

The Varieties of Ministry in Education

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Christian life is a spiritual journey, a daily search for meaning within the context of real life situations. Each work situation or family event poses a question to the Christian person; what is the best judgment I can exercise at this given moment that will help to transform my life into a richer fullness, giving it with meaning and direction? To pose the question even more basically is to simply ask: What does God the Father expect of me today?

This very question provided the grist for Jesus' earthly pilgrimage. Jesus was skillful in detecting His Father's will within the variety of instances and circumstances that befell His daily life. Whether He was refreshing Himself at a Samaritan well or allowing Himself to be pressed by a curious crowd or was instructing the multitude about life's values Jesus used each opportunity to reveal His Father's presence.

Jesus had a profound sense of His mission. He spoke with unsurpassed conviction, insight and truthfulness about his Father's will. "he taught the people in their synagogue in such a way that they were astonished" (Matt. 14:54). He reminded those whom he met about His Father's everlasting love for mankind by rekindling hope in impoverished hearts. His compassion, concern and love for the poor and troubled dispelled fear and quieted anxieties.

There was a power within Jesus that allowed Him to create an openness in people towards acceptance of the Father's will. The impact of His own words and deeds manifested justice, truth, goodness, peace and joy to those who let themselves be touched by His life. In this way, Jesus unfolded His Father's plan for salvation and at the same time became a visible sign of future promise. "... God has give us eternal life and this life in His son (John 5:11).

In the present day, it is the role and function of Religious Education to participate in the teaching mission of Jesus. In every parish in the diocese there are religious educators who continue to work in the spirit of Jesus. These dedicated men and women continue to preach the Good News to broaden understanding of the faith, to instill a love and respect for life, to challenge Christians to live out the Gospel vision more deeply and to create awareness where Christian values seem to be neglected, overlooked or misunderstood.

The range of programs for Religious Education is very broad. The programs are designed to respond to a wide variety of educational needs within the parish community. Many parishes are placing a stronger emphasis upon the faith development of the adult community, enabling adults to discover renewed spiritual meaning and values in spite of the complexities of contemporary life. Programs preparing children for the reception of the sacraments include more parental involvement, often becoming the source of enriching family experiences.

Beyond the many programs that Religious Education personnel administer, there is one overriding concern that continuously emerges: that Religion Education will do more than merely strengthen the knowledge of the faith. It is the prayer and desire of every Religious Education teacher that the hearts and lives of their students will be deeply touched. The purpose of Religious Education is to enable the process of personal growth and Christian conversion to continue throughout one's lifetime. Hopefully persons will have an attitude of singlemindedness towards the Father's will. Christian commitment will be stronger and the values embodied in the life of Jesus will be reflected in Christians' lives.

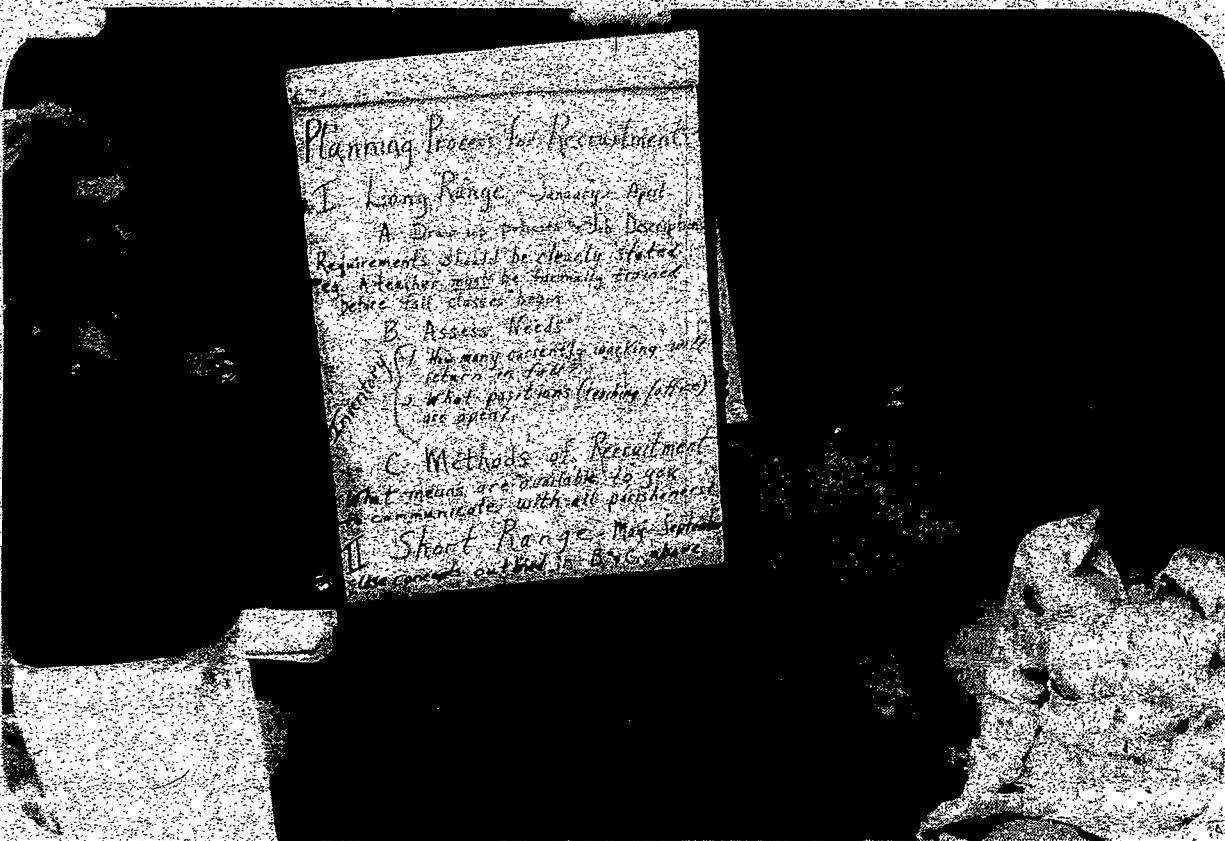


Photo by Bruce Genut

Gini Gradl [l.] and Cathy Torma, religious education coordinators at Guardian Angels, were among those offering resources to the new coordinators at the annual religious education workshop at the Cenacle.



Denise Mack, consultant for coordinators.