



Catechesis Supplement

Evangelizing catechesis: Inviting people to a disciple relationship with Jesus in the Church

By Ken Ogorek

First it was consubstantial. Then came missionary disciples. Now the Church wants us to become familiar with another phrase: “evangelizing catechesis.”



Official definitions, practical examples

A semi-official definition of this phrase, as it's currently used, can be found via the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops webpage:

“At the heart of the Church's mission to all

people, an evangelizing catechesis seeks to deepen a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It proclaims the core message of the Gospel, the *kerygma*. It accompanies people to a response of faith and conversion to Christ; it provides a systematic exposition of God's revelation within the communion of the Catholic Church; and it sends out missionary disciples as witnesses to the good news of salvation.”

I like to use an example when explaining it: Jesus taught. And when he teaches, he often includes an invitation. “Follow me.” “Be my disciple.”

Evangelizing catechesis, then, teaches the faith in ways that intentionally include invitations to a personal, disciple relationship with Jesus—lived in full communion with his mystical body and spotless bride, the holy Catholic Church.

Lifelong learning, new vocabulary

I've heard folks say they prefer the phrases “religious education” or “faith formation” to the word “catechesis.” And while it's generally good to avoid jargon that can be at least a bit off-putting, it's also OK to use (or revive) a new word or phrase occasionally.

We're lifelong learners. And if a phrase catches our attention because it's a bit unfamiliar, this can be an invitation to explore the meaning and intention behind this specific vocabulary.

What exactly is a missionary disciple? Why is it important to profess that Jesus is of the same substance—consubstantial—as our heavenly Father?

How we support parish ministry

As for evangelizing catechesis, one place you might notice this phrase is in connection to how our archdiocesan offices support ministry in parishes. I often say, “The reason people like me have jobs is to help support parish ministries.”

Several offices supporting ministries in various ways are now enfolded within what's called the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. This small group of archdiocesan staff members stands ready to serve as a resource for your parish—working with parish leaders to help serve God's people faithfully and effectively, all by his grace and mercy.

As you enjoy this annual Catechesis Supplement of *The Criterion*, I hope you'll see that efforts—throughout the archdiocese—to teach the faith are bearing good fruit thanks to the work of dedicated catechists who place themselves in God's service, striving to do his will by answering the call to catechetical ministry. In central and southern Indiana, an evangelizing catechesis is alive, well and growing—praise God!

Yes, evangelization is still important. So is catechesis. They're both very much interrelated in the ministry of missionary discipleship. You might even say they're ... consubstantial.

(Ken Ogorek is executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. He can be reached at kogorek@archindy.org.) †

From water fights to rosary lessons, children and teens grow in faith through cooperation of parishes

By John Shaughnessy

A childlike joy fills 34-year-old Megan Rust as she describes a fun-filled scene from earlier this summer.

When a water truck from a local fire station approached the hill by St. Mark Church in Perry County in southern Indiana, a group of children waiting for it couldn't hide their excitement. And when the firefighters unleashed the water onto a slip-and-slide, the children took turns giddily heading down the hill with huge smiles.

The fun was just beginning. A water balloon fight followed, with Rust joining in, getting blasted time and time again by the children, leaving her soaked and smiling.

Rust had a similar smile earlier on that late June morning as she watched the same children enter into the church for the closing Mass of the Tell City Deanery's Totus Tuus program.

Latin for “Totally Yours,” Totus Tuus is a weeklong summer program designed to bring children and teenagers closer to Jesus, the Blessed Mother and the Church. And Rust saw that development by the reverence the children showed during the closing Mass.

“Their participation went from not a whole lot on Monday to really being involved and much more reverent by Friday,” says Rust, the catechetical leader of St. Paul Parish in Tell City.



The children who participated in the Totus Tuus summer program in the Tell City Deanery line up for a group photo on the last day of the program, which included the fun of a water balloon fight and a slip-and-slide. (Submitted photo)

“It was a joy to watch those kindergartners to sixth graders really come to appreciate the Mass more.”

Another joy for Rust was knowing that there were 80 children and teens who participated in this year's program, a record number that reflects the increased cooperation among the 10 faith communities in the Tell City Deanery to combine their resources to help grow and deepen the faith of their youths.

“Something that we do for Totus Tuus and something that is supported across the deanery is that we don't charge for it,” Rust says.

“We provide a free meal to every student and adult who comes in for the program. And we couldn't do that without the support of the community.”

“Not only are we doing this with great numbers, but we also have such tremendous support from all of the parishes. When we're able to pool those resources from all of the different parishes, the kids win.”

That deanery-wide support is also complemented by the contributions of the Tell City Knights of Columbus Council #1172. Rust also says that individual Catholics in the

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Catechetical leader points people to Christ and the Church through storytelling

By Sean Gallagher

The Christian faith that began 2,000 years ago in Palestine and has spread to the ends of the Earth is rooted in a story—the story of God's love for humanity told in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sandra Hartlieb has been convinced for some 50 years that the Holy Spirit has empowered her to draw others to Christ and his Church by sharing that story.

Beginning in the early 1970s as a young wife and mother in Indianapolis, she began working with other people to dramatically act out Bible stories—a ministry she continues today.

For the last 10 of those years, Hartlieb served as the director of adult faith formation at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, incorporating her interest in Scripture and drama into her ministry there.

Hartlieb was recently honored with the archdiocese's 2023 Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein



In 10 years of ministry as director of adult faith formation at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, Sandra Hartlieb often brought the Gospel to life through storytelling. (Submitted photo)

Excellence in Catechesis Award for her years of catechetical ministry at St. Lawrence.

Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis, presented her with the award at a June 24 Mass at St. Lawrence Church. The Mass preceded a party celebrating her retirement—but the award was a surprise.

“Sandra has been very generous with her time and talent over the years,” Ogorek said. “Her knack for creatively portraying key figures in our faith—for example, the Blessed Virgin Mary—engages the imagination in ways that help deepen faith and devotion. Sandra has been and remains a blessing to many folks.”

Hartlieb described the moment when she realized that Ogorek was at the Mass to give her the award.

“I just wanted to shrink in my seat because I don't need to get awards,” she recalled. “I feel so blessed and called by the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel. I choose to do that through storytelling and teaching. That has blessed my life for a very long time.”

As director of adult faith formation at St. Lawrence, Hartlieb oversaw the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and Bible studies. She also helped adults with developmental disabilities grow in their love for Christ and the Church.

She said that guiding adults into the full communion of the Church through RCIA provided her with many “monumental moments in my spiritual journey.”

Hartlieb recalled working with a Muslim man who had married a Catholic woman and who initially participated in RCIA simply to learn more about the faith of his wife.

Later, though, he fully embraced the Gospel and was received into the Church.

“He told me that, as a Muslim, he was a slave

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Bilingual catechist workshop builds up bonds of faith in New Albany Deanery

By Sean Gallagher

Catechists from across the New Albany Deanery gathered on Aug. 16 at St. Mary Parish in the southern Indiana city to learn more about the faith and to hone their skills in passing it on to others.

The workshop involved a bilingual question-and-answer session and opportunities for bilingual communal prayer. There were also breakout sessions in Spanish and English that focused on teaching young people how to pray and how to retain the knowledge of the faith they are given.

Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis, and Felix Navarete, archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic ministry, helped lead the workshop attended by more than 20 catechists from three New Albany Deanery faith communities.

"It's so important for catechists to invest in their own formation," Ogorek said. "Workshops like this are great ways for folks who teach the faith to increase their own knowledge and ability to share sacred truths as catechists."

"And a bilingual format is an excellent way to manifest the breadth of our Church as well as showing how several offices and ministries can collaborate fruitfully."

"We are a Church that every day is becoming more diverse," Navarete said. "The fact of having such different catechists in this workshop gave us a widely open panorama about what a multicultural Church means."

"There were not only people with different skin colors, but also people with different realities, from different parishes, with different experiences and backgrounds. In



Members of St. Michael Parish in Charlestown pose during an Aug. 16 bilingual catechist workshop at St. Mary Parish in New Albany. They are, from left in the front row, Laura Kinder, Jessica Sarver, Jennie Lathem and Christina Smith. From left in the second row, Nick Smith, Haley Cady, Abigail Martinez, Evangelina Delgado Veliz, Luz Elena Niño-Melchor and Gerardo Pascual. (Submitted photo)

the end, though, they were united by the same goal: to train to better serve others."

Andrew Hennessy, St. Mary's parish catechetical leader and youth minister, helped organize the workshop. He noted that the initiative can strengthen the ties within the diverse New Albany Deanery faith community and give encouragement to people who are just beginning to pass on the faith to others in parish programs.

"Every opportunity to have folks from different ethnic and language backgrounds together for a common cause is a small but important step to continued integration and mutual enrichment," Hennessy said. "Perhaps the special thing about the workshop is it also acknowledges our common needs to grow, of our common doubts about taking up the role of lay apostolate. "When our new

catechists are nervous and see the same in the others, there is a chance to build not only cooperation but mutual support."

Jessica Sarver, pastoral associate at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Henryville and St. Michael Parish in Charlestown, attended the workshop with 10 catechists from St. Michael.

"We are always seeking to develop in our ministry, and this was a perfect opportunity for our Spanish and Anglo communities to come together for a common training," Sarver said. "The training was very helpful, as it gave us some practical suggestions, some of which I was able to put into practice at a recent meeting at my parish."

"I have two new young adult volunteers that will be helping with youth ministry this year. They were both able to attend the training with us."

She also appreciated how people from diverse ethnic backgrounds came together at the workshop to learn more about the faith that they all share and seek to pass on to others.

"This is extremely important, especially for the parish communities that serve both a Spanish-speaking community and an Anglo community," Sarver said. "We do a pretty good job of bringing our Anglo and Spanish communities together in children's and youth ministry, but not so much in adult ministry."

"We are working hard to collaborate more at St. Michael. Bringing our Anglo and Spanish catechists together for one training really helps. †



Felix Navarete, archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic ministry, leads a breakout session during an Aug. 16 catechist workshop at St. Mary Parish in New Albany. (Submitted photo)

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to Allah, but as a Christian he would be a child of God," Hartlieb said with emotion. "That he began to understand, that was the reward that I got. It meant so much to me."



Sandra Hartlieb portrays Mother Theodore Guérin, the foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and Indiana's first saint, in 2015 at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis. In decades of ministry, Hartlieb has used drama and storytelling to help people grow closer to Christ and the Church. (Submitted photo)

In helping the adults of St. Lawrence explore Scripture, Hartlieb often taught them through her love of storytelling and drama—a love she's had since she was a child.

"I feel that people remember something better when they hear it in a story," she said. "That I could help people to want to open up their Bibles

was beautiful to me."

Helping people in RCIA and Bible studies happened in a very different way in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I had never heard of Zoom before COVID hit us," Hartlieb said of the online video conferencing platform. "Just to have to learn this technology was amazing. But what I found out was that you could reach people that you would never have had sitting in a room."

People far beyond St. Lawrence took part in their online Bible studies the parish offered during that time. And online-streamed RCIA sessions allowed people to participate in them when they could not attend them—a practice that has continued at St. Lawrence.

"Several people had never signed up for a traditional Bible study and sat in a classroom for one," Hartlieb said. "But this was a medium that worked for them. What a tool for evangelization that this could be. That had never occurred to us before."

Father Thomas Schliessmann hired Hartlieb when he was St. Lawrence's pastor.

"She was very personable and worked one-on-one with a lot of

people," said Father Schliessmann, now the pastor of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Indianapolis. "She was very hands on and creative."

Even though the way catechetical ministry was carried out during COVID stood in stark contrast to the way it had been done previously, Father Schliessmann noted that Hartlieb took the changes in stride.

"It just seemed to flow from her," he said. "She had everything in place, sending out links, making sure that I was there when I was doing talks, getting handouts by e-mail to people in advance."

Whether meeting with people in person one-on-one or in groups, or leading online faith-formation sessions, Hartlieb encouraged catechists to remember that faith comes to life in people when "they make a connection with a person and that person connects them with Jesus Christ."

"The important thing is to make connections with people," Hartlieb said. "Start out being a good listener. Find out how your story connects with other people's stories. That's the way we share faith."

(For more information on Sandra Hartlieb, visit www.sandrahartlieb.com.) †

'Lots of joy' at annual SPREAD retreat for those with special needs

By Natalie Hoefler

For 23 years, a special group of people have met for an annual summer retreat.

It's a retreat that spreads joy, spreads the word of God and spreads the light of Christ.

In light of all that "spreading," perhaps it's providential that the acronym for the annual Special Religious Education and Discipleship summer gathering is the "SPREAD" Retreat.

The most recent retreat was held on July 22-23 at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove, with 28 participants.

"The goal is to bring all the SPREAD groups together in community for a weekend with a spiritual focus," says Jennifer Bryans, disabilities ministry coordinator for the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis.

SPREAD (formerly SPRED for Special Religious Development) groups have been active in the archdiocese since 1997 as a means of providing regular faith formation to people with developmental disabilities.

"When they all come together for the retreat, it's like a big family reunion," says Bryans. "They haven't seen each other for a year, so there's lots of hugging, lots of laughter, lots of joy."

Each annual retreat centers around a catechetical message.

"Usually, the theme is based on a verse from the Bible," Bryans explains. "This time we chose 'Footprints in the Sand,'" from the popular, anonymously-written poem "Footprints."

"The message was that Jesus is with you in the good times and the bad, even in the times when you don't feel like he is by your side—that those are the times when he's closest."

'A great catechetical moment'

Whatever the theme is, "We just try to help them apply the message to their daily life," says Shannon Farrell. She is a catechist for the SPREAD group at St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis and has been involved with the annual summer retreat for "eight or nine years."

Each year, the catechetical message is shared in numerous ways: group discussion, crafts, games, interactive activities, prayer, praise and worship. The sacrament of reconciliation is always offered, and each retreat culminates with Mass.

Whatever the activity, the participants are all in.

"They're always open to hear what we say," Farrell says. "They listen well; they respond when we ask questions; they participate in discussions. They're just enthusiastic participants."

That fact applies to activities repeated each year, like their praise and worship sing-a-long with Benedictine Sister Cathy Anne Lapore, and to new activities as well.

"This year we added adoration," says Bryans. "Because it was the first time, we weren't sure how it would go. But they were so very prayerful. We said the rosary, and everyone knew all the prayers."

Father Todd Riebe says he's seen that same enthusiasm and reverence at the closing Mass he has celebrated at the last four retreats.

"The parishioners could learn about participation from them—I ask a question during the homily, and every hand goes up," says Father Riebe, who retired last year and now lives in Terre Haute.

The participants who proclaim readings and serve at the Mass "help with such dignity," he adds. "Every movement—they just do it so intently and carefully."

"And they have so much love and concern for each other. I open up the [prayers of] intercession, and it could go on for half hour if I let it, with their needs and concern for each other."

Father Riebe calls the SPREAD retreat "a great catechetical moment. Even the Mass, just to open the Scripture in the most fundamental way, even more than at parishes, to help them understand it and celebrate it."

"Their sense of faith and belief is absolutely strengthened at the retreat."

'So much love and support'

The retreat offers something else important for the participants: community.

"This retreat is so important because that sense of belonging to the Church is strengthened," says Father Riebe.

Farrell agrees. "People with disabilities are important members of our society," she says. "They deserve to have their faith enriched just like the rest of us. Coming together as a larger community helps them feel like they're part of something bigger."

Farrell notes that some participants say they've been coming since the retreat was first offered.

"One told me they feel like it's a place where they can really be themselves and be accepted for who they are and not be judged," she says.

The participants feel "so much love and support" at the retreat, adds Bryans.

"One parent said that their son, who is on the autism

spectrum, looks forward to this retreat more than he does Christmas."

Even Father Riebe, who is only present for a short time during the weekend, sees the bond of the participants.

"It's a real community," he says. "I witness nothing but joy from start to end. And they're so welcoming of new participants. We can learn so much about community from them."

And more than just community, says Farrell. "Most of them really are very faith-filled to start with," she says. "Just seeing their faith and being interested in learning more makes me feel like I want to learn more, too."

Bryans agrees. "We, as leaders and catechists and volunteers, learn from them," she says. "In fact, I'd say we learn more from them than they learn from us. They are so open spiritually and so giving."

'A beautiful weekend in so many ways'

The catechetical focus is changing a bit, too, both for the retreat and the special needs faith formation groups.

"We have decided to change our name from SPRED—Special Religious Development—to SPREAD—Special Religious Education and Discipleship," says Bryans.

"We aren't exclusively using the SPRED materials [through the Archdiocese of Chicago] for the faith formation groups anymore," she explains. "We're now using a variety of programs and materials to best meet the needs of the different groups."

The second reason for the change has to do with the length of time the groups have been in existence.

"Some of them have been around since 1997," says Bryans. "They have grown in their faith formation, and we would like to move in the direction of discipleship, becoming more active members in their parish communities."

She calls the retreat "a wonderful opportunity for awareness and education for those volunteers who have never worked with this community."

No catechetical training or background in working with those with special needs is necessary to volunteer, Bryans notes.

"You just need to be willing to be open, willing to learn and willing to have a wonderful experience."

"It's just a beautiful, beautiful weekend in so many ways."

(For more information on the SPREAD retreat or catechesis for those with special needs, contact Jennifer Bryans at jbryans@archindy.org or 317-236-1448.) †



Participants, volunteers and catechists pose for a photo on July 23 at the Benedict Inn and Conference Center in Beech Grove after the 23rd annual summer Special Religious Education and Discipleship retreat for those with special needs. Among the catechists are Shannon Farrell, far left on fourth step, and archdiocesan special needs coordinator Jennifer Bryans, far right on fifth step. (Submitted photo)

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deanery have an impact, too, including the parishioner who provided a rosary for each participant in this year's Totus Tuus program, which had the theme, "The Mystery of Salvation," with an emphasis on the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.

A dramatic impact

The impact of all that cooperation for the Totus Tuus program has been noticeable.

"I've seen more kids in Mass since we've done Totus Tuus," Rust says. "I've seen an uptick in our younger families. I would say the same is true the past couple of years."

"That's neat to see because we don't have a Catholic school here. Religious ed, Totus Tuus and Mass on Sunday are as much as they get. That's what we provide. By the end of the week, they had learned to pray the rosary, and they were proud of that accomplishment. That was something really neat to watch."

The cooperation of the parishes in the deanery also extends to the confirmation retreat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad that Benedictine Father Luke Waugh leads each year.



Megan Rust, catechetical leader of St. Paul Parish in Tell City, poses for a photo with her nieces—Adley Greene, left, and Ayrá Greene—during the Totus Tuus program in the Tell City Deanery this summer. (Submitted photo)

"It's designed to foster a dialogue between the confirmand and their sponsor," says Father Luke, who serves in Holy Cross Parish in St. Croix, St. Augustine Parish in Leopold and St. Isidore the Farmer Parish in Perry County. "That seems to be well-received."

"In early January, we usually have an Epiphany tour where we get the kids of the deanery together, and we'll go tour different parishes to see how they decorate for Christmas and then have a little party afterward."

There was also a deanery-wide pool party for youths on July 28.

These efforts are geared to overcoming one of the biggest challenges a parish priest has, Father Luke says—"getting our young people to participate in things."

"We get a lot more participation when we get all our kids together," he says. "We try to look for a whole lot of avenues to do this. As priests, we try to support all of our lay catechists and lay leaders with this."

'I really felt a lot of happiness'

For Father Luke, that included concelebrating a Mass at this year's Totus Tuus with Father Michael Keucher, vocations director for the archdiocese.

"The program helps extend the young people's faith," Father Luke says. "They get to know their brothers and sisters in Christ that are of the same age. We have a good mix of students from different school systems, so it's nice to see them interacting. It's nice to see their faith grow. The participants from my parishes have always enjoyed it and look forward to returning."



Benedictine Father Kolbe Wolniakowski poses for a photo with altar servers Serena Guillaume, left, Macie McBride and Carter Sweat on one of the days he celebrated Mass during the Totus Tuus program in the Tell City Deanery. Father Kolbe, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, serves as parochial vicar of St. Paul Parish in Tell City. (Submitted photo)

The same is true for the children and teenagers who participate from St. Mark Parish, says Bridgett Berger, the parish's volunteer religious education coordinator.

"I couldn't believe how many more kids we had this year and how much fun they had. I love that the program keeps growing by leaps and bounds each year," Berger says. "The kids tell their friends, 'You should come too.' Seeing their faces light up as they're learning about Jesus and Mary, it's inspirational. I love it. They're the future of our Church."

For Berger, that focus on "the future of our Church" can't be overstated.

"If we don't have our kids in our churches, in our communities, we're not going to have a future," she says. "We're not going to be able to keep our little parish."

"The children are our future. We have to teach them. We have to show them what it's like to be a Catholic, what it means. We have to open up and share with them. Hopefully, we do a good job. Hopefully, we can promote new priests and sisters to religious life."

Rust heaped praise on the college-age students who served as the team leaders of this year's Totus Tuus program.

"The way they really focus on a relationship with the young people is huge," she says. "They can reach them in a way I cannot, being a 30-something adult."

"We had a young lady who came to our night-time program and was a little hesitant. She became very glad she came by the end of the week because she was more involved, she was talking, and she made friends. To really see her blossom and grow in that manner was just wonderful."

For Rust, that's the lasting impact of the cooperation among the parishes. It offers a common connection to the faith, to each other and to being part of the faith community at the parish, the deanery, the archdiocesan and the universal Church levels.

By the end of this summer's Totus Tuus program, Rust was soaked from the water balloon fight and ready for a long nap. She also had a satisfied smile.

"I really felt a lot of happiness because I felt we touched a lot of kids this year, a lot of kids we never had before," she says. "To just see the smiles on their faces as they left, to hear their excitement and the question, 'We're going to do this next year, right?!' It always brings me joy to know they've had a good time, and they've learned something. To witness that is always a pleasure." †



Children draw in coloring books about the rosary to help learn how to pray during the Totus Tuus program in the Tell City Deanery this summer. (Submitted photo)