

Catechetical Sunday

The Lord's Word

Submitted by
Sister Marie Clare Stoe, St. Philip Neri

To bring the Word of God to His people, the Religious Education staff of St. Philip Neri decided to launch faith-life experiences into this year's schedule in order to create personal communication between families and teachers, deepen relationships among students and neighbors, and finally maintain prayer time for the entire CCD community.

During the year, lessons will be supported by strong emphasis on scriptural texts. Families will be invited twice a year to enjoy Good News skits and songs at social gatherings. A Religion Fair is scheduled in January. Perhaps the most exciting plan for the children will be the Neighborhood Alert program. The youngsters will be encouraged to become attentive and concerned for the sick and elderly in their streets. They will share names of people who need prayers or parish assistance.

Working as a team with personal faith stories to share, it seems that this year's goals are quite outstanding yet very possible. Registration and Open House begins the 1980-81 CCD program on Sept. 24. All classes from pre-school through 8th grade will take place on Wednesday afternoons from 3:45 to 5 p.m.

Total Commitment

The Father Kelly School of Religion, Fairport, goes back 25 years to the time when Father Leonard A. Kelly was the new pastor at Assumption Parish. The school began with an enrollment of 250 students. It is now staffed by 50 trained lay teachers, three priests: Father John Norris, pastor, and his associates, Fathers Daniel Hogan and Tim Horan; and five Mission Helper sisters. It has an enrollment of 1200 students, from grades K-12. Grades 1-8 come during school hours on a released time basis from seven different public schools in the area. Grades 9-12 come in the evening.

Many of the teachers have a record of from 8-10 years service and last year five received Diocesan Master's Certification.

For the past three years there has been a Vacation Bible School, conducted entirely by parishioners — 200 of them were involved in this year's program which ministered to both children and adults. At the end of October, costumed 5th and 6th graders will present a Saints' Pageant at all the Masses on the Sunday before All Saints' Day.

High-school enrichment activities include outside speakers on a variety of topics including respect for life, sexual morality, alcohol abuse, the missionary work of the Church, sacred scripture and the liturgy, and religious vocations. Under the direction of Father Horan and council headed by Cathy and Jerry Coder, the youth engaged in charitable experiences, the monthly Youth Mass, cookie bakes for shut-ins, yard work for shut-ins and single parents, car washes, bike hikes, and service at St. Joseph House of Hospitality and nursing homes.

Teens

Submitted by Melissa Richardson

On Feb. 29 and March 1, 50 teenagers from St. Christopher's parish experienced a unique retreat: a teen Renewal and Reconciliation loosely based on the adult R&R experience.

As a junior group leader, I was really looking forward to the weekend, but as I listened to some of the comments of the other teens as they arrived, I began to wonder how much of a success the R&R would be. The moans and groans that I heard ranged from "My mother made me come!" to "I came because I was grounded!"

Off to that kind of start, I was sure the weekend would be a flop. But, as the small groups formed, I began to hear laughter and people saying, "I'm glad I came."

Each group got acquainted and discussed what to name themselves and how to introduce the group to others. Some clever names such as "Pope's Pals" and "The Heavenly Seven" were thought up, along with Biblical skits, songs, and poems to introduce them.

After the general icebreaker there was a talk on motivation by a guest speaker. There followed a group discussion about the negative and positive appeal of the Church to teens, witnessing by a young couple, and then evening prayer.

The next morning I began to see a genuine change among the group. Everyone was eager to find out what they were going to do next, which turned out to be a talk about Jesus. Afterwards, each group made a poster depicting their interpretation. A Penance Service was next on the agenda, followed by a sharing of prayer.

Highlight of the R&R experience was the closing Eucharist prepared by the young adults. They prepared the music, did the readings, and gave the homily. The homily consisted of each teen sharing a word they felt described the weekend. Hearing the words "love," "friendship," and "family," I realized that my pessimism about the turnout of the R&R had been all wrong. The moans and groans I once heard had turned into laughter, hugs and even tears — the perfect ending to a perfect teen R&R experience.



Planning group for the St. Philip Neri CCD program includes Sandra Ferraro, Sister Marie Clare, REC, Agnes Hasenauer, Brenda Chadil, Jean D'Alessandro, and Carolyn Conrow.

Adult Faith

Submitted by Sister Kathleen McCarthy, St. Anne

The religious education program at St. Anne's begins with programs to help parents prepare for the Baptism of their children and continues through adulthood. The program at St. Anne's helps children as they mature to strengthen their faith in Jesus by weekly religious instructions, experiencing various kinds of liturgies, and being part of Christian Service. Although this has been the continued pattern at St. Anne's, more and more there is developing a realization that adults need to grow in their knowledge of Jesus. Current programs are trying to provide adult opportunities for growth in faith and an understanding of the message of Jesus. The newest of these programs for adults is Scripture Study. Several bible study groups are operating within the parish.

Initially the groups dealt with the problem of various translations and inspirations as they work in the Word of God, and how the Bible came about. Starting from the New Testament, the Book John, the groups have begun to work through the words and actions of Jesus as remembered by the storytellers of the early Christian communities. As each group has studied the works of the New Testament writers they have had an opportunity to look at this standard for our Christian faith and evaluate its image to the Christian life today.

Lent

Submitted by Sister Ruth Maier, Blessed Sacrament

"Because our life of faith is related to our human growth and development, catechesis is a lifelong process. At every age, catechesis is needed to nurture and deepen our relationship with the Lord. Each of us possesses aspects of faith in varying intensity. Our openness to accept God's Word, our ability to explain and share it with others, and our ability to apply it to our life grows and develops as we grow and age."

And so to help us realize more fully the presence and power of God in His Word, the parish community of Blessed Sacrament pursued the theme of "My Word Is Life" as their Lenten focus this past Spring. To encourage the Word to take root within us and to bear fruit in our lives, we considered the Word in four main aspects — to Proclaim the Word, to Ponder the Word, to Share the Word, and to Act on the Word.

The Sunday Liturgy provided the context for Proclamation. Lectors were provided with materials to help them prepare themselves for the best possible Proclamation of God's Word. The assembly of worshippers was encouraged to likewise prepare themselves for the hearing of God's Word by prayerfully reading the Scripture passages assigned to the day before coming to celebrate the Liturgy.

Each Sunday evening of the Lenten Season the faithful were invited to an Evening Prayer session to further Ponder the Word. Different forms of prayer were used in which the Scripture readings of the morning provided the main focus of the prayer.

Parishioners were also encouraged to Share the Word in family and neighborhood discussion groups. The Bible Study and Sharing magazine, published monthly by the Paulist Office for Evangelization, was used as the basis for discussion.

Once we have received the Word, we are called to act on it. There are many ways in which we can do this, particularly through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. And many opportunities of service to Church and neighborhood were present in our area. One which we highlighted with the Lenten program was to feed the hungry. The Hunger Task Force provided a series of issues and events for our people to act on.

The Building Blocks of Faith

Catechesis is an esteemed and ancient Christian tradition. Its purpose is to make individual's faith become conscious, living and active. But how does it happen, and what are the paths to enable faith to grow? To answer this question, the diocese approached several parishes to see how they seek to be seen. Responses underscore the richness of catechetics in the Diocese of Rochester as they meet the needs of all ages for faith development.

Other opportunities for adult education center around the parents of children in the sacramental programs. Adults are given the opportunity to develop their knowledge of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation so that they can help communicate these mysteries of faith to their children. Thus as the children of our community grow, the adults become richer having increased their knowledge and having had a chance to share this gift with those they love.

Throughout the year shorter programs in adult education are offered so that adults have a chance to develop their knowledge of theology and faith. Selections are offered to correspond to the experienced needs of many parishioners.

As servants of the word, the current thrust of St. Anne's parish is to become more familiar with the Word, through a knowledge of God's revelation in the words of history, the Word made flesh and the Word of the Holy Spirit spoken in the community today.

The Religious Education Program at St. Stephen's, Geneva, covers a wide range of religious educational programming: sacramental preparation programs for baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance and marriage; instructional programs for grades K-8 in both the Catholic school and School of Religion; high school instruction and retreats; and the beginning steps toward an adult education program. These are the major aspects of religious education that St. Stephen's parish community has at present. Each of the above is in itself a significant amount of work. A lot of time and talent is necessary to insure that all runs smoothly.

The Catechists

Submitted by Elizabeth Maurer, St. Stephen's, Geneva

At St. Stephen's, the above time and talent comes from a group of dedicated volunteers — men, women, and teenagers who give of themselves in order that our Catholic faith may flourish in young and old alike. As committed Catholic Christians they realize the many needs of a good religious education program. And so they contribute their personal abilities as teachers, teacher and office aides, hall monitors, babysitters, typists, etc. They use the talents God has given them to help religious education at St. Stephen's become the best it possibly can. Coming from all walks of life, they exhibit the diversity of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, they also witness to its oneness in their conviction of the need for our faith to be shared with their brothers and sisters of all ages.

Without these special individuals religious education at St. Stephen's would not be possible, nor could it have grown in quality as much as it has in the last 10 years (I am sure the same is true in parishes all over the diocese). God has truly blessed us through these witnesses of our faith — our catechists and those people who support them behind the scenes. As God has blessed us through their talents, may He bless each of them who gives so graciously of their time and talent. Believe me, St. Stephen's parish would not be the same without them.

The Community: Serving