By Fr. Patrick Beidelman

In May of 2014, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin decided to place the management of the ministry of evangelization within the department that also coordinates the archdiocesan Office of Worship. The primary motivation for this flowed from the essential relationship that is shared between our worship of God and the evangelical mission of the Church. This is most clearly expressed in the dismissal at Mass when all are sent to “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord,” and to “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”

So, our experience of prayer and worship, especially in the Mass, necessarily leads us out from our experience of the presence of the Lord to proclaim and share with others the good news of salvation we have received.

Throughout several consultations with those in pastoral leadership, as well as with those who are presently engaged in the promotion of evangelization, several needs and issues emerged.

While the conversations we had identified many and varied ways in which effective evangelization is happening, many expressed that we need a clear, concise definition of evangelization before we can identify what methods we will use to cultivate intentional discipleship.

Others expressed a need for greater support and resources for those of different cultures and language groups within the Archdiocese.

Finally, there was a caution among those consulted that we not try to develop a “one size fits all” approach to our coordination of the ministry of evangelization in our parishes and communities. Each community itself has a slightly different culture and most certainly will discern different priorities as it relates to this aspect of the Church’s mission.

So, what are some things that are emerging as possible next steps in the coordination of the ministry of evangelization in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis?

Recently, Archbishop Tobin has given us some important foundational areas of focus upon which we can build our approach. Echoing Pope Francis, our archbishop recently said at a meeting on this topic that “we can’t ask people to join us without giving them a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.”

He went on to describe that this encounter is personal but not private. In this encounter with Jesus, there is always an invitation to community, for we hear the message of our salvation through the Church.

Archbishop Tobin would also have us view the call to missionary discipleship (which this encounter calls every person to) through this Scriptural paradigm: “Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve, whom he also named Apostles, that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mt 3:13-15).

In this passage, we read about the call of the first Apostles that is also given to each of us who follow Jesus: (1) to hear Jesus calling us; (2) to come to him and be with him (personal encounter); and (3) to be sent out to proclaim the power and goodness of the Lord in all we say and do!

Throughout our acceptance of this call to be missionary disciples, we must engage at all times, as the first disciples did, in a deepening of our understanding of the beliefs and practices of our faith family so that our core development in the Church’s teaching keeps us rooted in the truth of divine revelation.

This paradigm of Mark 3:13-15 brings us back to the first steps that are so critical for the work of evangelization.

In the celebrations of the sacraments in the liturgy of the Church, the Holy Spirit acts in four unique ways, listed below (#1092):

1. The Holy Spirit unites the Church to encounter Christ;
2. The Holy Spirit unites the Church to encounter Christ;
3. The Holy Spirit unites the Church to encounter Christ;
4. The Holy Spirit unites the Church to encounter Christ.

In the next few months, several resources and methods for evangelization will be provided for parish communities to choose from by which we can intensify our effort in evangelization and missionary discipleship in our everyday lives.

Together, let us hear the call of Jesus to be with him and to be sent out through the action of the Holy Spirit and the celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments. For this effort, we need only to turn to one simple prayer: Come Holy Spirit!

Father Patrick Beidelman is executive director of the Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization for the archdiocese, and rector of St. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis.
FOCUS founder defines evangelization, catechesis, encountering Christ and building disciples

By Natalie Hoefer

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—Encountering Christ. Building disciples. These are key terms discussed at parish staff meetings and encourage Christ-centered youth ministry. “It’s easy to get into a rut when you’re teaching, and have them stand. He then asked those three and not just living a spiritual life, but that challenge should not be a cause for apathy. "We’ve got to get back to the source of why I teach and minister in a Catholic school," Whitaker said. "I love this conference so much that I’m just putting it on my calendar to put in my calendar for next year right now, and tell them, ‘Folks, you’ve got to do this—just it’s great.’"
RCIA catechists gain resources, knowledge, network of support at ‘invaluable’ conference

By Natalie Hoefer

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—As Mary Wagner, a volunteer catechist at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, walked the campus of Franciscan University of Steubenville during the St. John Bosco catechetical conference, she enjoyed seeing familiar faces, and being recognized by others as well.

“I didn’t know what to expect last year,” said Wagner, who attended the St. John Bosco catechetical conference for the first time in 2014. She was so impressed and found the conference so helpful that she not only returned this year, but plans to attend for the next three years as well.

Her goal: to earn a certification from Franciscan University in instructing Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The certification is earned by attending the RCIA track at the St. John Bosco conference for five years.

“I think those credentials are well-respected,” she said. “I’d like to be a director of religious education one day, but even if I never do anything else [besides volunteer], I can’t lose, because the education and the information and the resources I’ve been exposed to are just incredible.

“I don’t know of any opportunity anywhere else to have this kind of access to this kind of knowledge.

And not all of the information comes from the speakers, she pointed out.

“I now have a whole new network of friends,” both from within and outside of the archdiocese. “Three of us [from the archdiocese] are going to meet once a month for lunch, and another [who lives farther away] and I plan to share e-mails and texts.

“It’s more than just the ‘head’ side of the conference that draws Wagner, however—it’s the ‘heart’ side, too.


Wagner was joined on the RCIA track at the conference this year by two other archdiocesan catechists: Sandra Hartlieb, administrator of adult faith formation at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, and Manuela Johnson, who begins her first year serving as a RCIA team leader for SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis; and Manuela Johnson, who begins her first year serving as a RCIA team leader for SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood this fall.

It was the first time attending the conference for both, but they hope to return for the next four years to earn their RCIA certification from Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio.

“It was a phenomenal experience,” said Hartlieb, who has been involved in catechetical ministry for more than 25 years.

Hartlieb said she not only received “top notch” information, but witnessed from the speakers how to best deliver that information.

“The keynote speakers spoke with their whole bodies,” she said. “It wasn’t just someone standing at a podium telling. It was someone who was engaged and passionate about their message. That excited me, so I know that that’s the way to witness—to be engaged with every part of yourself.”

Hartlieb feels it’s “really important that our catechists and I have an opportunity to come [to the conference].

“We are guiding people in something that is going to affect their eternity,” she explained. “Our job is to introduce these people to Jesus and to have a relationship, and if we do that right, they’ll see that the best place to have a relationship with Christ is in the Catholic Church.

Johnson agreed, and commented on another important relationship developed during the RCIA process—the relationship between the candidate or catechumen and their sponsor, which was the focus of one session at the conference.

As result of the conference, she said she hopes to “recruit parish sponsors in advance of RCIA, starting to give them time to learn about their role and the importance of their role in building disciples.”

Jeffery Earl, RCIA director at Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Danville, also walked away from the conference with a respect for the role of sponsors in developing disciples.

“I don’t have the time to spend [time] one-on-one with each candidate,” said Earl, who, like Wagner and Johnson, ministers in catechesis while working full time. “But when we find people in the parish who are strong in their faith and can share their faith, they can develop those relationships.

One of the biggest messages Earl walked away with from the conference was also about relationships—his with God.

“What this conference drove home is that I can’t make this be ‘my’ [RCIA] program—that’s not going to work. It has to be God’s program.”

Earl, who has a master’s degree in theology and more than 10 years of experience in catechetical ministry, found the conference to be “amazing.”

“It’s not always someone with 10 years of experience and a master’s degree [who leads catechetical ministry in a parish],” he said. “It’s a person who wants to do their best, knows their limitations, and is struggling because they don’t have the formation they need.

“This type of thing where you come for four days and get this almost miniature semester of course work packed into four days is invaluable.

“And then the other side of it is you get the spiritual formation. It connects you to Christ again personally, and it renews your own prayer life and spiritual life.

“I don’t think you could spend your money any better than sending [catechists] to training like this.” †