Catholic Schools Light the Way in 2008

This year’s Catholic Schools Week theme, “Catholic Schools Light the Way,” combines the concepts of God as the light of the world and the light of knowledge that our Catholic schools kindle in students. The stained glass logo underscores the faith-filled education Catholic schools emphasize. During this week we focus attention on the high quality faith-based education our schools provide and honor everyone who contributes to their success—students, families, faculty and staff, as well as clergy, volunteers, supporters, and local and national leaders. The unity of our schools in the archdiocese will be highlighted in the celebration of a special all-school liturgy with Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB, Archbishop of Indianapolis, at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on January 30, 2008.

NCEA Convention 2008, Indianapolis

The National Catholic Educational Association Convention, Exposition, and National Parish Catechetical Directors Convocation will be hosted by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis at the Indiana Convention Center March 25-28, 2008. The event is rapidly approaching and the Local Management Team is meeting frequently now along with the many subcommittees required to organize an event of this size and scope including some 1,500 local volunteers. Some 10,000 Catholic educators will attend the convention to hear national keynote speakers, attend hundreds of workshop sessions, and visit over 800 exhibitors. Our guests will be invited to participate in many locally sponsored events as well, including:

- A trip to St. Mary-of-the-Woods, home of St. Theodora, Indiana’s own saint
- A special reception at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum
- A special Priest’s Day
- A Sacred Sounds Concert featuring students from archdiocesan schools
- A reception at the Indianapolis Museum of Art
- A liturgy at St. John Parish
- Catechists’ Day, with special programming for parish catechists at a reduced price
- College Day, with special rates for all college students
- A Health Fair, with free health screenings sponsored by St. Vincent and St. Francis Hospitals
- A special Urban Symposium sponsored by the archdiocese

To find details on the convention or any of the local events or to sign up to volunteer, please visit www.archindy.org/ncea or www.ncea.org.
HOOSIER HOSPITALITY

There is a phrase tossed about in these parts, “Hoosier Hospitality.” Hospitality is something that is radiated from the heart which cannot always be described but is immediately felt, like putting a stranger at ease. The upcoming NCEA/NPCD Convention, hosted by the archdiocese will be our opportunity to put our best foot forward and, “Welcome the Stranger Among Us.”

Hospitality is one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which is bestowed on Christians to strengthen the Church (See: 1 Cor. 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4). The gift of hospitality is the special ability that God gives to members of the Body of Christ to provide open house and warm welcome for those in need of food and lodging.

The acts of kindness we perform can make an incredible impression on those we serve. A smile and a gentle voice are powerful tools when dealing with people. Don't forget, the task we perform is only a tool we use to touch a soul for Jesus. Hospitality also provides the context for developing Christian community. Our public effort will reflect either positively or negatively on our Christian community. Our public effort will reflect either positively or negatively on our Church. God blesses our actions even when we think we have failed according to human expectations, so let’s do our very best.

Love your fellow Christians always. Do not forget to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:1-2

CATECHISTS’ DAY

A special “Catechists’ Day” has been added to NCEA/NPCD Convention on Thursday, March 27, and we will have many opportunities to exercise the gift of hospitality. According to the APARE leadership, here’s how you can get involved:

- Staff the registration table for walk-in catechists
- Greet people at the door to welcome them
- Provide welcome notes for hospitality packets
- Be available for people with special needs
- Offer housing for out of town catechists and DREs
- Involve your kids in making Welcome Cards
- Consider helping as a deanery, as a parish, or as an individual

The NCEA/NPCD coordinators from APARE are Mary Lynn Cavanaugh and Bev Hansberry. Once you decide how you might help, please contact Eileen Paige, (317)637 2620, ext. 402, or epaige@holycross.org.

I recently attended the National Catholic Youth Convention (NCYC) with 20,000 high schoolers representing all 50 states. I had attended NCYC once before and I knew it was going to be a great experience, but I had forgotten just how life-challenging the event really is. Once we arrived at our hotel in Columbus, OH, we dropped off our stuff and headed to the Convention Center. I was astounded at the number of people I saw – all high school students just like me. Even having participated before, the sight of all these people of faith congregated in one place from all over the United States gave me chills.

The keynote speakers were amazing: from the awe-inspiring words of a man who has no arms and a woman who has no feeling from the neck down; to the humorous anecdotes of a priest straight from the ghetto. The speakers were comical, enjoyable and relatable. It was incredible to hear their stories, and although what they had to endure seemed drastic compared to what most of us were going through, they showed us how to use our own experiences to help ourselves.

There was always music playing as we entered the convention center. At first, it seemed odd to hear Christian music quite different from what we hear in Church; but it quickly became the norm. By the end, it seemed natural listening to a “rap” about Jesus. Whenever we entered, it felt as if everyone dropped their insecurities, did not care if they looked stupid, were not “cool,” or even shed a tear. We were truly able to act and feel our faith unconsciously there.

The conference was fun but it also helped all of us to become closer. We knew that we were the “Moo Cows” from Columbus, IN, and by the end of the convention, everyone else knew us, too, from of our chants and songs.

This was a perfect time in my life to return to NCYC. I had been stressed with school and the many activities I am involved in. My good relationship with God had been slowly dwindling. Attending NCYC helped me re-center myself and proved to be a faith experience I will never forget.

Lindsey Moore, St. Bartholomew Parish, is a Senior at Columbus East High School

DING DONG, DITCH AND RUN

Several years ago our youth team at Holy Family Parish in New Albany was searching for a way to show our appreciation to some elderly parishioners who had been very involved in the life and growth of our parish. Thus, was born the “Nativity Set Delivery” program or what is now referred to as “Ding Dong, Ditch and Run” – 3DR for short.

For ten days in mid-December, one figure for a nativity set and part of the nativity story are delivered to the parishioner’s 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 unfolds in the little packages,” said 3DR recipients Betty Jo and Gene Murphy.

“Initially I heard people wondering what was going on. People like the mystery of it,” commented Pastor, Father Sonny Day. The youth have fun trying to not to get caught; and the recipients have fun trying to catch them. “It was really funny to see how all the senior citizens tried to catch us each night. I think they enjoyed it as much as we did,” said youth, Katherine Finn.

On the last day, the youth 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. This Christmas, the program’s sixth year; six sets were delivered. Recipients say it brings both joy and meaning to the Christmas season.

Rose Lehman is Youth Minister at Holy Family, New Albany
Scratched your head lately? Often after Confirmation some of us scratch our heads and wonder, “Why haven’t some of our kids come back for catechesis, comprehensive youth ministry, etc.?” Our new archdiocesan Confirmation guidelines, The Sacrament of Confirmation for Baptized Adolescents: Preparation Guidelines, dare to prevent this sort of head-scratching. Properly implemented, the guidelines help make Confirmation a step in a lifelong journey of faith formation.

No Such Thing as Confirmation Class

The reason a young person comes to catechesis the year she or he is confirmed is not to get ready for Confirmation. Youth come for catechesis that year for the same reason that you and I and all Catholics pursue catechesis every year of our lives – because we need it!

In years that we celebrate a sacrament it stands to reason that a bit of extra catechetical preparation is needed. Most of this does not need to occur until six weeks or so before celebrating the sacrament, and generally it should occur outside of regular daily or weekly catechetical sessions. When we set up our programs any other way we tell young people, “This is pretty much the end of the road for you as far as religious ed. goes. You’re graduating!”

A Good Hoop is Still a Hoop

The difference between requiring and encouraging is significant. Certainly we should encourage service, days of reflection, etc., as parts of proximate and immediate preparation for Confirmation. We must balance this, though, against making such a big build-up that Confirmation becomes the end of the road and not the sacramental transition perfecting baptismal grace. God has not given us a sacrament marking the transition from youth to young adulthood; we cannot hijack Confirmation for this purpose.

Proper Implementation

Please take time to become familiar with the revised Guidelines for Confirmation, available as a download in the Member Area of our OCE website, #5, Guides. We will have ample opportunities to discuss their implementation in the months ahead. As always, please address any questions you may have to Ken Ogorek, Director of Catechesis, kogorek@archindy.org.
"Slashers," Expanding the Vision of Catechetical Leadership

John Jacobi is a “Slasher.” At St. Michael Parish, Bradford, John is director of religious education/youth ministry/(and) adult faith formation. Marianne Hawkins is also a “Slasher.” She coordinates faith formation/youth ministry at St. Thomas More in Mooresville. “Slashers (/)" is slang used to refer to catechetical leaders with more than one ministry focus.

Kathy Davis-Shanks, St. Bartholomew, Columbus; and Jonathan Chamblee, Holy Name, Beech Grove are “Slashers” too; but of a different type. They serve as directors of religious education, but their parishes have youth ministers. Both Kathy and John are “Slashers” in that they also coordinate programs like Christ Renews His Parish, Bible Study and Small Church Communities.

Then you have a few parishes like St. Monica, Indianapolis, that are blessed to have Mary Jo Thomas-Day, Director of Religious Education; Joe Connelly, Youth Minister; and, Anne Corcoran, Pastoral Associate, who coordinates Christian Initiation and Adult Faith Formation. They are not “Slashers.”

Each parish, despite differences in size and resources, is trying to affirm one basic mission. With Jesus Christ at the heart of evangelization and catechesis, their goal is to lead all believers to a deeper knowledge and love of Christ and the Church and a firm commitment to follow Him.

The new National Directory for Catechesis (NDC) places evangelization – the outreach element of total Catholic education – at the core of ministry. The objective is to fire new energy and commitment to proclaim the Gospel that challenges us to provide opportunities for a parish-centered, life-long process of ongoing faith formation.

The expansion of the term catechetical leader in the NDC is worth noting. According to Bishop Richard J. Malone, STL, ThD, Bishop of Portland in Maine, newly elected Chair of the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB):

*We do not evangelize and catechize in a vacuum. Even as we affirm and build on culture’s positive elements, we must recognize and confront those elements that are roadblocks to evangelization and catechesis.*

The goal is not merely a question of adaptation, but of missionary thrust. Our Church has a vision which is inclusive of all faith formation efforts. We are confident of this expanded direction for evangelization and catechesis and are committed to this work and effort.

Jesus prayed, "That all might be one" (John 17:21). Our obedience is required for this to happen – an acknowledgement that only Christ can reconcile all things and all people.

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***Another Right Fulfilled: The National Framework for High School Religion***

John Paul II in *On Catechesis in Our Times* pointed out that one of our most basic human rights is to hear the Catholic faith proclaimed in its entirety with no gaps and no errors. Because this proclamation must be developmentally appropriate, we must have access to the entire Faith over and over again throughout our life. Without a clear plan and appropriate accountability this comprehensive and authentic breaking open of the Deposit of Faith is less likely to occur. Thanks to several solid textbook publishers collaborating with our American Bishops, Catholic high school students are closer to assurance that this basic human right is being fulfilled.

**A Scope and Sequence**

Because currently so many topics are covered at so many different grade levels from high school to high school, religion book publishers have had difficulty producing age-appropriate textbooks in financially viable ways. Their reasonable request – that our bishops offer guidance on what topics are to be covered in which grades as religion is studied in high school.

The result? In November the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgated a doctrinal framework for Catholic high school religion. The framework provides appropriate unity and consistency while being flexible enough for each school to remain true to its charism and service to its unique population.

**A Core Plus Electives**

This doctrinal framework consists of six core courses to be taught the first three years of high school (with some flexibility). In the remaining two semesters catechists can choose from five electives offering more in-depth treatment for various aspects of our Faith.

The framework is intentionally focused on the Person of Jesus and will help our talented high school catechists be certain their department as a whole is teaching systematically by an objective standard. Most importantly, because different facets of Jesus attract different people, this objectively comprehensive treatment of Catholic faith provides every reasonable inroad for the Holy Spirit to touch our students’ hearts and minds drawing them to salvation from sin and death by the Passion and Resurrection of God’s only Son.
OCE Living the Legacy Planning Process

The Office of Catholic Education (OCE) has participated in many different strategic planning processes during its long history. Some processes have been complicated; some have been simple, but the latest process is custom designed for the unique mission of the Office of Catholic Education. Called “Living the Legacy,” emanating from the current capital campaign,”Legacy for Our Mission for Our Children and Our Future,” the plan requires long-term strategies and shorter term goals for each of twelve categories. For each goal, “key milestones” or expected benchmarks as well as budget requirements are listed. The OCE plan is considered a satellite plan of the archdiocesan strategic plan, which is now being revised.

Twice each year in January and June, the field staff of the Office of Catholic Education and its various ministries complete a comprehensive progress report on Living the Legacy to the Archdiocesan Education Commission (AEC). The progress report is discussed in its entirety with the AEC Monitoring Committee. The Committee then presents a summary report to the total commission along with a copy of the full report.

The planning process was designed by the Delta Learning Group consultants and was made possible by Project EXCEED funding by Lilly Endowment Inc. and other generous donors. Strategic planning helps to focus the work of the OCE and to provide long-term accountability for its mission. The AEC received the latest report on January 15, 2008.

ST. PIUS X, Blue Ribbon School

St. Pius X School, Indianapolis, was named a 2007 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School by the United States Department of Education this fall. Representatives from the school took part in two days of ceremonies in Washington, D.C. where the school was honored by, among others, the Deputy Secretary of Education. During this trip, Kathy Taber, middle school literature teacher, presented to other Blue Ribbon winners on a “best practice” at St. Pius.

The Washington celebrations preceded the school’s own commemoration of the award. On Friday, November 30, the school organized special activities for all of the students highlighted by a special presentation from the Department of Education’s regional representative, Todd Zoellick. The celebration culminated with the student body receiving bells and filing outside where the Blue Ribbon flag was hoisted on the flagpole while their individual bells joined the church bells to ring out the “good news” about St. Pius X School. The Saturday Anticipation Mass was dedicated to a parish celebration of and thanksgiving for this special award.

Former principals, Sister Antoinette Purcell, OSB (representing the Sisters of St. Benedict), Jim Leffler, and Sandi Patel were honored for the work they did previously to propel St. Pius toward this distinction. Dr. Ron Costello, Superintendent, also spoke about the stature afforded St. Pius and the schools of the entire archdiocese because so many of our schools have been honored as Blue Ribbon Schools (31 Blue Ribbons for 25 schools – 22 in just the past five years). The celebration concluded with a reception in the school where the Blue Ribbon plaque was proudly displayed.

Dr. Ted Caron is Principal of St. Pius X.

IMMIGRATION EDUCATION

Fred Koss wrote, “My wish is that the Church in the United States would become more active in pushing for a better understanding of the issues of immigration and a recognition that solving this problem should be considered a moral obligation.”

We’re working on fulfilling that wish, Fred.

- The Immigration Education Committee has produced a PowerPoint presentation for parishes and schools now available online at www.archindy.org/evangelization.
- A new Justice for Immigrants Website is now listed on the archdiocesan homepage (www.archindy.org) featuring: Frequently Asked Questions, Myths About Immigration, A Pastoral letter of the Indiana Bishops (also en Espanol), A Prayer for Immigrant Justice and links to the national website.
- Immigration Education Workshops on “Hope For The Journey” are being held throughout the archdiocese.

There is such a strong association between Latin Americans and Catholicism that it surprises almost everyone that nearly one quarter of all Latinos in the United States are Protestants.

- Of the 44 million Latinos in the United States, 70 percent are Catholic, translating into 29 million Catholic Latinos (compared to 22 million white mainline Protestants).
- About 23 percent (10 million) identify themselves as Protestants or other Christians. To put these numbers in national perspective, there are more Latino Protestants in the United States than American Jews, Muslims, Episcopalians or Presbyterians. Moreover, 37 percent (16 million) of all Latino Protestants say they have been “born again” or are evangelical.

Since 1967, the United States has grown by 100 million people; 55 million of Hispanic descent. In the last 10 years alone, 20 million Hispanics have been added. Latinos have surpassed African-Americans as the largest minority group in the United States and now represent 14 percent of the U.S. population.

The vast majority of Latino Protestants consider themselves to be evangelical or “born again” – that is, they report to have had a personal conversion experience related to Jesus Christ. Within the Catholic Church, the Charismatic movement is popular and gaining ground among Latinos. Unfortunately at this time, for every one Latino who converts or returns to Catholicism, four leave the Church. As Catholics, we need to continue to welcome our new neighbors. We believe the Holy Spirit will manifest itself in this ministry and continue our own conversion and spiritual renewal through this outreach on behalf of Jesus Christ.

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Thoughts from Mickey

“Catholic Schools Light the Way”

I love this year’s theme for Catholic Schools Week which combines the concepts of God as light of the world and the light of knowledge that our schools kindle in students. What a great image!

There is a much broader context than just schools in this theme. It is our concept of Total Catholic Education. It is the fact that our Catholic schools work together with our parishes to educate the mind, body and spirit – a place where the spiritual needs of the whole child are addressed along with those of the whole family. We help students understand that they are unique creations of God who have a special divine light inside of them.

Our Catholic schools here in the archdiocese under the leadership of our school administrators, pastoral teams, boards/commissions and faculties have made significant contributions to our communities. Our students’ academic achievements, service projects to help the needy, accomplishments in music, art and drama and the success of our athletic teams are all well known here in the archdiocese.

March 25-28, 2008 our excellent Catholic schools and faith formation programs in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will be on the national stage as we host over 10,000 Catholic Educators at the NCEA Convention, Exposition and NPCD Religious Education Convocation at the Indiana Convention Center. Governor Mitch Daniels has recognized the importance of this event by declaring March 25, as Catholic Educator Day in Indiana. I am so proud of our local convention Management Team, and our 1500+ volunteers who will help us represent the best of Total Catholic Education to the rest of the nation.

Thanks,

Mickey

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