Welcome educators to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Dear Catholic Educators:

I extend to you the warmest of welcomes to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and its See City. We are excited and proud that you chose to hold the 105th Annual National Catholic Educational Association Convention here at the “Crossroads of America.” I also welcome all the parish catechetical leaders who are here to take part in the National Parish Catechetical Directors Convocation.

Educators all, you are key to the future of our Church, and the future of our society. You have the privilege—and the serious responsibility—of shaping future generations.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein

Due to chemotherapy treatments I will be unable to attend the convention, but I will pray that your time in Indianapolis will be inspiring and that you will return to your local parishes energized in your commitment to be good stewards of our most precious resource: our children, youth and young adults.

I hope during your convention that you will draw inspiration from St. Theodora Guérin, who was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 15, 2006. St. Theodora is truly a model for today’s educators. St. Theodora came to the Indiana frontier in 1840 with five Sisters of Providence and almost no resources, but within a year she had established a motherhouse, a novitiate and an academy and soon thereafter began opening Catholic schools throughout Indiana.

Let’s pray that we continue to follow St. Theodora’s wise counsel: “Love the children first, then teach them.”

God bless all of you for all the good work you do and may God be with each of you this week!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.
Archbishop of Indianapolis
Archdiocese of Indianapolis schools set Blue Ribbon record

By G. Joseph Peters

When U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced the 2005 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Awards in September 2005, 24 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis received the award. Five of those were Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

An awards ceremony was held in Washington, D.C., in November. Two representatives from each school—typically the principal and a teacher—participated in the ceremony, and received a plaque and a flag signifying their school’s Blue Ribbon status.

Only 295 schools nationwide were honored for 2005, including 50 private and religious schools.

The story has been similar each fall for five years. Four schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis received Blue Ribbon awards in 2003, six schools in 2004, five schools in 2005, six schools in 2006, and one in 2007 for a total of 22 awards in the past five years. Before 2003, eight schools had received Blue Ribbons under the former Blue Ribbon Schools (IBRSE) program.

Since the first Blue Ribbon was awarded in 1985, 24 Catholic schools in the archdiocese have earned 31 national Blue Ribbons under the former Blue Ribbon Schools program, and an additional 22 schools in the archdiocese have earned 31 national Blue Ribbons under the former Blue Ribbon program, and a third Blue Ribbon.

The 2008 Recipient of the F. Sadlier Dinger Award

Annette “Mickey” Lentz, executive director of Catholic Education and Faith Formation for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, was honored as a Blue Ribbon school, which is the second is based more on our students’ quality in several components of school life; the second is based more on our students’ high achievement on standardized tests.

St. Jude School and St. Lawrence School in New Albany, Ind., received its second Blue Ribbon award in 2005. St. Jude School and St. Lawrence School, both in Indianapolis, are the first schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to receive their Blue Ribbon status with a special certificate. She meets with administrators and teachers, visits classrooms and speaks to the student body at an assembly, affirming their Blue Ribbon status with a special certificate. She always stays to observe student teachers, practices, and cheers.
Archbishop of Indianapolis guides nation at crossroads

By Ken Ogorek

Catholic education, in particular religious education, is at a crossroads of sorts.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein of Indianapolis continues to help guide the authentic renewal of faith formation in schools, parish catechetical programs and various other settings for education in religion nationwide.

Ken Ogorek

A national leader

When the Catechism of the Catholic Church became available in the mid-1990s, our American bishops sprang into action establishing their “Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism.”

Simply put, this committee’s work has greatly improved the doctrinal content of textbooks and other resources used to teach religion in various settings.

Archbishop Buechlein was instrumental in this effort and continues to fill a major role in spearheading efforts to provide reliable materials for truly excellent religious education.

Our own Catechism

Archbishop Buechlein was deeply involved with the process that gives us our own United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.

Why do we need an official American catechism?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church suggests that groups of bishops throughout the world produce local catechisms—articulations of the Catholic faith that accurately express the doctrines of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, yet communicate them in ways that speak directly to people of specific regions, cultures and nations.

With Archbishop Buechlein’s involvement, our U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has blessed us with a great resource for adult religious education—a very important area of faith formation.

The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, then, will guide teacher training, catechetical certification and overall adult religious education for decades to come.

Local leadership, national impact

In southern and central Indiana, Archbishop Buechlein has overseen the implementation of strategies for religious education that are in turn used by several dioceses throughout the United States.

For example:

• The Diocesan Religion Curriculum Guidelines, used in schools and parish catechetical programs, answer the important question of “What am I supposed to teach?” in our archdiocese and several other dioceses.

• The Faith 2000 assessment instrument for religious education, developed by our Office of Catholic Education, provides helpful feedback in the area of faith formation—for school and parish programs—throughout southern and central Indiana as well as in dioceses other than our own.

Information on these and other resources is available on our Office of Catholic Education Web site, www.archindy.org/oce under Our Curriculum.

The National Directory for Catechesis—another document that Archbishop Buechlein helped to bring about—guides all of our Catholic education efforts from curriculum and assessment through approval of textbooks to teacher and catechetical formation and certification.

Decisions at a crossroads

From the late 1960s through the early 1990s, some methodological gains were made in religious education even if its doctrinal content wasn’t as clear as it could have been.

Without losing those gains, we have an exciting opportunity to bring greater clarity to Catholic education in light of documents like the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (USCCA) that speak directly to American society and culture.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein of Indianapolis has been a leader in faith formation in the United States by helping guide the crafting of the USCCA and earlier leading the Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism.

Youth ministry in action: ‘Ding Dong, Ditch and Run’ builds community

By Rose Lehman

Several years ago, our youth team at Holy Family Parish in New Albany, Ind., was looking for a way to show our appreciation to some elderly parishioners who had been very involved in the life and growth of our parish.

This was born the “Nativity Set Delivery” program or what is now referred to as “Ding Dong, Ditch and Run”—3DR for short.

For 10 days in the middle of December, one figure from a Nativity set and part of the Nativity story are delivered to parishioners’ homes one at a time. With each delivery, the Nativity story grows.

Each day, a group of youth and family members stop at the houses of the parishioners. They ring the doorbell and run back to the car—“ding-dong, ditch and run.”

“It’s been such a joy when the doorbell rings to see what unity in the little packages,” said 3DR recipients Betty Jo and Gene Murphy.

Initially, I heard people wondering what was going on,” commented Father Sonny Day, pastor of Holy Family. “People like the mystery of it.”

The youths have fun trying not to get caught, and the recipients have fun trying to catch them.

“It was really funny to see how all the seniors tried to catch us each night,” said youth participant Katherine Finn. “I think they enjoyed it as much as we did.”

On the last day, the youths and families deliver the stable and the Baby Jesus, along with cookies, and sing Christmas carols to those they have served.

The first year, Holy Family delivered Nativity sets to the homes of two parishioners. Last Christmas, the program’s sixth year of existence, six sets were delivered.

Recipients say it brings both joy and meaning to the Christmas season.

(Rose Lehman is youth minister at Holy Family Parish in New Albany, Ind. For more information on youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, contact Father Jonathan Meyers, archdiocesan director of youth ministry, at jmeyers@archindy.org.)

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The ongoing professional development and the performance pay provided by the TAP programs has a significant impact. Teachers are encouraged to earn higher salaries and advance professionally, just as in other careers, without leaving the classroom. This allows good teachers to advance in qualifications, roles and responsibilities, and so does their compensation.

As teachers move through the ranks, their positions throughout their careers—career, mentor and master teacher—depend upon their interests, abilities and accomplishments. These important experiences in the original TAP program enable teachers to pursue a variety of teaching strategies and by holding teachers accountable for their own performance.

Allowing teachers to take time to learn new techniques and strategies that would assist them to become better teachers is a key to the success of Project EXCEED. This collaborative time allows teachers not only hear of new techniques, but also able to watch other teachers utilize the new strategy before they are asked to implement it. Project EXCEED's success stems from the way the archdiocese's Office of Catholic Education uses professional development efforts to support teachers' growth and impact student learning. Another strength is the way the archdiocese uses system-wide data to improve schools and teach students.

Maintained growth in ISTEP tests—20 percent higher than state average. Implemented value-added assessment model in all 67 archdiocesan schools. Value-added assessment allows teachers to earn higher salaries and advance professionally, just as in other careers, without leaving the classroom. The Milken Family Foundation created a program to ensure that all children receive the high quality education they need and deserve from well-trained and caring educators.

The review team also recommended providing improved compensation, health and professional development for all teachers. Performance-based compensation is one of the major elements of the TAP program. The TAP program has been implemented in 13 schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis through Project EXCEED. The New Milken Family Foundation has identified these schools focusing on identified instructional needs based on instructional issues that specific teachers face with particular students.

Unfortunately, teaching has too often been the most unappreciated profession. It is time to change this perception and reward the best teachers and administrators. The archdiocese achieved NCA AdvancED District Accreditation. Achieved a high school graduation rate of 97 percent (state average 75.5 percent). The archdiocese showed that they wanted to invest in me and what I do matters to them.

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Mother Theodore Catholic Academies vital to center-city education

“We carry out the mission of educating center-city school children not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic.”

—Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.

Symposium on Catholic Urban Elementary Education set for March 28

If you are interested in learning more about the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies and other urban elementary school models from around the United States, please join us for the “Symposium on Catholic Urban Elementary Education” from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on March 28.

The symposium will be held at the Indiana Convention Center, following the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) Convention, which runs from March 24 through March 27.

The symposium fee is $125 which includes the conference, continental breakfast and lunch.

(For registration information call Sarah Ley at 317-226-1513 or 800-382-9836 ext. 1513 or e-mail her at dev@archindy.org. You can also go to our Web site www.archindy.org/ncea/symposium.html.)

• Provides tutoring and development of organizational skills.
• Helps middle school families and students transition to high school.
• Offers high school students an opportunity to receive secondary and post-secondary education site tours.
• Provides information regarding post-secondary education and career opportunities.

“Our approach is about providing a high-quality education with a strong moral base, which will lead students of all faiths and economic levels to secondary and post-secondary education,” explained Connie Zittnan, director of MTCA.

“We want our students to be leaders in the community and role models for those who come after them.”

Financial support for the MTCA schools has come from the archdiocese through the generous contributions of corporations, foundations and individuals.

(For more information about Mother Theodore Catholic Academies, please call Heidi Nightingale at 317-592-4067 or 800-382-9836, ext. 4067. E-mail her at hnightingale@archindy.org.)

St. Theodora Guérin: A saint for Indiana and a role model for educators

Anne-Thérèse Guérin was born on Oct. 2, 1798, in France.

She was 24 when she entered the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir, France, a community that served as teachers and cared for the sick and poor.

The young sister was asked to lead a small missionary band of sisters to America to establish a motherhouse in the frontier Diocese of Vincennes in western Indiana.

Mother Theodore and five sisters arrived at their mission, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, on Oct. 22, 1840.

Mother Theodore would establish a motherhouse, an academy (now Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College), Catholic schools and a legacy of love, mercy and justice that continues to this day.

She urged her Sisters of Providence to “Put yourself gently into the hands of Providence.”

By the time of her death on May 14, 1856, Mother Theodore had opened schools in towns throughout Indiana and Illinois, and the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence was strong, viable and respected.

She was beatified in 1998 and was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on Oct. 15, 2006, in a Vatican ceremony witnessed by hundreds of Hoosier Catholics.

St. Theodore is interred in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods near Terre Haute, Indiana.

A marble statue of St. Theodora Guerin, the foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, stands outside of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. The statue was sculpted by Teresa Clark of Terre Haute and carved by Nicholas Fairplay of Oberlin, Ohio. The statue will be dedicated on May 10.
By Mary Ann Wyand

Educating Hispanic children also means helping their Spanish-speaking parents and other family members with English as a New Language (ENL) instruction. Margarita Solis Deal, program coordinator at the archdiocesan office of Catholic Education, has created a series of bilingual classes to help Latino adults acclimate themselves to a new language and culture.

These evening classes held at Catholic schools with a large number of Hispanic students involve the parents in their children’s learning environment and help build community among Latino adults who are newcomers in the parish.

“They want to learn English,” Solis Deal said. “Although there are other [English language] courses available throughout the city, they feel much more comfortable coming to the school to get that resource.”

This family support is especially important for student performance. Many Spanish-speaking parents express concern about not being able to help their children with homework assignments.

Terri Rodriguez is the principal at St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis, said the school’s ISTEP (Indiana Standard Testing for Educational Progress) test results last year indicated that students who did not achieve Level Four or Level Five in English proficiency had “an incredibly short look at the Woodcock language scale also did not pass the ISTEP test.”

Elizabeth Berkholtz, the Catholic Charities Indianapolis social worker assigned to St. Philip Neri School, also works with Latino families to help them understand the benefits of computers and dangers of the Internet as well as other cultural issues of concern for youth.

Solis Deal began her bilingual ministry five years ago at center city grade schools in Indianapolis, which are now called the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies—with initial program funding through the Woodcock-Mueller language scale also did not pass the ISTEP test.

“St. Philip Neri School is now 93 percent Hispanic, and St. Anthony School is now about 70 percent Hispanic.”

Recently, Solis Deal worked with staff members at Holy Name School in Beech Grove, St. Ambrose School in Indianapolis, and St. Louis School in Batesville to help them with educational services for Hispanic students. She also worked with the principal at St. Lawrence School in Indianapolis about specific needs there.

Solis Deal presented a teacher orientation session titled “Welcoming the Latino Student into Your School: Things to Consider.”

“I will go out and do workshops and training sessions,” she said, “or work with the principals to see how they are getting their schools ready to support the Latino families.

“We’re finding that the size of religious education programs have exploded tremendously in terms of working with the Hispanic population,” Solis Deal said, “but many of the schools are still struggling in terms of resources.”

The center city schools [in Indianapolis] receive financial support, but many schools in outlying areas (or [archdiocese]) are challenged by the needs of Hispanic families.”

The former English as a Second Language program was renamed a few years ago, she said, to reflect the fact that many newcomers who immigrate to the U.S. already speak two or more languages.

“Someone from Guatemala speaks Spanish and may also know their Mayan dialect, their native language,” she said. “Now they are learning a third language here.”

“St. Philip Neri School provides evaluation and diagnosis of learning problems for more than 110 children ages 6-18 annually. A plan for school success is developed for each family based on the results of the evaluation.

St. Mary’s Early Childhood Program provides direct educational services to children age 3 to 5 who are impacted by poverty, abuse and violence, Transportation, nutrition services, social work, and family counseling are also provided.

The program is of the highest quality. It is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and inspired by the pre-primary programs of Reggio Emilia of Italy, heralded to be the best early childhood program in the world by Newsweek magazine.

In addition, St. Mary’s Child Center offers professional development opportunities to our community and beyond. The Seminar Series introducing the Reggio approach for the 2007-2008 school year, and one-to-one mentoring is offered to other programs serving children.

St. Mary’s Child Center provides financial support for educators working with children in poverty.

St. Mary is a member of the Indianapolis Reggio Collaborative (Butler University, Warren Township Early Childhood Program, Lawrence Township Early Childhood Center, and St. Mary’s Child Center) and participates in the Butler Summer Institute, drawing educators from all over the Midwest.

Significant, positive, lifelong outcomes are experienced by children who participate in a high quality early childhood program, particularly children who face extreme challenges.

Research studies show compelling evidence that children involved in these programs have higher IQs, achievement, and graduation rates. They are less likely to be retained, enrolled in special education or incarcerated later in life.

No child has ever been denied services at St. Mary’s Child Center because a family is unable to pay. The clearly defined mission has the support of the entire community. Individual donors, foundations and the corporate community fund the programs.

Many of the largest companies in Indianapolis support St. Mary’s Child Center and its approach to educating the whole child. Through the collaboration of these businesses, the leadership of the center and the archdiocese, St. Mary’s is able to serve the neediest of children in the city.

These same businesses have extended their support to other Theodore Catholic Academies in the center city that also work to provide educational opportunities to the economically disadvantaged children of Indianapolis.

(For more information contact Connie Sherman, St. Mary’s Child Center director, at csherman@stmaryschildcenter.org)
The merger of these three respected names—RCL, Benziger, and Silver Burdett Ginn Religion—is a significant moment in Catholic publishing. We want to share our enthusiasm and tell you a little bit about our new company.

Who owns RCL Benziger?
RCL Benziger is owned by CFM Religion Publishing Group, LLC. CFM also owns Standard Publishing in Cincinnati which is a non-denominational Christian publisher. However, the companies are independent and RCL Benziger continues to serve the Catholic market with Catholic materials. All our catechetical programs are submitted to the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee to oversee the use of the Catechism for conformity review.

Why is Silver Burdett Ginn Religion not in the new company name?
We regret that we must phase out the use of the name Silver Burdett Ginn. Pearson Education publishes other academic products under the Silver Burdett Ginn imprint.

What products will continue to be available?
All the current product lines from RCL, Benziger, and Silver Burdett Ginn Religion are and will continue to be available. This includes all three K–8 series: Blest Are We; Faith First; and Christ Jesus, the Way.

Who is my local RCL Benziger sales representative?
You can find your local representative listed at RCLBenziger.com. Each sales representative is committed to providing you with the highest quality service.

How do I place an order?
For your convenience, you can now order materials from all three product lines by calling one toll free number—1-877-275-4725. Our customer service representatives are eager to help you.