

Why Collaboration is Essential to Being an Agent of the New Evangelization

Wendy Scherbart



Pope Benedict XVI has launched a Year of Faith to “help the faithful develop the gift of the faith received from the Lord, to live it and transmit it to others.” The primary place for the transmission of faith has been identified in the family. The Bishops recognized that other bodies within the church have to support the family in its evangelization.

In order to support the family in its evangelization, diocesan departments must collaborate and embrace a common vision; this Year of Faith is an opportunity for diocesan directors and staff to model this for parish and school staff.

Here are four examples of how collaboration can promote evangelizing parishes:

COLLABORATION WITH PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS

Last year I led our diocesan catechetical advisory board in a consultation with the parish catechetical directors and coordinators to identify three goals based upon the challenges and joys they expressed in their ministry. They chose: Strong Catholic Families, Evangelizing Catechesis of Culture, and Cultures and Catechist Formation. A grant was written and strategies for training, best practices and resources were designed after consulting the parish catechetical leaders. We will implement the strategies in a coordinated effort with the diocesan pastoral ministry departments.

COLLABORATION WITH THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

In August, the director of youth and young adult ministry, John Rinaldo, and I were invited to lead a parish staff day on youth ministry in the context of total parish ministry. We structured the day as a conversation connected to the parish mission statement and invited the staff to reflect on their ministry’s purpose and hope for young people and families. Citing data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, the guiding principle of the conversation was “The *single most important influence* on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents.” John and I highlighted three best practices to grow youth and family ministry. We connected our best practices to the strategies generated by the diocesan council of priests’ subcommittee on youth ministry. In small groups, the staff reflected on the strategies and brainstormed new ideas. In a large group, they shared their best ideas and prioritized the top three to be implemented within their parish. The results were interesting; the staff began the day

focused on youth ministry and ended focusing on becoming an evangelizing parish. They chose to use sacramental preparation as an opportunity for evangelization of families, provide mini-retreats for adults, and enhance their liturgy to make it engaging for youth, realizing the best way to enhance youth ministry was to become a more vibrant parish that understands its role as an evangelizing community.

COLLABORATION WITH THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP

Diana Macalintal, the director of worship, and I collaborate on catechist and catechumenate formation. We both are members of the diocesan catechumenate committee and provide formation workshops with the committee for team members. Diana recently taught the basic catechist formation session on liturgy. I have learned from her the importance of mystagogical reflection in helping people uncover the presence of God in their lives. Diana highlighted in her teaching that “we can’t know what liturgy/Eucharist means unless we participate in it and live it.” Diana’s conviction about the use of mystagogical reflection in catechesis to unleash the power of liturgy has had a profound effect. Our collaboration to provide formation for catechists has helped me understand how to do evangelizing catechesis through the lens of mystagogical reflection and lead others to do the same.

COLLABORATION WITH DIOCESAN DIRECTORS OF CATECHETICAL MINISTRY

The animators of the Diocesan Directors Forum have chosen the topic of how diocesan departments can foster collaboration among parish staff and ministries to become an evangelizing parish at our next forum at NCCL. We look forward to the conversation this forum will produce. I recommend the following articles published by Boston College C21. <http://issuu.com/church21/docs/spring-2010>

Evangelization is the foundation of every ministry. It is the common mission that binds our ministries together. As diocesan directors, let us respond to Jesus’ directive to “go therefore and make disciples” in collaboration with our colleagues. It will make all the difference! ■

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