

## Adults

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will be ready in February.

In addition, these packets will be also discussed at a series of synod sessions scheduled across the diocese between Aug. 23 and Oct. 11.

Each packet will contain an essay on the topic written by an individual with expertise in the field. Essays will be accompanied by analytical questions and informational boxes, all printed on four-page fliers. Parishes may reproduce the pages, have them printed or they may order extra copies from the diocese. The four-page documents can then be distributed to parishioners as bulletin inserts, at church or at parish meetings.

"The idea was to get a packet where there was something (parishes) could put in a bulletin to get them out to everyone in the diocese," Dealy said.

In addition, each parish will receive a facilitator's guide and tips about how to use the materials, Rinefiend said.

Parishes will also be furnished with lists of possible speakers who can address the topics as well as books and nearby retreat and education centers.

The information in the packets can be used in traditional adult-education sessions, for

short discussions as part of regular parish meetings and groups, or even in informal settings with just a few other people, Rinefiend suggested.

"People do a lot of unofficial faith formation as adults," she noted.

And because of their life experiences, adults are able to bring to the issues insights they can share with others through such discussions, Rinefiend said.

"A lot of people are not going to turn out to a meeting or a group, but this is something people can use in their homes on their own," Sister Smith said of the packets. "I think we need to reach people where they are."

Issues in the packets can be discussed by family members at meals, spouses as they drive in the car, or even friends over lunch, Sister Smith suggested.

The packets, Rinefiend continued, take into account this "unofficial" faith-formation process. Classroom methods are not necessarily always best for adults because they learn in different ways and for different reasons than do children.

"Adults come to something when they feel a need for it," Rinefiend said. "You can't tell an adult, 'You have to come to this.' They need to get something out of it."

Beyond the problems of time pressures that many adults face,

another problem is overcoming a misconception about faith formation, Rinefiend said. Many Catholics believe that their religious formation ended when they finished with sacramental preparation or with childhood religious-education classes.

"We have a sense that we've learned the content of our faith," Rinefiend said. "But in contrast, we don't do that with any other part of our lives. We keep updating our jobs skills, for example."

"Faith formation is lifelong," Rinefiend continued. "I don't know everything there is to know about Christian doctrines just because I know the story about how Jesus was born."

As for future initiatives, Rinefiend said the committee and the diocese will wait to gauge responses to the six packets. Moreover, because of the magnitude of the topics in the first six packets, parishes may take more than a year to effectively deal with the material.

"One of the things we will include in the facilitator's guide will be an evaluation form," Rinefiend said. That form will include such questions as, "Is this useful?" "Did you get a chance to use all six?" and "Do we wait a year before creating more packets?"

"Once you do something like this," Rinefiend said, "people start to make suggestions."

## Wisconsin governor signs law allowing school choice for poor

MADISON, Wis. (CNS) — Wisconsin Gov. Tommy G. Thompson has signed the nation's first law allowing poor parents the right to use public funds to choose religious schools for their children.

The religious school choice legislation, signed into law July 26 in Madison, applies only to the city of Milwaukee and will accommodate 7,000 students in the 1995-96 school year. The number will increase to 15,000 in the 1996-97 school year and thereafter.

"Religious values aren't our problem. Dropout rates and low test scores are," Thompson said at the signing ceremony. "School choice is a belief that parents know best when it comes to their children, not bureaucrats."

The director of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference hailed the Legislature's move to include religious schools in the choice plan when it was approved June 29. John Huebscher said the new program was "both a victory for families and a vital step in making government programs more responsive to changing needs."

Thompson noted at the signing that nearly 33 percent of Milwaukee Public Schools teachers send their children to private schools, according to a recent study.

"If private schools are good enough for the children of Milwaukee Public Schools teachers, then they are good enough for the poor families of Milwaukee as well," the governor said. "All parents deserve a choice. All parents deserve the opportunity

to give their children the best education available."

The new program will cost about \$17 million the first year and \$39 million the second year. The money will come from a reduction in state aid to Milwaukee Public Schools in proportion to the number of students who participate in the choice program.


To be eligible, students must come from a family whose income is at or below 175 percent of the poverty level — about \$26,000 for a family of four.

Wisconsin has had a private,

nonsectarian school choice program, operating only in Milwaukee, since 1990.

"We are fully empowering poor parents in Milwaukee by affording them the same educational choices for their children as other parents," Thompson said. "If a poor inner-city mother wants to send her child to the private school across the street, rather than busing her child across town to a public school she is dissatisfied with, she should have that opportunity regardless of income."

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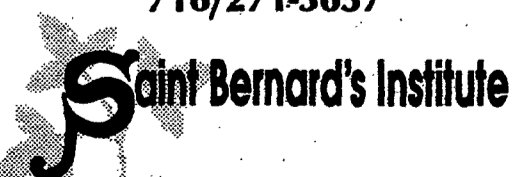
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