

Catechumenate—Creating a People of the Garden

Jim Schellman, Executive Director



Jim Schellman

In July 2010 approximately 400 practitioners and scholars of the Catechumenate from throughout the world gathered at the Institut Catholique in Paris for the first International Conference on the Catechumenate in 16 years. The last was held in Lyons, France, in 1984. The organizing topic for this gathering concerned the great principle of the General Directory for Catechesis that the Catechumenate is the inspiration or model for all catechesis. The conference consisted of a handful of major presentations, reports on catechumenal and related practices in various countries and dioceses, and dialogue sessions on a variety of topics related to present and future practice. Jim Schellman was invited to give one of the three brief concluding “interventions.” His remarks follow.

It is a great privilege to be part of this International Conference on the Catechumenate. I am humbled to share this podium today with Michel Dujarier, who through his writings was one of my earliest mentors in the vision and practice of the Catechumenate. I owe a similar debt of gratitude to two others of blessed memory long associated with the Institut Catholique: Pierre-Marie Gy, OP, and Henri Bourgeois.

The Garden

Chers amis en Christ, we are the keepers and preachers of a memory. This is the sacred memory of that first garden of our Scriptures, the beginning of our great story in God. In this garden of original grace, we walked in easy, intimate communion with our Creator, with one another, and with all that God made. Annually, we recall this story and how we lost this grace of right relationship with all we hold dear—how we thought we could do better than God. The legacy of this God-given freedom is all around us: the reality of torn and broken relationships, the constant outbreak of violence, our struggles with genuine intimacy, and a natural world that we turn on and despoil, a world which also at times turns violence on us through

The Mission of The North American Forum on the Catechumenate is the full implementation in all parishes of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and its implications for reconciliation.

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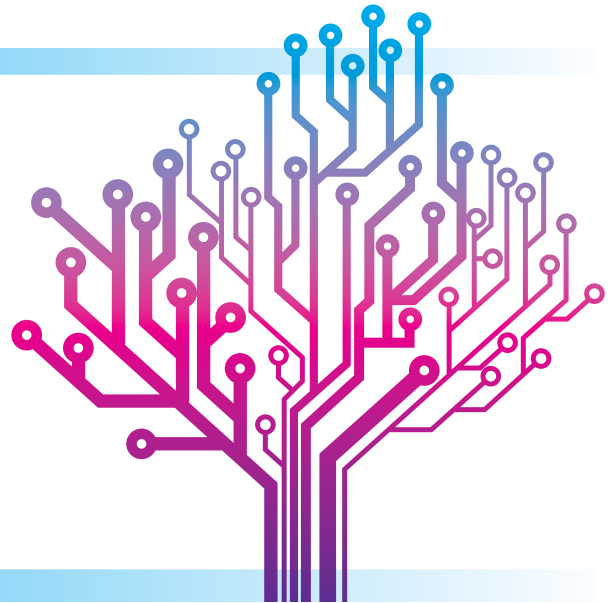
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Mystagogy and the New Texts for Mass

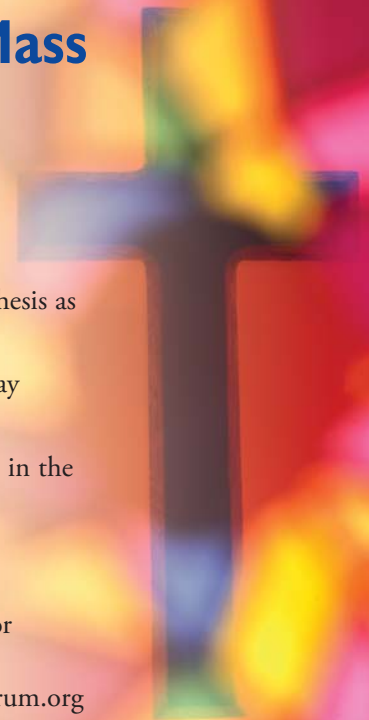
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For further information please be in touch right away with: **Jim Schellman**
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The North American Forum on the Catechumenate

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Mission The North American Forum on the Catechumenate (Forum) is an international network of pastoral ministers, liturgists, catechists, and theologians united to share the vision and practice of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Mission Statement The mission of The North American Forum on the Catechumenate is the full implementation in all parishes of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and its implications for reconciliation.

Theological Foundation The Mission of Forum is grounded in a theology based on the experience of

- ◆ God's gracious initiative
- ◆ the paschal mystery of death and resurrection in Jesus Christ
- ◆ the prophetic power of word and sacrament
- ◆ the shared life and wisdom of the people of God, graced and sinful
- ◆ listening to the voice of the poor and oppressed
- ◆ conversion to the freedom of disciples
- ◆ working for justice and peace for the world

Formational Principles To remain faithful to the vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, Forum adheres to these principles:

- ◆ Initiation begins with evangelization leading to conversion.
- ◆ Catechesis, community, liturgy, and mission are formative.
- ◆ All cultural gifts are honored and celebrated.
- ◆ The methods of theological reflection are pastoral.

- ◆ The processes of adult learning are normative.

Organizational Traits Forum's operations, behaviors, attitudes, and actions exhibit these traits:

- ◆ Excellence: The highest level of competence, creativity, and professionalism are strived for at all times.
- ◆ Stewardship: Human, material, environmental, and financial resources are administered with responsibility and accountability.
- ◆ Respect: The precepts that all life is sacred, that each human being is unique, and that all deserve to be treated with dignity are affirmed in speech and action.
- ◆ Collaboration: Cooperation, consultation, communication, and networking are normative for all Forum projects.
- ◆ Inclusivity: Forum relies on the diversity of gifts among its members and proactively seeks a full range of diversity in all areas of its ministry.
- ◆ Integrity: Honesty, justice, and ethical behavior are hallmarks of Forum's work.

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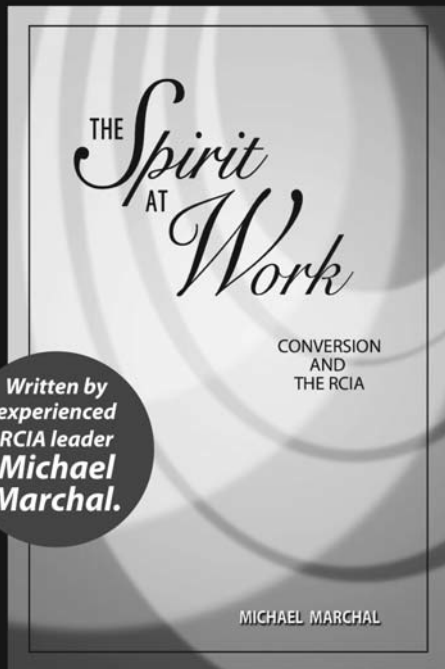
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Continued from page 1

tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes, and more, ripping us from this life and those who love us.

This legacy is not of God. It is inimical to God's plan, a plan for the end of all destructiveness and tears, the restoration of that garden of intimate, harmonious relationships. We get the story wrong every day of our lives, and when honest we know this. Deep in every human heart is a longing for something better than the world we have helped to make, for that garden place for which we were created. We hunger like this because we are made in the image and likeness of a God who first longed for us, dreamed us into existence, and will not rest until God's infinite compassion saves us from our self-inflicted exile.

A People of the Garden

God's compassion is Christ. In our Lord's own flesh and blood, dead and risen, God has entered the deepest fractures of this beloved, broken place. In this new Adam God is bringing to birth that new garden in our very time and place. The Body of Christ, the living community of faith, is the midwife of this great and sometimes painful labour of love.

This is God's great work, the work of evangelization. It is an en-gospelizing of all relationships and all creation with God's great story redeemed in Christ. Our way of evangelization was forged by our ancestors in faith in the process of the Catechumenate. The Catechumenate was their labour of learning how to make a people of the Garden in the midst of the religiously complex societies they inhabited. The whole story awaits the success of this continuing giving birth in our time and place: "With longing and groaning, all creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the children of God" (Romans 8: 19-20).

"Deep in every human heart is a longing for something better than the world we have helped to make, for that garden place for which we were created. We hunger like this because we are made in the image and likeness of a God who first longed for us, dreamed us into existence, and will not rest until God's infinite compassion saves us from our self-inflicted exile."

"In other words, not only do the catechumens need the community to accompany them, but the community needs the catechumens in order continually to feel the bracing, authentic call to ongoing conversion of life and discipleship. Post-baptismal catechesis is thus inspired to aim always for conversion of heart and life, for life in community that fosters living discipleship in Jesus Christ."

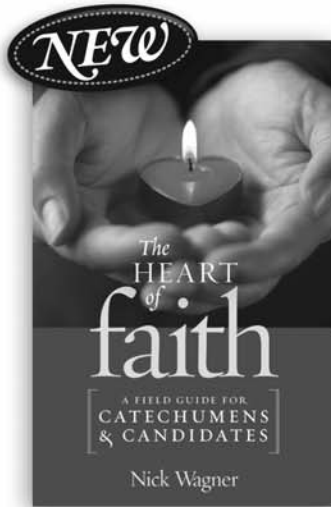
A People on the Way: Before and after Initiation

For nearly 40 years now, the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adulorum* has invited us in both its vision and practice to experience ourselves once again as a converting people. Through trial and error our beloved ancestors in faith discovered that this required an ongoing relationship between two types of community members: those undergoing initial conversion to Jesus Christ and those who, having undergone that initial conversion and been initiated into Christ, are now busy learning the tricky and lifelong talent of "walking wet," as Martin Luther so well expressed it.

We are still only beginning to learn how much those undergoing initial conversion and those on the path of post-initiatory lifelong conversion need one another. This is more than hinted at in the insight of the *General Directory for Catechesis* that the baptismal catechumenate is the inspiration or model for all catechesis. In other words, not only do the catechumens need the community to accompany them, but the community needs the catechumens in order continually to feel the bracing, authentic call to ongoing conversion of life and discipleship. Post-baptismal catechesis is thus inspired to aim

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Essential resources for every step of the RCIA process

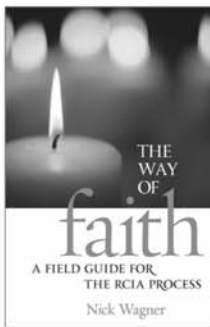


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NICK WAGNER

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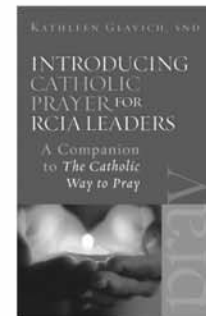
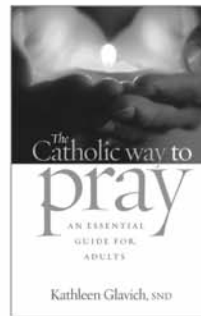
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The Way of Faith

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Continued from page 6

always for conversion of heart and life, for life in community that fosters living discipleship in Jesus Christ. Thus the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, in its introductory paragraphs, wisely insists that “the initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place WITHIN the community of the faithful” (*RCIA* para. 5, emphasis added). The Church community of parish and diocese does not have to be perfect to do this. Those of us who are parents know that parenting is on-the-job training. We get better by doing, and the doing changes us, enlarges our hearts and our talents. So too for our communities of faith—our catechumens, in their hunger for Christ among us, will help us learn the way!

A Community of Disciples

Through the Catechumenate the community of the baptized is learning once again that all formation aims for intimate relationship and communion with Jesus Christ. And this is for the sake of Christ’s mission to bring this broken world back to God. Neophytes have come through the waters and anointing in the Spirit to be fed at the table of the Lord for Christ’s “Garden-creating” work in our families, neighbourhoods, and society as a whole. This work of discipleship does not await the end of the formation of new Christians. It is a constitutive part of their catechumenal apprenticeship (see *RCIA* para. 75: 2 & 4). So too for post-baptismal formation—it must model at all times, and not simply toward the end of some prescribed program, a living discipleship that serves the Church’s outreach in fostering charity, justice, and peace. All formation is about a way of life, of kingdom-building, of being the Body of Christ broken and poured out for the world and for its salvation. “God so loved the world that...!”

A Community Immersed in Word

The indispensable source of all catechesis in Christian formation, before and after initiation, is the Word of God. For us as Catholics, this Word is never simply the Scriptures as such. For us, this Word means both Scripture and the living tradition of our community of faith. It is the revealed Scriptures in dialogue over time with a living, breathing, struggling-to-be-faithful Christian people.

This Catholic understanding of the Word leads us to the liturgical word, the Lectionary for Mass, as a privileged means of pre-baptismal and post-baptismal catechesis. This is how the Lectionary emerged—a result of the labour of our ancestors in faith as they learned how to make new Christians and to offer lifelong Christians nurture and challenge for faithful living. In the liturgical proclamation of the Scriptures on the Lord’s Day, the God who longs for a covenant people comes among that assembled people yet again to elicit their own deepest longings for that garden kingdom. This is a real presence and a decisive dialogue between God and us that calls us to kingdom tasks in the week now beginning.

A Community Assembled

We who serve the pastoral ministries of the Church know all too well its weaknesses, in some places its real woundedness. In the United States and Canada, the sexual abuse crisis has taught us anew to rely upon the Church assembled for Sunday liturgy as a place of hope and even sometimes healing. Through the Catechumenate perhaps we are beginning to relearn the depth our deep belief about Christ’s real and dynamic presence in the liturgy. Inquirers knock on our doors still, their numbers undiminished even since this crisis came upon us. If we do nothing more than form our catechumens to hunger for Christ really among us at Eucharist, to bring their real lives, hurts, and terrors into that people gathered, to reflect catechetically on and live out the full implications of that experience faithfully in the week that follows, have we not put them in touch with the deepest source of ongoing formation for the rest of their lives?

Would this not be a great task to set ourselves for the formation of all our people? Our often modest Sunday celebrations can renew in us a willingness to find there hope and healing and ongoing food for catechesis and discipleship. This is the ancient wisdom of our ancestors in faith, the practice of liturgical catechesis renewed among us now with the ingredients of our real lives in touch with our longing Lord coming once again among the People of the Garden.

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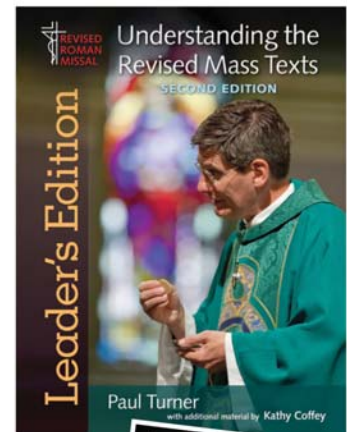
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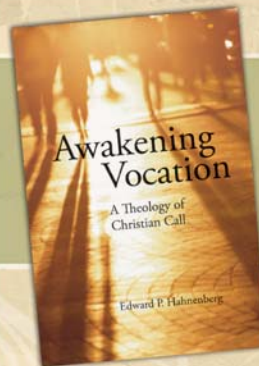
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RESOURCE REVIEW

Forward in Hope: Saying AMEN to Lay Ecclesial Ministry



Rita Ferrone

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

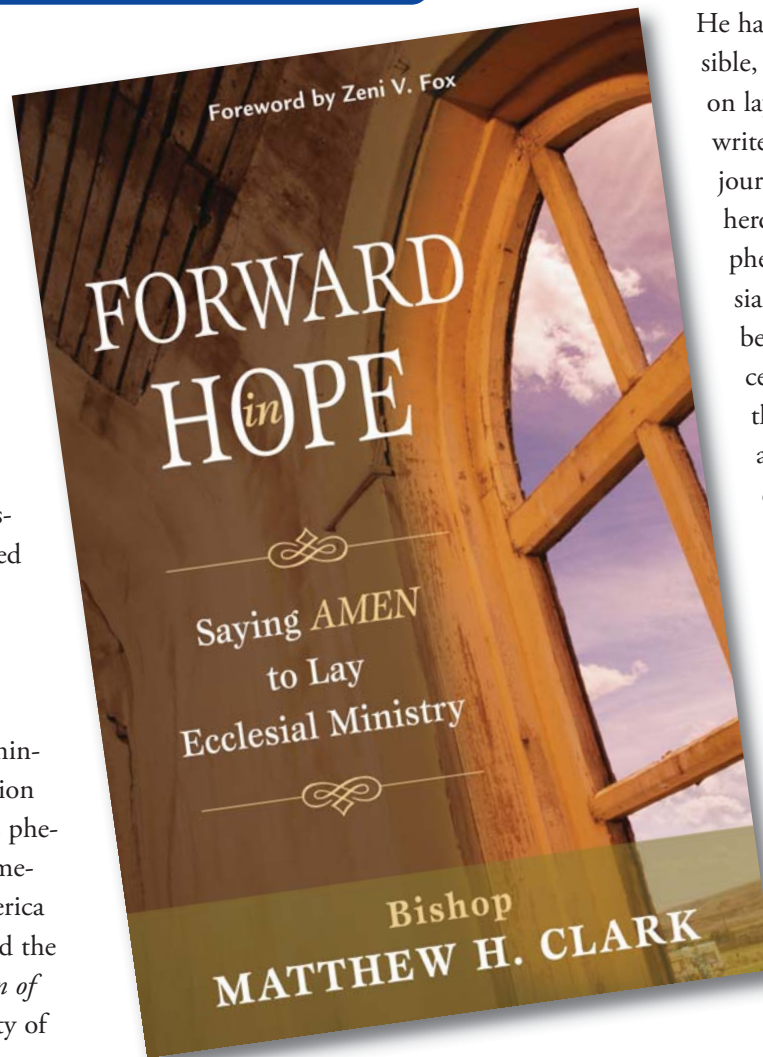
Published by Ave Maria Press,
\$11.95 (U.S.), 114 pages

Reviewed by Rita Ferrone

Everyone in the Catholic Church today can benefit from learning something about the burgeoning field of lay ministry. More than 30,000 lay ecclesial ministers are currently employed in the United States, as pastoral ministers, parish life coordinators, and in many other crucial roles. Those who serve in the ministries of Christian initiation will readily recognize this phenomenon. Most catechuminate teams in North America are led by lay persons, and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* encourages a variety of ministries. Lay ministry is now

part of the Church into which we initiate new members; we need to understand it in order to help our communities appreciate what it is, and why it is valuable.

Enter Matthew Clark, Bishop of Rochester in New York. He has written a clear, accessible, interesting little book on lay ecclesial ministry. He writes not as a sociologist or journalist, but as a shepherd who has seen the phenomenon of lay ecclesial ministry mature and bear fruit in his own diocese over the course of thirty years. His personal gifts, as a spiritual director and a good listener, shine through in his manner of presenting his subject. He includes not only his own thoughts, but also the witnesses of five lay ministers from his diocese. They speak simply but eloquently of their experiences, naming the challenges and describing the



RESOURCE REVIEW

joy they find in their calling. I found that the chapters written by them were highlights of the book, framed by Bishop Clark's excellent summaries of the issues involved in this striking development.

Is lay ministry a stop-gap measure, something to fill the gaps created by the priest shortage? Are lay ministers creating a "new clericalism" within the Church? Does lay ministry undermine the priesthood and take the laity away from their proper role directed toward service in the world? These are some of the questions to which Bishop Clark's book gives a considered and circumspect "No" while saying "AMEN" to lay ecclesial ministry as a genuine work of the Spirit. Bishop Clark's affirming vision is solidly supported by papal teaching and Church documents, especially *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, a document produced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2005 to guide the development of lay ministry.

Bishop Clark sees lay ministry as a decidedly positive development, which, along with the other aspects of renewal

flowing from the Second Vatican Council, is returning the Church to her roots. The Church is a community of many gifts and callings, all working together for the reign of God. Indeed, one of the most helpful sections of the book is his brief sketch of the history of ministry. He explains that the system by which priests assumed all ministerial functions was a late development more reflective of the political systems of the time than of the Gospel or apostolic tradition.

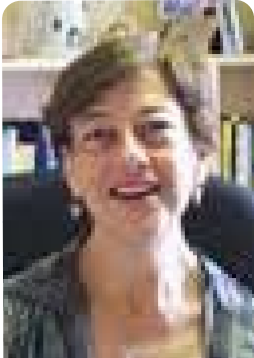
Lay ecclesial ministry is a growing phenomenon sure to capture increasing attention in the years ahead. Bishop Clark has done us a service in presenting this timely subject in such a caring and judicious manner. *Forward in Hope* is a must-read for anyone, lay or ordained, who cares about the future of ministry.

"Is lay ministry a stop-gap measure, something to fill the gaps created by the priest shortage? Are lay ministers creating a "new clericalism" within the Church? Does lay ministry undermine the priesthood and take the laity away from their proper role directed toward service in the world?"

Rita Ferrone is a liturgist and Forum Team member who has worked with the catechumenate for more than 20 years. Rita is the author of On the Rite of Election (Liturgy Training Publications), and co-author of the Foundations in Faith series (RCL Benzinger). Her latest book, Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium, in the Paulist series, Rediscovering Vatican II, won a Catholic Press Association award in 2008. Rita is a frequent presenter at workshops throughout the U.S. She lives in Mount Vernon, New York.

RESOURCE REVIEW

Introducing Catholic Prayer for RCIA Leaders: A Companion to the Catholic Way to Pray



Anne Walsh

By Kathleen Glavich, SND
Published by Twenty-Third
Publications, \$19.95 (U.S.),
216 pages

Reviewed by Anne Walsh

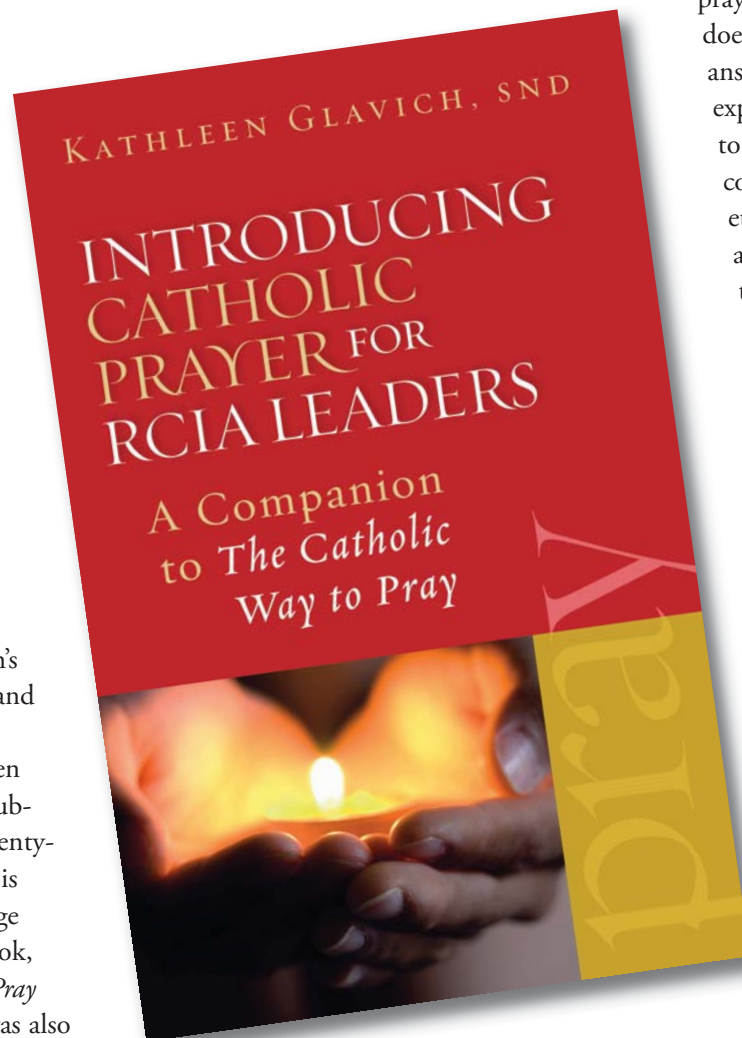
“Lex orandi, lex credendi... What we pray is what we believe.” *Introducing Catholic Prayer for RCIA Leaders* will be an invaluable resource for RCIA leaders as they walk with inquirers, catechumens, neophytes, and candidates in plumbing the Church’s storehouse of prayer and belief. This book was written by Sr. Kathleen Glavich, SND and published in 2009 by Twenty-third Publications. It is intended as a 216-page companion to her book, *The Catholic Way to Pray* (112 pages), which was also

published by Twenty-third in 2009. Sr. Kathleen is a Sister of Notre Dame of Cleveland, Ohio, a well-known and well-respected speaker and retreat director, and the author of more than fifty books related to spirituality and religious education. At present, she ministers as a pastoral associate.

The Catholic Way to Pray addresses the questions that many inquirers, catechumens, neophytes, and

candidates have around prayer: What is prayer? How does God speak? Does God answer prayer? Chapters explore topics such as how to create an environment conducive to prayer, varieties and forms of prayer, and finding the best time to pray. It addresses the real and often ignored issue of challenges and road-blocks to prayer. The earlier chapters, and their corresponding chapters in *Introducing Catholic Prayer for RCIA Leaders*, might be of particular benefit to those who minister with folks in the inquiry stage of the journey.

Throughout the chapters, the author lays before us a smorgasbord of prayer forms, including pray-



RESOURCE REVIEW

ing with Scripture, the Eucharist, the Divine Office, Lectio Divina, meditation, praying with art, praying memories and more. She includes user-friendly introductions to Catholic devotions and prayers such as the Rosary and other Marian devotions, the Stations of the Cross, eucharistic devotions, and more.

The companion volume, *Introducing Catholic Prayer for RCIA Leaders*, takes the questions and prayers explored in the first book, expands on these and offers helpful and practical tools for facilitators, assisting and empowering us to lay before inquirers and catechumens our and varied rich heritage of prayer.

In this volume and in its companion some of the most helpful features are the grey-shaded boxes that periodically dot the landscape of both books. In *Introducing Catholic Prayer for RCIA Leaders*, these boxes offer, for example, stories, tips, questions that may arise in the minds and hearts of participants related to the topic at hand, and glossaries. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for activities related to the focal point of the chapter. These are a “gold mine” for leaders and sponsors. These grey-shaded boxes contribute to the friendly and inviting feel of the books, and provide easy points of re-entry when a facilitator wishes to return to a particular point.

A small and perennial concern is the use of the word “program,” used throughout the text to refer to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Related to this is the suggestion, raised early in the work, of inviting in various “presenters” to speak on prayer and lead inquirers, catechumens and candidates through their exploration of the various prayer forms. In my view, this resource is much more appropriately used in a more “organic” manner, not as a “teaching tool” for sessions on “how to pray,” but rather used to assist RCIA team and individual sponsors in weaving prayer throughout the entire RCIA process, and gradually exposing participants to the rich storehouse of treasures, old and new, that is our heritage as Christians and as Catholics. It is my sense that these companion resources will prove to be invaluable elements of the resource library of many RCIA team members and others. They are simple, comprehensive, and accessible.

“Each chapter concludes with suggestions for activities related to the focal point of the chapter. These are a “gold mine” for leaders and sponsors. These grey-shaded boxes contribute to the friendly and inviting feel of the books, and provide easy points of re-entry when a facilitator wishes to return to a particular point.”

Anne Walsh is director of Adult Faith Formation for the Archdiocese of St. John's, Newfoundland and is associated with the Redemptorist community as a lay missionary. A Forum Team member, she holds advanced degrees in Religious Education and Music Education and has been involved in Christian initiation as a parish catechist and diocesan resource person since 1985. Anne has pastoral ministry experience in various settings, including youth and campus ministry, and has facilitated courses, workshops, and retreats in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

The North American Forum on the Catechumenate's Pastoral Training Institutes provide ministers—volunteer and paid, full and part-time, lay and clergy - with deeper understanding of the vision of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* and the fundamental and advanced skills to implement all aspects of the Rite and its implications for reconciliation. Institute leaders are among North America's most experienced pastoral ministers, liturgists, catechists, and theologians.

2010-2011 CALENDAR

■ THE INITIATION EXPERIENCE INSTITUTES

present the compelling vision and pastoral skills to implement the initiation process and emphasize the relationship of good liturgy to good catechesis.

BEGINNINGS & BEYOND INSTITUTE

BEGINNINGS "PLUS" INSTITUTE

June 8-11, 2011, Diocese of Dallas (TX) – Spanish

June 8-11, 2011, Diocese of Dallas (TX) – English

June 22-25, 2011, Diocese of Saginaw (MI) – with focus on adults & children

July 28-31, 2011, Diocese of St. Augustine (FL) – with focus on adults & children

August 4-7, 2011, Diocese of San Bernardino (CA) – bilingual

BEGINNINGS INSTITUTE

October 15-17, 2010, Archdiocese of New Orleans (LA)

November 4-6, 2010, Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis (MN)

June 3-5, 2011, Archdiocese of Santa Fe (NM) – Spanish

■ INITIATION IN RURAL AND SMALL PARISHES (Diocesan Events)

■ THE FOCUS ON INITIATION INSTITUTES

concentrate on specific aspects of initiation using presentations, celebrations of the rites, and small group discussions. It is preferable that they follow the Initiation Experience Institutes.

CATECHUMENATE

PURIFICATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

October 29-30, 2010, Diocese of Rockville Centre (NY)

MYSTAGOGY

CHILDREN AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION

November 5-6, 2010, Archdiocese of Cincinnati (OH)

March 29-30, 2011, Diocese of Trenton (NJ)

CONCERNING THE BAPTIZED

October 15-16, 2010, Diocese of Charlotte (NC)

August 22-23, 2011, Diocese of Albany (NY)

■ THE INITIATING COMMUNITY INSTITUTES

explore advanced issues of implementation for experienced ministers as they broaden the initiation experience to include the entire community. Small groups discuss, share, and critique models.

DEVELOPING THE MINISTRIES

FURTHERING THE INITIATION EXPERIENCE

PRAYING THE RITES

ECHOING GOD'S WORD

IMAGING THE INITIATION PROCESS IN SMALL CHURCH COMMUNITIES

■ AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST: BUILDING RECONCILING COMMUNITIES

explores the ministry of reconciliation ✦ invites participants to reflect on the vision and process of conversion and reconciliation ✦ explores an understanding of a reconciling community rooted in initiation ✦ examines present processes and future possibilities for reconciling ministry in the parish

■ THE VISION OF INITIATION MINISTRY CONFERENCES (Diocesan Events)

introduce the vision and practice of initiation in a two-day format for individual dioceses, formation institutions, and religious communities. For clergy and other pastoral ministers, together or in separate conferences.

October 2-3, 2010, Diocese of Metuchen (NJ) – Spanish

August 12-13, 2011, Diocese of Fresno (CA) – Bilingual

October 17-18, 2011, Diocese of Yakima (WA)

■ THE EVANGELIZING PARISH: VISION, PASSION, PRACTICE

develops the vision and practice of evangelization and how this creates parishes of mission

Evangelizing Parish Institutes

October 22-23, 2010, Diocese of Manchester (NH)

November 12-13, 2010, Diocese of Memphis (TN)

December 3-4, 2010, (bilingual) Diocese of Palm Beach (FL)

September 16-17 & 23-24, 2011 Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau (MO)

September 30-October 1, 2011, Diocese of Prince Albert (Saskatchewan)

November 4-5, 2011, Archdiocese of Mobile (AL)

Evangelizing Parish Conferences

March 4-5, 2011, Lake Geauga District, Diocese of Cleveland (OH)

August 12-13, 2011, Diocese of Fresno (CA) – bilingual

■ WEBINARS

February 15, 2011, 2pm EDT, *RCIA with Children & Implications for All Sacramental Initiation with Children*

■ TO BE DETERMINED

Archdiocese of Atlanta (GA)

Diocese of Baton Rouge (LA)

Diocese of Calgary (AB)

Diocese of Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island)

Archdiocese of Denver (CO)

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (TX)

Diocese of Rockville Centre (NY)

Archdiocese of St. John's (Newfoundland)

Archdiocese of St. Louis (MO) – in house institute

Archdiocese of San Francisco (CA)

Diocese of Tucson (AZ)

Diocese of Venice (FL) – in house institute

Archdiocese of Washington (DC)



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Check our website www.naforum.org for the latest calendar and resource updates