

The National Catechetical Directory — Chapter 9

1. Religious education planning should observe the principles of person-centeredness, subsidiarity, participation, goal setting and equity.
2. A representative parish education board should enter into the religious education planning process of every parish. Circumstances dictate the specific organizational form and responsibilities of such a board.
3. The needs of the total community must be the norm by which religious education programs are established, financed, staffed and evaluated.
4. Parishes must strive to integrate all of the components of pastoral ministry with catechesis.
5. There must be coordination of effort among those responsible for adult education, schools, out-of-school programs and all other educational groups in planning to meet the total religious needs of a parish.
6. There should be communication and

- cooperation between those involved in non-parochial settings, such as campus parishes, campus ministries, Catholic colleges, military base parishes, etc., and the local bishop and diocesan religious education administration.
7. The size of a diocese, managerial or administrative style of a bishop and available resources determine the form the religious education office takes in the official structure of diocesan administration. In whatever form it takes, it must be coordinated with other major apostolates.
 8. Diocesan religious education offices provide leadership training, administrative guidance, curriculum adaptation and set standards for certification or accreditation of religion teachers.
 9. The essential mission of the Church to be missionary should be evident and permeate the catechetical apostolate at all levels in the diocese.
 10. All religious education programs must in-

- tegrate the threefold dimensions of message, community and service.
11. The special religious education program must assist persons with learning disabilities to grow in faith, supported by the love and concern of the Christian community.
 12. Religious educators must channel and direct their efforts to relate positively to press, radio and television.
 13. Religious educators should be alert to utilize effectively the communications media in communicating the Christian message on all levels.
 14. Teaching materials, particularly textbooks should be evaluated in the light of the guidelines set forth in this chapter.
 15. Research and planning are essential to religious education. Diocesan, regional and national groups must assume responsibility for developing instruments, projecting and testing models to be used on the local scene.

Chapter 9: Organization to Facilitate Religious Education

By Sister Michael Lappetito, RSM
Director of Religious Education

Organization to facilitate Religious Education is the subject of Chapter Nine in the National Catechetical Directory. Just as organizational principles, structures, goals, research and planning are indispensable to healthy Religious Education, the content of Chapter Nine is indispensable to a National Catechetical Directory. Chapter Nine of the NCD is a rich supplement to the Roman produced General Catechetical Directory which mandated the establishing of diocesan, regional and national structures, in four brief articles.

By way of an aside, Chapter Nine reflects one of the unique characteristics and contributions of the American Catholic Church — its propensity and appreciation for administrative skills. (Prior to Vatican II, a prominent consultant firm rated the Roman Catholic Church one of the most organized institutions, second only to General Motors!)

However, the American Church's organizational skills, within very recent memory, have not always been cherished as a gift. Very often the word skills is separated from the word organizational, which is a determining factor in interpreting the Church as an impenetrable institution. Too, there is the wise

In the box above is a synopsis of the ninth chapter of the proposed National Catechetical Directory as prepared by the directory staff. In recent weeks the Courier-Journal has published a critique of each of the chapters. The ninth and final chapter is analyzed by Sister Michael Lappetito, diocesan director of Religious Education. Extra copies of the directory are available from the Office of Religious Education, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Any comments, suggestions or criticism also should be sent to that office.

omen which cautions that too much emphasis on structure and organization can dim the vision and corrode values. After all, the work of the Spirit cannot be managed by objectives. On the other hand, failure to offer limited direction can also create equal havoc.

The topic of pastoral structures for Religious Education is often the subject of as much debate as the concern over the teaching of authentic Christian doctrine and the use of contemporary teaching methods for Religious Education. Contention is so easily sparked because pastoral structures do, in many instances, directly touch life and precipitate either good or unfavorable human experiences. Organizational principles become pastoral practices when they are translated into a variety of lived experiences. Lived experiences have much to do with human behavior, actions, personal beliefs and what touches and affects life. Organizational principles can be the source of creative challenges. They also can become the source of oppression and frustration.

One of the most important sections of Chapter Nine is the author's brief but well stated catalogue of organizational principles. They appear in Article 213: person-centered programs, subsidiarity, participation, goals, planning and equity. For the unreflective reader, the far-reaching pastoral implications may go unnoticed.

SUBSIDIARITY: "No larger planning unit should assume what can be accomplished by a smaller unit. Respecting local decision-making processes encourages initiative and frees larger units to concentrate on needs unable to be met locally."

A practical interpretation of this principle is an experience commonly shared by diocesan staffs, and parish staffs. Oftentimes diocesan staff will judge a parish quite capable of serving itself in a particular area. Likewise, a parish staff may judge a committee quite capable of performance without further directions. Misunderstandings result because the other "party"

had expected a difficult response. Each unit involved has generally failed to identify and communicate its own self-understanding and expectations regarding performance and services.

PARTICIPATION: "Because everyone shares in some way responsibility for building a living, conscious and active faith, everyone including laity, religious and clergy should participate in all aspects of religious education planning." (lines 039-044). This is an important principle that cannot be simply presumed. Structurally, Religious Education is a vital part of the parish ministry and needs to be well-integrated into the overall parish mission. To isolate Religious Education for the total parish mission would prevent the growth and support that results from interaction and interrelationship. On a personal level cooperation among all persons is critical for the growth and vitality of the Christian message. Implicit to cooperation are clear-shared perceptions about Religious Education, support, encouragement, trust and so many more characteristics which "let Christian community happen."

EQUITY: "Administration is

responsible for the equitable distribution of services, opportunities and resources within communities. Without central leadership, local communities that are stronger and better organized could take better advantage of existing resources to the detriment of those more in need." (Lines 073-080). The principle of equity or more specifically, the abuse of the principle of equity, most blatantly shouts out at us. The division between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has not been successfully resolved, even within the Christian community. The collapse of the inner city school system is a living witness to the failure in reconciliation and to the failure to share resources, pain and frustration. The future of regionalism rests uncomfortably in the ability to deal equitably with each other on every level.

This article has consciously focused only upon one small section of Chapter Nine. A practical and meaningful grasp of the organization principles enumerated is extremely crucial. In the last analysis the proper emphasis on these principles will make or break the future of Religious Education, parochially, on the diocesan level, regionally and nationally.

Dear Mrs. J. K.,

You might be buying yourself a whole set of problems which may never materialize. Let your son go to the priest — almost all parish priests have plenty of experience today with this kind of situation.

There are two basic points which need to be kept in mind. The first is that the Catholic Church is not in the "church rental" business, providing a convenient and/or beautiful setting for wedding ceremonies. Yet when young people who haven't darkened the door of a church for some time come to ask for the church for their weddings, I'm convinced that most of them do not see the discrepancy between their behavior and their request.

It needs to be explained to them that the Church stands firmly on the position that marriage bears an essential relationship with God Who created it and is a Sacrament, i.e. Jesus touches the relationship with his Spirit, His grace, which enables a couple to live a life of love above their human potential. It does indeed take three to get married, at least if we are honestly aiming for a mature, loving relationship which will last until death. The priest is not making a judgment of the young peoples' standing in the eyes of God, but is merely trying to remind them that marriage under the Christian ideal is, as the old ritual goes, "most sacred and most serious... and so every effort must be made by the priest and the parties involved to insure its reality and its permanence insofar as humanly possible."

Sincerely,
Mrs. J.K.

Legion of Mary Ceremony Draws 400 Members

Approximately 400 active and auxiliary members of the Legion of Mary attended a recent Acies Ceremony at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church.

Father Clarence Gardner, chaplain at Auburn Correctional Facility, told the gathering that the legion "is the finest organization I know of for bringing about a change in the attitude of the Catholic residents of the facility."


"By their background, most of the men have never known any other way of life than to live off others — consequently, they end up in prison," Father Gardner said. "The Legion of Mary presents a maximum goal, not a minimum one. It appeals to them to be men committed to Christ and his Blessed Mother; to be men of prayer, to be men who can produce... not to seek out for themselves, but to seek out to serve Christ by serving others."

Father Gardner said he had been contacted by several chaplains from other correction facilities who are interested in starting a Legion of Mary.

OPEN WIDE

Ask your dentist for a complete mouth checkup. It's one of the ways to detect oral cancer early when it is curable, according to the American Cancer Society.

THE OPEN WINDOW



Fr.
Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman,
Not too long ago you wrote in your column something to the effect that if we were really going to pursue Jesus' ideal, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder", there had to be better and better efforts made to prepare the young couple for marriage. All well and good, but how would you achieve that in a case like this:
My son has every intention of marrying this very nice girl who is twenty-two and very mature. She is not a Catholic. Several years ago (in college) my son "turned off" on the Church, but now, wonder of wonders, he is planning to be married in our parish church. I am scared to death that he will be further turned off by the pastor and that will be the last we will see of him as far as his religion is concerned. Should I help to get him ready for this meeting? If so, what should I say? Or should I just stay out of it and let him take his lumps?

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