

### Insights in Liturgy

## The Catechumenate

By Father Robert J. Kennedy

It has always been the chief pastoral concern of the Church that her members are well-prepared to receive the sacraments with appropriate understanding, right dispositions and devotion. Two of the clearest examples of this concern are the Pre-Cana (and other forms of) Marriage Preparation and the extensive seminary training in preparation for Holy Orders. However, all the sacraments have attached to them (or should have!) a preparatory period.

The oldest of these sacramental preparation programs and the model on which they are built is the catechumenate. This is perhaps a new term in our experience but not in the full experience of the Church's tradition. The catechumenate is the period during which those preparing for baptism are formed in the faith and their intentions to live the Christian life are matured.

The catechumenate is really the second part of a two-part process that leads to initiation into the Church (baptism, confirmation and first eucharist celebrated together at the Easter Vigil). The first part is the hearing of the Good News in such a way that it touches one, moves one, to begin to see life in a new way, to experience Jesus as alive, and to desire the life that he alone can give. This conversion leads to repentance of one's past sinful life and belief that the Kingdom of God is near at hand.

But this conversion and faith are fragile; they need time to grow and deepen. Thus the Church from the beginning has sought to protect and develop the infant faith of those moved, by the Good News, they have heard. Through the catechumenate, these "hearers" had an opportunity to test their resolve, to deepen their understanding of their newfound faith and open up the dimensions of the Word they had heard, and to begin to live the life of the Gospel in practical ways. The catechumens were not simply instructed as though Christianity were an intellectual enterprise or a philosophy of life; they were formed into a whole new way of living by sharing the life of the community, for Christianity is a whole way of life. The catechumenate was a time for reflection on the Word of God, for prayer and the service of the needy. And it took time; time is required to refine a commitment as important as this, to make it solid, and to bring it to maturity.

This was recognized from the very beginning. Even in the Acts of the Apostles where baptism seems to be quickly given, the sincerity of faith is tested and instruction given. And all over the Mediterranean World in the second, third and fourth

### ME Weekend

A Marriage Encounter weekend will be held at the Americana Hotel downtown, beginning Oct. 3 at 7:30 p.m. The weekends last until early evening on Sunday. Father Robert Collins will be the clerical leader of the program. Further information on fees and registration are available by calling (716) 663-1727.

centuries, catechumenates were in evidence, showing how important the early Church felt it was to protect and foster the faith of those who sought membership with her. This, of course, was also an age of persecution when such protection and strengthening was absolutely necessary for survival.

When Constantine accepted Christianity in 313 AD and it became acceptable and even encouraged to be Christian, something happened to the catechumenate. Large numbers of people entered the Church all at once, and therefore the quality of formation and the strength of commitment waned. And after several centuries of missionary effort, "everyone" in the world is "Christian" and the only candidates for baptism were the newborn of Christian families. The catechumenate all but disappeared.

That is why it's both puzzling and welcome that the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy called for the restoration of the catechumenate of adults (64) and this was accomplished by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, published in 1972. The full impact of this remains to be seen but the RCIA and its vision of Church, ministry and faith-formation have been widely hailed and welcomed. It is set before us as the norm for initiation and perhaps all sacramental preparation in general. It sets the standards that say who we are and what we are about is of crucial importance. At the very least, this is worth the restoration — and the implications for preaching the gospel, formation in faith, and ministry in the Church, are dynamite!

## St. Mary's Hospital Sponsors Health Fair

St. Mary's Hospital is sponsoring the second annual "Health Fair '80/Partners in Health" from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 12 at the hospital's Bishop Kearney Building, 89 Genesee St.



MRS. MITCHELL Director

Kathanne Mitchell of Brighton has been named director of Nazareth College's new Center for Elder Learning. A graduate of Skidmore College, she was formerly employed in the Nazareth Alumni Office. Mrs. Mitchell is a former teacher and is active in the Brighton Town and County Committee and the Brighton Nutrition Committee. The Center for Elder Learning is a program intended to encourage participation of the over-60 population in the academic, cultural and recreational aspects of college life.

### Eucharist

Focus on the Eucharist will have an evening of prayer beginning at 7:30 p.m., tomorrow, Oct. 2 at Mother of Sorrows Church chapel, 5000 Mt. Read Blvd. Father Gerard Guli will celebrate Mass at 8:15 p.m. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will follow.

Participating with St. Mary's and various community health agencies will be the Westside Health Services and the DePaul Clinic.

Health care professionals will provide a variety of free screenings and informational programs for persons of all ages. Testing for sickle-cell disease, lead paint poisoning, vision and hearing impairment, dental problems, high blood pressure and glaucoma are only a few of the programs to be offered free at the fair.

Information also will be available on diet, heart disease, cancer, drug abuse, alcoholism, prenatal care, mental health problems, crisis hot line, poison control and natural family planning. Appointments will be made

for pregnancy testing.

The Genesee Valley Heart Association, the Cancer

Society, the Lung Association and the Red Cross will assist St. Mary's in providing tests and educational materials.

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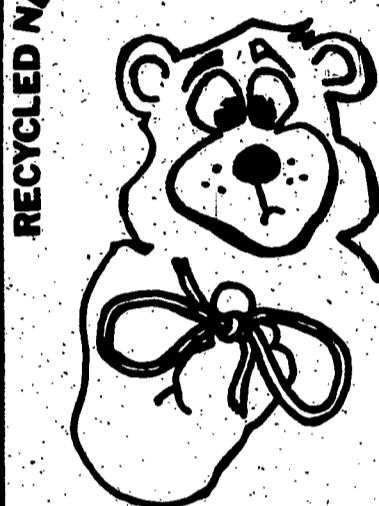
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# October Events Calendar

**ANNIVERSARY SALE**  
Thursday - Sunday, OCT. 2-5  
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**SWEET ARTS CAKE CLUB ANNUAL SHOW**  
Saturday - Sunday, OCT. 4-5

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**WIDMIR WINE CELLARS WINE TASTING**  
OCT. 2, 3, 4 — Thurs. & Fri. 1-3, 7-9  
Sat. 1-4

**COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS BY CHEF EDDIE CALLENS OF CH. 13 & TALE O' THE WHALE**  
Fri. 1-3, 7-9, Sat. 1-4

**BETTER LIVING HOME SHOW**  
Oct. 8-12

**GREECE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARTS & CRAFTS SHOW** Oct. 16-18

**4-H APPLE DESSERT CONTEST**  
Oct. 18

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