The three ironies of catechesis
By Ken Ogorek

“There are two types of people in the world,” quipped a college professor of mine. “Those who have a sense of irony, and those who don’t.”

Separating the world into two types of people is above my pay grade. Jesus will take care of that when he comes again in glory.

I do see three ironies, though, as we celebrate another Catechetical Sunday on Sept. 15. I’m not sure if this makes me a sheep or a goat today, but here goes:

Hidden in Plain Sight
The Catholic Church isn’t exactly secretive about her basic doctrinal and moral teaching. We have a website. We have a catechism. The teaching of the Church is readily available to folks who are looking for basic information.

Yet many adult Catholics say they’re unclear on what Church teaches about various matters. Are we unclear, or are we unwilling to embrace the basic teachings of our faith because of the demands such acceptance would place on our daily lives? Addressing that question is also part of the sometimes perilous waters of our culture. Leaders help form the next generation to lead these efforts in the deanery. (Submitted photo)

No matter what type of person you are, I think you could be interested in the sometimes perilous waters of our culture. Leaders help form the next generation to lead these efforts in the deanery.

Taking down barriers helps children learn God’s message
By John Shaughnessy

The trusting smiles of the two Burmese children who are deaf reflect the special connection they have with their American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter.

For 9-year-old Peh Bue and his 12-year-old sister Bae Meh, interpreter Stephanie Campo is a bridge who helps them cross further into their knowledge of the Catholic faith during the children’s faith formation program at St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. “Having an interpreter sign helps me understand what the teacher is talking about,” Bae says in sign language as Campo interprets. Her brother adds, “My favorite part is learning about God.”

The children’s responses elicit a warm smile from Campo.

“It’s rewarding that they’re getting the same experience that a hearing child is getting in the classroom,” says Campo, a 36-year-old mother of four children between the ages of 9 and 2 who offers her interpreting skills as a volunteer. “It would be a terrible thing for them to miss out on God’s message to them.”

At the same time, Campo insists that hearing faith formation from a child’s perspective helps her deepened her empathy for the journeys that some families make. Regarding the influence on her faith, Campo says, “Sometimes, I can get complacent at Mass. But hearing faith formation from a child’s perspective helps me slow down and appreciate it.”

She also has an appreciation for the journey that the children and their father, Pray Reh, and their mother, U Mei, have made as refugees. Both Pray and U fled their homeland of Myanmar in 1996. They married in a refugee camp in Thailand where Peh and Bae were both born. Then the family came to the United States in 2015 through the help of Catholic Charities. And here in Indianapolis, they have faced the challenge of adapting to a new country while also trying to learn English and ASL.

“They’ve been on an amazing journey,” Campo says. “I’m sure it’s been a lot to adjust to. It’s got to be difficult at times.”

That connection as people of faith—with the goal of all involved to grow closer to God—is exactly the hope of the archdiocese’s Ministry to Persons with Special Needs. “It is very common to hear from them,” Campo says.

Veteran New Albany Deanery catechetical leaders help form the next generation
By Sean Gallagher

Deacon John Jacobi grew up in St. Michael Parish in Bradford in the New Albany Deanery in the 1970s and 1980s at a time when lay Catholics were just beginning to serve as leaders of catechetical ministry in faith communities in central and southern Indiana.

Claire Fessel was St. Michael’s director of religious education at the time. “She was a saint,” Deacon Jacobi recalled.

Deacon Jacobi took over leadership of his home parish’s catechetical programs in 1995 when he was 25. Ann Northam, the longtime director of religious education at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine parishes in Jeffersonville, was a mentor for Deacon Jacobi in his early years of ministry.

About a decade later, Deacon Jacobi mentored Michelle Fessel when she became the youth minister of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. Fessel was also assisted by Tom Yost, the parish’s pastoral associate who has ministered there for nearly 37 years.

Fessel is now the sage veteran passing on wisdom gained in the past in serving as director of parish initiatives at Catalyst Catholic, a youth ministry organization for parishes in the New Albany Deanery. At 35 she is also the oldest member of Catalyst Catholic’s leadership team.

Passing on the faith forms one generation to the next. That’s how the Gospel has been proclaimed from the earliest days of the Church. The stories of Yost, Northam, Deacon Jacobi and Fessel show how it’s also the way that lay Catholics have been formed over the past generation to lead these efforts in faith communities in the New Albany Deanery.

See VETERANS, page 9
Summer Tuus Tuus program helps youths, young adults say 'I totally love you'!

By Natalie Fessel

NEW ALBANY—After a week of teaching the faithfulness of the Teal City Downtown this summer, Jackie Parkes was feeling uncertain.

“This little girl came up to me at the end of the week and she said, 'Jackie, you think I'll make a great saint?'” she recalls, her eyes moist at the memory. Parkes is one of four women who volunteer with Youth Ministry to Outreach, or YMO, a local youth ministry.

The young adults spent the week teaching the children of the Teal City Downtown how to live a faith-filled life.

Teal City of youth Ministry to Outreach hosts children in grades 1 through 6 from morning to mid-day during the week. In addition to catechesis on that summer’s topic of faith, the evening programs included listening sessions, where they could talk, small group sharing and discussion. They also line out the faith.

Confession is Tuesdays at 6:15 p.m. and Wednesdays at 10:45 a.m.

Evangeline and Catechesis Supplement

VETERAN

Leadership as "walking alongside"

When Bob Baxter died in 2018, he was at the peak of his career as the director of religious education for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He is now led by parishioners. Yost has also launched several initiatives to keep the faith.

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Honoring parish catechetical leaders

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson poses on June 4 in St. Agnes Church in Nashville with Marty Williams, left, Ann Northam, Bob Hansberry and Paulette Davis after a Mass that was part of the archdiocesan Office of Catechetical Leader Spring Celebration. The catechetical leaders were honored for their service to the Church. Yost has also launched several initiatives to keep the faith.

Archdiocesan endowment funds offer ways to support catechetical efforts in central and southern Indiana

Catechists for Discipleship: Developing leaders

Contributing to this fund allows donors to help build the mission-critical work of the local Church in ‘go and make disciples’ (Mt. 28:18-20). Development

Committed to help provide formation and skills to parish catechetical leaders and catechists in forming those with special needs.

To contribute to this fund, send a check payable to the Catholic Community Foundation (noting in the memo line: Special Needs Ministry Endowment Fund #20-0627) to the Office of Catholic Services, 140 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46202. For more information, contact Kim Orr, director of the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis, at 317-236-1446, or 317-323-8935.
Evangelization and Catechesis Supplement

Challenges facing differing moral truths can be overcome in relationship, prayer

By Sean Gallagher

“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (Rom 12:2).

The age to which St. Paul was referring in this passage from his Letter to the Romans marks the culture of the Roman Empire in the first century. But his words have tremendous relevance for Catholics living today. In the 2,000 years later half a world away from Rome.

There are aspects of the Catholic faith that run dramatically counter to the conventional wisdom of secular culture. So, Catholics today seeking to proclaim the Gospel and draw others to Christ, to make the Gospel more real and pleasing and perfect, must be wise and vigilant in discerning the culture that is adapting or innovating or degenerating,

But feelings and wants don’t make way or really want this to be the truth. Moral issues are to their consciences with individuals with autism, or other range of people who have special needs.

The Catholic faith more accessible for a their friends than they could ever teach,”

S.G.L.

Sr. Diane Carollo, S.G.L.

If a person is honestly seeking a moral issue to be true for themselves and to justify their choices or positions on a moral issue are “saying that they really feel this way or really want this to be the truth. But feelings and wants don’t make truth.”

Father Anthony Hollowell, administrator of St. Pius X. “Some special needs are more challenging and pleasing and perfect” (Rom 12:2).

Your own mind needs to be changed. It needs to be formed.

‘Grace influences our reason’

Father C. Ryan McCarthy, pastor of St. Mark Parish in Indianapolis who holds a doctorate in moral theology, emphasized that, according to the Church, the conscience is an “intellectual act of the mind by which it studies a question and determines what is right or wrong based on ethical, moral or philosophical principles.

In contrast, he suggests that many people in secular society who appeal to their consciences to justify their choices or positions on a moral issue are actually “saying that they really feel this way or really want this to be the truth. But feelings and wants don’t make truth.”

Str. Ryan McCarthy

DEAF

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our catechists that they learn more from

Fr. Anthony Hollowell

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson processes on June 24, 2018, into a St. Isidore the Farmer Church in Perry County to celebrate a Mass to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Tell City Deanery faith community. Father Anthony Hollowell, administrator of St. Mark Parish in Perry County and St. Paul Parish in Tell City, says regularly attending Sunday Mass is a critical part of the formation of the conscience of Catholics. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

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what we’re really looking at when people say that they don’t believe in moral absolutes [is] that they don’t believe in traditional moral absolutes and they want to come up with any number of their own moral absolutes.

They want to reject some moral absolutes and embrace others.’

This individualistic rejection and embracing, Father McCarthy said, is often motivated by people’s willingness to trade truth for comfort for their actions.

“Do you go run after them? No,” Sister Diane said. “Because they’re not ready. They’re not ready to hear the truth or accept it. Something else will happen along the way that may redirect them. “God uses everything and everyone to bring them to the Catholic faith. Positive and negative.”

‘Trading truth for comfort’

An essential aspect of the Church’s moral teachings is that there are some actions that are always objectively wrong. Torture and abortion are examples of this.

This is challenging for many people considering the Catholic faith because of the strength of moral relativism in the broader culture.

They may hold a certain position on a moral issue to be true for themselves but not necessarily for others.

Father McCarthy pointed out the inconsistency of such an outlook.

“If you say that there are no moral absolutes, you’ve made a moral absolute,” he said. “Usually if you push people on it, they will usually consent to some sort of moral absolute. You just have to ask the right questions.

“What we’re really looking at when people say that they don’t believe in moral absolutes [is] that they don’t believe in traditional moral absolutes and they want to come up with any number of their own moral absolutes.

“They want to reject some moral absolutes and embrace others.’

This individualistic rejection and embracing, Father McCarthy said, is often motivated by people’s willingness to trade truth for comfort for their actions.

“So, whatever makes another person or myself comfortable becomes the truth,” Father McCarthy said.

Father Hollowell said there is an added challenge to convincing others of the existence of moral absolutes.

“A lot of people who are deaf to their religion,” says Father Hollowell. “There is a culture of the mind by which they are—human in the best sense of the word. To be in relationship with them brings down our barriers—and allows us to be vulnerable as well. It truly is a gift I hope every parish experiences.”

(For more information on the archdiocese’s Ministry to Persons with Special Needs, visit www.archindy.org/specialneeds, or contact Erin Jeffries, coordinator of the archdiocesan’s special needs ministry, at jeffries@archindy.org, or 317-236-1448.)

We have a mental illness is something that has been taking on ever greater importance these past few years as well.”

Many of our parishes are working with individuals with autism, or other intellectual developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome,” Jeffries says. “More frequently now, deaf individuals or their family are reaching out to their parish or school, looking for inclusion and family life.

The approach to the children’s faith formation program at St. Pius X. “Some special needs are more apparent than other children’s special needs. I just try to work with the families and our catechists and parents have a special concern, we try to work with their child.

That approach is appreciated by Bae’s and Peh’s parents, who both have their hearing.

“With the help of Stephanie, they have confidence in class, they learn more things and they learn about God,” says their dad.

Besides Kampen’s Pins benefits from having three other sign language interpreters who volunteer their skill Diane Jones, Gretchen Krug and Lucy Wahnsiedler.

Jennifer Naville hopes to provide that service in the future at St. Mary Parish in Navillleton in the New Albany Deanery. Right now, the mother of four and grandmother of two is starting her senior years of studying sign language at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. This summer, she attended a weeklong program that connected ASL to the Catholic faith.

“I just always felt I wanted to integrate my faith with ASL to connect people who are deaf to their faith,” says Naville, who made a career change after 30 years as a nurse. “It’s giving them access to the word and connecting them to the Gospel. It’s something I’m looking forward to doing in the future.

Taking down barriers, building a saring of belonging

Jeffries welcomes that help, noting that about 200 children are born every year in Indiana who are deaf or have significant hearing loss.

“We set out to provide a religious service, much less a faith formation opportunity, for the primary reason that
available, and one evening includes a holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament.

“The teens, who can be less enthusiastic by their nature, ended up absolutely loving the program and were passionate about it,” says Griffin. “It’s great to have college kids come in and show kids they’re living their faith out this way. It sets a good example. They taught them [the faith], and also showed them.”

And the benefits of the program don’t stop there, says Shaw. With parishioners preparing lunch during the week, hosting team members for dinner and providing a place for them to stay, she says Totus Tuus “gets the whole parish involved in this opportunity for the kids to grow in their faith.”

Closeness to Christ leads to purpose in life as a Totus Tuus catechist for two summers as a seminarian that Father David Doseck of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati affirmed his call to the priesthood. Now he and a priest of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, who also served as a Totus Tuus catechist while in seminary, devote their vacation time to training the program’s catechists for 10 days each summer. They also develop the program’s theological content, “making the curriculum as applicable as possible,” says Father Doseck.

The last day of the program includes a discussion about vocation.

“We mention the vocation call and that, first and foremost, a relationship with Jesus Christ will lead you to your purpose and meaning for life,” he explains. “We tell [the youths] how some of them might be called that very week at Totus Tuus to be a priest, to marriage, to the religious life, or to be single and chaste and live in holiness right now.”

But the largest witness of seeking one’s purpose and meaning through a relationship with Christ comes from the catechists themselves, says Father Doseck.

“They’re giving up their summer to dedicate their life totally to Jesus and loving these children,” he explains. “For a young, single person that’s very radical.

“And the fascinating thing is that most Totus Tuus missionaries are actively discerning their own vocation to married life, the priesthood, or religious life. We encourage them to be open to sharing their discernment at this stage in the process, especially with the middle school and high school kids.”

In all, says Father Doseck, Totus Tuus is “a healthy, holy way to approach [youths] where they are in their faith, and move them in a direction closer to Jesus.”

And for the young adult catechists, he continues, “This is where they learn ‘totus tuus,’ saying to Christ and Mary, ‘I’m totally yours,’ and saying to the kids and the parish for that week, ‘I’m totally yours. I’m dedicated to help you encounter Jesus and learn the faith.’”

For more information on Totus Tuus, go to www.archindy.org/totustusi or call Ken Ogorek at 317-236-1446 or toll free at 800-382-9836, ext. 1446, or e-mail him at kogorek@archindy.org.

Father McCarthy emphasized that the parish’s continued effort to share these and other opportunities offered by the Office of Evangelization, “If not for the communiques coming from the evangelization office, there are a lot of things we wouldn’t be aware of,” such as webinars and conferences, says Gaye McKenney, president of the parish pastoral council at St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville. “We’re very grateful to them for being on point all the time and keeping us engaged. We use what they send out as inspiration and make it fit for what our needs are and what we can handle.”

McKenney cites one resource from the office as having “great traction” in the parish’s evangelization efforts. With input from parishioners throughout the archdiocese, a tool called “10 Things We Want You to Know About the Catholic Faith” was created to evangelize about the faith. More information is available at www.archindy.org/yegrooffaith/10thing.

“We have a booth at the [local] farmers market where we take it out and, and at the [local] Friday business exchange,” she says. “It’s amazing the number of Catholics we’ve met and that we’ve introduced, but not remarried who stopped going to Mass because they thought they weren’t of the archdiocese.”

Four years ago, the office launched an annual “Morning with Mary” event open to all. It takes place each October, with its location moving among parishes in central and southern Indiana. This year it will take place at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods near Terre Haute from 9 a.m. to noon on Oct. 5.

And one final update Ogorek is pleased to announce: “We are in process of hiring a coordinator of evangelization and discipleship for the Office of Evangelization.

“We were blessed to have Theresa as our ECHO apprentice for last two years,” he said. “She laid some good groundwork for this ministry. The hope is for the new coordinator to start in the fall, pick up where Theresa left off, and keep the momentum going.”

For more information on resources offered by the Office of Evangelization or guidance in parish evangelization efforts, go to www.archindy.org/evangelization or contact Ken Ogorek at 317-236-1446 or toll free at 800-382-9836, ext. 1446.†