Dear Catechetical leaders:

Here’s a great example of how my crazy brain works: I was looking up the word “February”—first of all, because its pronunciation makes no sense—but I also wanted to find out where such a word came from! It came to us from Old English and traces back to the Latin Februa, which is plural for “feast of purification.” And then that jarred me into thinking about Lent—and Lent starts on March 1!! (It’s sort of like my aunt’s birthday on December 1 that always sneaks up on me because I haven’t yet transitioned from November. But of course, you super-organized types wouldn’t know about that, would you?).

Even with Lent almost upon us, I hope you’ll breathe, put yourself in the present moment, and dive into this issue of the Bulletin—especially Gustavo’s feature on what we have planned for catechist enrichment this spring. Page 5 is a good summary of another upcoming initiative, the Fifth Encuentro (check out the video link). And there’s so much more. I pray that in this month that celebrates LOVE, you will come to know that God loves you like crazy!

- Sharon K. Perkins, Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Family Life

Focus: The How of Catechesis

by: Gustavo Rodriguez, Associate Director of Catechesis

During this 2017 year, the Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Family Life will focus many of our gatherings and trainings on how to refine our skillsets and become even better Catechists. The methods, approaches and pedagogies we use are essential in making the learning experience truly transformative for those whom we serve; their goal is ultimately to help students develop a profound and intimate relationship with Christ. The National Directory for Catechesis (NDC) reminds us that genuine catechesis employs methodology that:

♦ Emphasizes God’s loving initiative and the person’s free response
♦ Accepts the progressive nature or Revelation, the transcendence and mysterious nature of the word of God, and the word’s adaptation to different persons and cultures.
♦ Recognizes the centrality of Jesus Christ.
♦ Values the community experience of faith
♦ Is rooted in interpersonal relations and makes its own the process of dialogue
♦ Utilizes signs (symbols), which link words and deeds, teaching and experience.

Draws its power of truth, and its task to bear witness to the truth, from the Holy Spirit. (NDC 28,B)

That’s a tall order, even for the most seasoned and experienced catechist! That’s why our office plans to devote this year to concentrating on how the NDC and portions of the Catechetical bulletin inform sound methods of instruction that are influenced by our human experience and the Gospel—and especially how to translate these methods into practice.
Catechetical and Methodological resource training for our catechists

We are happy to announce that a portion of the requirements for level I catechetical certification will have a new option for fulfillment. Author Joe Paprocki’s Catechist’s Toolbox, published by Loyola Press, will provide an alternative to the learning modules required to complete the Catechetical and Methodological portions for level I certification. (The theological modules will continue to be provided through diocesan instruction throughout the year in different locations). The Catechist’s Toolbox is a valuable collection of methods, techniques, and tips that provide on-the-job training for any new or experienced catechist. This resource—based on Paprocki’s book and accompanied by online videos, blog posts, and articles—helps the catechist develop the skills he or she will need in order to thrive. For example, it includes information on how to prepare a lesson, lead a discussion, supervise children, apply discipline, and help children grow in their faith.

RCL-Benziger’s Echoes of Faith, a video series accompanied by workbooks designed for individual and small group reflection, has been used in many parishes and has been the primary resource used in our diocese to complete the catechetical and methodological modules for level I certification. The Echoes of Faith series has been a longstanding project of the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), with a great reputation for effectiveness because of its basis in the experience of numerous catechetical leaders. Echoes of Faith is now available online in its new 3.0 format, delivered digitally via subscription. This version of Echoes of Faith is another good option for Catechetical leaders to help catechists to complete the methodological and catechetical portions of the certification requirement.

“Meet with the Publisher” Days

Many of you may be familiar with the “Publishers’ Days” offered in years past, in which a group of publishers’ representatives demonstrate their materials all on one day. This year, we’re offering each of our Catholic publishers a full day to showcase their resources and help us learn how to best utilize them. We have asked the publishers to demonstrate different methods of instruction and to share with us classroom strategies for learning. What are the benefits of this approach? Our goal is to provide a more thorough product knowledge, input about your specific needs to the publishers, and a great opportunity for sharing best practices with your peers. Catechists and Parish Coordinators of Religious Education are encouraged to attend any of the sessions, regardless of the published curriculum currently used in their parishes.

♦ Monday, February 13: Loyola Press & RCL Benziger—Methodology Training
♦ Monday, February 27: RCL Benziger
♦ Monday, March 6: Loyola Press
♦ Monday, March 27: Sadlier Religion
♦ Monday, April 24: Our Sunday Visitor
♦ Monday, May 8: Ascension Press

“Made in the Image of God”

Our office will also host two identical workshops (one in the spring, and the other in the fall of 2017) dedicated to learning about catechizing students with special learning needs. These sessions will build on the 2012 one-day conferences entitled “Made in the Image of God” which raised awareness and highlighted available resources for religious education. In this workshop, participants will share best practices and create plans of action for improving their parish’s responses to children, adults, and their families who often are “on the peripheries” (to quote Pope Francis) of our parish religious education and sacramental preparation programs because they don’t “fit” our usual norms and structures.

♦ Thursday, April 6: “Made in the Image of God”—Serving Persons with Special Needs (new date)
♦ Monday, October 9: “Made in the Image of God”—Serving Persons with Special Needs
Cedarbrake Retreat Center, Belton

**February 20, 2017: Cancer Survivor’s Retreat**
This retreat is a time for cancer survivors to come together to share their stories. Wanda Gibson is a business owner, spiritual director, and cancer survivor. Mrs. Gibson will lead this prayerful, winter day of reflection, meditation, discussion and movement through the survivor’s journey into the present moment. Whether you are celebrating one week or twenty years since your cancer experience you are invited to join us in courageous company as we allow our mind, body, and spirit to engage, heal, rest, renew, and rejoice. The cost is $40 and includes lunch. [Click here to register.]

**March 1, 2017: Ash Wednesday Day of Reflection**
The Ash Wednesday Day of Reflection at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton on Wednesday, March 1 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. is a time for growth in our spiritual life. We invite you to take advantage of the opportunity to deepen your experience of Christ. Brian Egan and Beverly Collin will facilitate this day. The cost is $40 and includes lunch. [Click here to register.]

**March 10-12, 2017: Silent Lenten Retreat**
The Silent Lenten Retreat at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton March 10-12 is a weekend of silence combined with communal prayer and Mass. Brian Egan and Beverly Collin will lead this retreat. The cost is $185 for private rooms. [Click here to register.]

**March 25, 2017: RCIA Day of Reflection**
The Right of Christian Initiation for Adults Day of Reflection at Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center in Belton on March 25 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. will lead those journeying through the RCIA process to explore both our need for Christ and the meaning of Christ’s resurrection for us and for the world. The day will include prayer, music, spiritual talks, private reflection and fellowship. Cheryl Maxwell, former director of the diocesan Worship Office, will lead this retreat. Cost is $25 per person and includes lunch. Please register through your RCIA director.

Eagle’s Wings Retreat Center, Burnet

**February 7, 2017: Be Still and Know That I am God**
Our lives are full of things to do: work and family and our “to do” lists just continue to expand and take up all our time. How can we find time in our everyday lives to just "BE?" Come away and spend a day in the lap of God as we explore Psalm 46. Presenter: Cindy Isaacson & Sue Fowler. Retreat leaders at both parish and diocesan level. [Click here to register.]

**March 14, 2017: Walking Through Grief in Faith and Hope**
Walking through grief can be the most difficult part of life’s journey. Mourning can seem to intensify as anniversaries or special days approach. Although there are no right or wrong ways to grieve, there are healthy ways to cope and heal. Scripture tells us to grieve but to not lose hope. During this Day of Spirituality, we will explore scripture, look at the natural journey of grief, and discover ways to face grief and seek healing. Presenter: Judy Hoelscher; MA in Pastoral Theology, Gifted retreat facilitator, musician and hospital/hospice chaplain for over 27 years. [Click here to register.]
SAVE THE DATE!

2nd annual
Austin Diocesan Women’s Conference
Saturday, September 23, 2017
Santa Cruz Parish, Buda, TX

WOMEN:
Healing the Body of Christ

2017 Catechetical Calendar Dates
English & Spanish

Visit our 2017 webpages for more information and the full class listing for the following programs:

♦ 2017 Summer Certification Program (registration to open in spring)
♦ 2017 Basic Teachings and CAF (English)
♦ 2017 Basic Teachings and CAF (Spanish)

Welcome our student intern, Rachel Gauna!

Rachel Gauna, a senior pastoral ministry major at the University of Dallas' Neuhoff School of Ministry, has joined us this spring in the Office of Evangelization, Catechesis, and Family Life. Rachel will work with the ECFL staff about ten hours a week, assisting with the Religious Education Survey Project, which is based on the online surveys sent to all diocese of Austin catechetical leaders in January 2017. She’ll help us collect all surveys from the parishes (so if you haven’t turned yours in, you can expect a gentle phone reminder from Rachel!), analyze the survey data, and put together a report that will help us to serve the great variety of parish religious education programs in our diocese and plan for future needs.

Rachel, age 23, is the second oldest of seven children and lives near Georgetown. She’ll be finishing her capstone project (focused on the RE survey) and is excited to learn more about the ministry of catechesis at both the parish and diocesan levels as she prepares for graduation this May. We hope you’ll help us welcome Rachel!
WHAT IS THE V ENCUENTRO?
The V Encuentro is a four-year process of ecclesial reflection and action that invites all Catholics in the United States to intense missionary activity, consultation, leadership development, and identification of best ministerial practices in the spirit of the New Evangelization. The process has been proposed as a priority activity of the USCCB's Strategic Plan for 2017-2020. The V Encuentro starts at the grass-roots level and calls for the development of resources and initiatives to better serve the fast-growing Hispanic population in dioceses, parishes, ecclesial movements, and other Catholic organizations and institutions in light of its theme: Missionary Disciples: Witnesses of God’s Love.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE V ENCUENTRO?
All leaders in arch/dioceses, parishes, lay ecclesial movements and other Catholic organizations and institutions are invited to participate by encountering Hispanic/Latino Catholics, particularly those living on the periphery, through the missionary process of evangelization and consultation of the V Encuentro.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE V ENCUENTRO?
The main goal of the V Encuentro is to discern ways in which the Church in the United States can better respond to the Hispanic/Latino presence, and to strengthen the ways in which Hispanics/Latinos respond to the call to the New Evangelization as missionary disciples serving the entire Church.

Click here to view a short video explaining the V Encuentro!

PARISH TRAINING

February 18, 2017
Sacred Heart Parish
2621 Bagby Ave., Waco, TX 76711
Registration deadline: Feb. 10, 2017

March 4, 2017
St. Anthony Marie de Claret Parish
801 Burleson St., Kyle, TX 78640
Registration deadline: Feb. 24, 2017

Parish trainings are a unique opportunity to learn how the process of the V Encuentro invites all Catholics to engage in becoming missionary disciples. Parish teams are required to attend one of the trainings listed below. Talk to your pastor about becoming part of your parish team and help to implement the V Encuentro process in your community.

All sessions will be bilingual (English and Spanish) from 8 a.m.—4 p.m.

For more information or to register call (512) 949-2426, visit www.austindiocese.org or scan the QR code with your mobile phone.

A $20 per person registration fee includes lunch and materials. The whole parish team must register to participate.
Couples Time Out
This is an opportunity for couples of all ages to spend quality time together to reflect and rejuvenate their relationships. This month, we celebrate Love as we spend a blessed morning reflecting on the Sacrament of Marriage and Family. We will have talks from our Schoenstatt Fathers, couples / personal reflection time and will close with mass at the Shrine.

Here is some information about Couples Time Out:
♥ Date: Saturday, February 11
♥ Time: 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
♥ Topic: Sacrament of Marriage and Family
♥ Location: Our Lady of Schoenstatt Marian Shrine, 225 Addie Roy Rd, Austin, 78746
♥ Babysitting provided; please RSVP
♥ Donation: $10 per couple/family

Please RSVP to Cati and Luis at cto@schoenstatt.us or 512-228-6510 as soon as possible so we can plan for morning activities and babysitting.

For more information about the Office of Family Life, please visit the following web pages:
♦ Family Life Office home page
♦ Catechesis on Human Love
♦ Introduction to Theology of the Body
♦ Marriage Preparation
♦ Natural Family Planning
♦ Prepare-Enrich

If you have questions, please call Dr. Phi Le (512) 949-2470, or Yolanda Sanchez (512) 949-2492.
Save the Date!

February 13, 2017: Loyola Press & RCL Benziger Methodology Presentation
February 27, 2017: RCL Benziger Faith Formation Presentation
March 6, 2017: Loyola Press Faith Formation Presentation
March 20, 2017: Diocesan DRE Day of Reflection at Schoenstatt Center of Austin
March 27, 2017: Sadlier Religion Faith Formation Presentation
April 6, 2017: “Made in the Image of God”—Serving Persons with Special Needs, at Diocesan Pastoral Center *(Date has changed from the 4th to the 6th)*
April 24, 2017: Our Sunday Visitor Faith Formation Presentation
May 8, 2017: Ascension Press Adult Faith Formation Presentation*
June 5, 2017: Summer Certification Courses begin at Diocesan Pastoral Center
June 9, 2017: Ascension Press Training for “YOU” (Theology of the Body for Teens) at Diocesan Pastoral Center
September 23, 2017: Diocesan Women’s Conference at Santa Cruz, Buda
October 9, 2017: “Made in the Image of God”—Serving Persons with Special Needs, at Diocesan Pastoral Center

Deanery Meetings

**Austin North/Georgetown/RR:**
- Thursday, March 30, 10 a.m.
  St. Thomas More, Austin

**Austin South & Central:**
- Tuesday, February 21, 10 a.m.
  St. John Neumann, Austin
- Tuesday, May 2, 10 a.m.
  Holy Cross, Austin

**Waco Deanery:**
- Thursday, April 20, 6:30 p.m.
  St. Philip, China Springs

**Temple/Killeen:**
- Thursday, February 9, 4:30 p.m.
  St. Mary, Temple
- Thursday, March 9, 4:30 p.m.
  St. Mary, Temple

**Bastrop/Lockhart Deanery:**
- February 10, 6:45 p.m.
  St. Paul, Smithville
- March 24, 6:45 p.m.
  IHM, Martindale
- April 21, 6:45 p.m.
  St. Mary, Lockhart
- May 26, 6:45 p.m.
  Ascension, Bastrop
- June 9, 6:45 p.m.
  Ascension, Bastrop

**Brenham/La Grange Deanery & Bryan/College Station:**
- Monday, February 20, 10 a.m.
  St. Mary, Caldwell

**San Marcos Deanery:**
- Thursday, February 16, 10 a.m.
  St. Mary, Wimberley
- Thursday, April 20, 10 a.m.
  St. Mary, Wimberley
- Thursday, May 18, 10 a.m.
  St. Mary, Wimberley
- Thursday, June 22, 10 a.m.
  St. Mary, Wimberley
- Thursday, July 20, 10 a.m.
  St. Mary, Wimberley

**Marble Falls/Lampasas:**
- Date pending
Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

1 John 4:7-12