

Religious Education and . . .

National Catechetical Directory

By SISTER MICHAEL LAPPETITO

"The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the son, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; you will be named 'priests of Yahweh,' they will call you 'ministers of our God.'"

Isaiah 61:1-6 [abridged]

Two years ago, the diocesan Department of Education adopted these lines from Isaiah as a succinct but powerful expression of the vision that is implicitly accepted within the meaning of Religious Education. This passage resounds with a strong sense of mission as service to the kingdom.

It is the responsibility of religious educators to keep the vision of the kingdom before the eyes of all. This responsibility entails identifying the signs of the kingdom visible to us, even though they are present in limited and frail forms. Nonetheless, the kingdom and the reign of God are present in seedling form, in signs of peace, joy, justice, compassion, kindness, ultimately in Christian love. It is this vision that sustains Christian hope in the face of human failures and the oppression of sinfulness. It is the reign of God for which the Church must hope, must bear witness and must proclaim with a sense of urgency. Religious Educators must be devoted to service of the kingdom.

The primary mission and service of the kingdom enjoined upon religious educators is proclamation of the Word of God to the entire Christian community with integrity and persistence. Those who hear the Word of God, placing their faith in Jesus as Lord, are saved. Commitment to Jesus is the necessary condition for the salvation that the Father promises in Jesus Christ.

Ultimately proclamation of the Word is directed toward conversion, the transformation of the person and his or her world. Conversion is that radical change of heart which affects attitudes, perspectives and behavior patterns. Repentance, acceptance and decision for Jesus transform persons and their world. Decisions for Jesus enrich persons' understanding, guide their judgments and reinforce their value choices. Gospel

values lead persons from fear, anxiety and inauthenticity to courage, decision and authenticity.

Religious educators are called to keep the vision before the eyes of all. They provide a healing and liberating experience for those who hear the Word of God in its various forms and accept His truth. To be able to discover a Father's loving presence within the context of ordinary human experience; to be able to discern and appropriate Christian values which respect life in a society corroded by injustice; to be able to appreciate and generate genuine Christian values such as care, compassion and forgiveness in an oftentimes loveless and despairing world are actions which do add a "cubic measure" to the personal growth of the Christian and the life of the kingdom.

The vision for Religious Education, like any vision, needs form and content to give it direction. The National Catechetical Directory hopefully will be the official American Church document that will support and facilitate the implementation of this vision.

Two years ago the National Conference of Catholic Bishops accepted the mandate from Vatican II to formulate a National Catechetical Directory. The purpose of this Directory is to provide the American Church with guidelines pertinent to the teaching of Religion, especially in the areas of content, methodology and structures supportive of the process of religious formation.

A point of major significance is the accent on National Directory, Vatican II in its mandate affirmed the value of plurality in the expression of our faith and recognized the unique cultural influences within each national church. It remains for us, as responsible American Catholics, to identify what is our American religious heritage.

In 1972, the American Bishops established a process for searching out a committee of experts to write the National Catechetical Directory for the American Church. Through a detailed process, Msgr. Wilfrid H. Paradis, Ph.D., J.C.D. was appointed director of the project; Sr. Mariella Frye, M.H.S.H., Ph.D. was appointed associate director.

As soon as the national committee for writing the Directory was established, the members initiated a threefold consultation process.

The first consultation process

took place last year from January 1974 to April 1974. The goal of the first consultation was to collect as much grass roots input as possible. Literally thousands of responses were mailed into the National Office for the Catechetical Directory. The writing team sorted through the suggestions and produced the rough draft of the National Catechetical Directory.

The second consultation process is under way. This process offers each of us the opportunity to critique the rough draft. If those responsible for Religious Education are in serious disagreement with what is stated or what is not stated or, the manner in which concepts are presented, they have an obligation to represent their point of view. A serious and rational presentation of a different perspective does bear with it the possibility of influencing the finalized form of the Directory.

The Directory, presently in its rough draft, is 48 newspaper pages in length, consisting of nine chapters. For participation in the second consultation process for the diocese, the following has been decided upon:

1. There will be coverage in the Courier-Journal encouraging the entire Church of Rochester, especially parents and catechists to participate in the second consultation process.
2. That the person or persons responsible for Religious Education in each parish will receive a copy of the National Catechetical Directory with suggested models of participation from the parish.
3. That all principals of Catholic elementary and secondary schools will receive a copy with suggestions for faculty participation.
4. That copies of the National Catechetical Directory will be made available to the priests and sisters in the Diocese with an invitation encouraging them to participate in the consultation process.
5. That nine task forces will be established. Each task force will be assigned the critiquing of one chapter.

Everyone in the diocese is urged to participate and be a strong and responsible voice in the extensive educational and consultative process.

Copies of the directory may be obtained by returning the coupon printed here to the Division of Religious Education.

Church Education Series Continues

"Ways to Educate Reluctant Saints: the Mystique of Teaching" is the title of a public lecture to be given at 12:45 p.m. Tuesday, March 4, at Colgate-Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer Seminary.

The speaker will be J.C. Wynn, professor of pastoral theology at the seminary complex. His "Church Education '75" series will continue on April 4 and May 6. The sessions are all in Classroom 2-A at 12:45. There is no fee. Students pursuing the theory and practice of educational ministries assist Prof. Wynn in the course.

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(Responses and recommendations should be returned to the Office of Religious Education (address above) before April 15, 1975.)