

Pastoral Perspective

Catechetics -- Information and Formation

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

This month thousands of our people participated once again in the beginning of programs of formal Religious Education. The programs are not limited to a particular area or age, but are as universal in scope as the call to the Teaching Mission of the Church.



The familiar scene of shepherds, fishermen and scholars gathered around the Master Teacher permeates the message of the New Testament. The "classroom" was as varied as the road He traveled — once a small boat rocking in the waters; another time a grassy hillside and yet another the temple itself. Whatever the scene the message was clear — love your God; love your neighbor and this is how you do it...

The example of Jesus as teacher; the references to the ministry and call to teaching continue to be foundations for the growth of our Church today. For two thousand years the Church has strengthened and endorsed her institutions of education and has made them visible witnesses to society. The catechumenates of the early Church, the monasteries of the Middle Ages, the schools, seminaries and universities that exist to the present day have a clear and explicit role to fulfill.

The recent celebration of Catechetical Sunday reminded us that Catechesis is a special form of ministry to make faith become living, conscious and active in our lives through the light of instruction. A blending of information and formation must exist in true Religious Education. Good catechesis brings the gifts of liturgy, theology and preaching to life through conversion and commitment.

Catechesis can only become a reality through the people who are dedicated to the mission of teaching. A catechist must first possess a willingness to be not only a teacher but a witness to the faith. Doctrinal knowledge and pedagogical skills are essential, but shallow if they are not united by a strong personal commitment. Just as Jesus taught that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life a true catechist must show by example that he/she follows that Way, Truth and Life.

In order to do this, teachers realize that their education is not complete and their quest for a fuller realization of the Gospel Message in their lives needs further experiences through formal and informal educational opportunities. Programs such as those offered by our Continuing Education Department and Regional Workshops provide that blending of content and personal commitment through prayer and spiritual renewal.

The strength of our programs is dependent upon the dedication of our catechists. They may be the professional teachers/catechists in our Catholic schools; they may be the volunteer parent or grandparent assisting in the pre-school program or the specialized Religious Education teacher working with Youth Groups or Adult Education. For all of these programs their willingness, knowledge and skills are necessary, but their witness is primary!

More Opinions

Relinquish Anger?

Editor:

We would like to respond with a gentle concern in our hearts to the author of "Is Christ Weeping?" (Courier-Journal, 9/13/78). Like you, we dream of our Church being a "radical" one, that is, one in closest possible unity with Jesus, His Gospel and His Spirit.

And we dream of our pope leading us in just such a direction by living a life himself in closest possible unity with Jesus.

Just as "Rome wasn't

built in a day," it is humanly difficult for our Church, and Rome in particular, to undo centuries of renaissance-type traditions. We were pleased at the steps John Paul has taken to be a man closer to Jesus and his flock. In the meantime we hope you, as well as we, can truly adopt the Gospel lifestyle, because it is you and we who are the Church, not just the occupants of Vatican City. Are you willing to put your anger aside and be salt and light for our Church?

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'A blending of information and formation must exist in true Religious Education. Good catechesis brings the

gifts of liturgy, theology and preaching to life through conversion and commitment.'

I am grateful to all of you who have contributed to the Religious Education Programs in our diocese. I have spoken at length about the teachers who are very visible. I wish to extend my gratitude and my call to be witnesses to the "hidden" people in our programs — to the secretaries, the attendance keepers, the aides and assistants. Your role is indeed one of service and one

which enriches the effectiveness of the formal programs.

We are committed to the fact that the truth of Jesus must be taught; that the love of Jesus must be extended. We are grateful to your response and contribution to this mission!

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