto:adoyle@saintgeo.com)

## NE ADULT FAITH FORMATION SYMPOSIUM

August 11-12, 2010

Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Worcester

New Technologies,  
New Relationships:

Connecting with Young Adults

*Sponsored by NECDDRE*

*Featuring:*

Mike Hayes  
Tim Welch and others

