

# Formation for Mission

*any age, any number, any size, any where.....*

September, 2011 - Vol 1,

Issue 5

## In This Issue

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## Join the Gathering!!!

Look at the amazing variety of presentations for you to be part of during Diocesan Convention - November 4th and 5th this year! [Click here](#) and link to the Diocesan website for more information. Please remember, pre-registration is a must!

**Friday, November 4th - Breakout Session 10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.**  
Gathering Presentation 1 - The Roles of Deacons & Licensed Lay Ministers (Part 1)

Gathering Presentation 2 - Creating a Vision and Practical Planning in Youth Ministry  
Gathering Presentation 3 - Spiritual Knitting  
Gathering Presentation 4 - Talking Like Leaders

**Friday, November 4th - Breakout Session 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Gathering Presentation 1 - The Roles of Deacons & Licensed Lay Ministers (Part 2)  
Gathering Presentation 2 - Challenges in Christian Formation  
Gathering Presentation 3 - What You Need to Know About Hospice  
Gathering Presentation 4 - An Extended Advent

**Friday, November 4th - Breakout Session 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**  
Gathering Presentation 1 - Best

## Discernment in Christian Education....

What is discernment, and what does it have to do with Christian Education? Doesn't it have to do with holy orders, and with choosing a new priest for our parish? Well...yes. But those are only specific applications of what is broadly, the responsibility of all of us, all the time. And it has every bit as much place in our parish Christian Ed. programs as it does in any other part of the common Christian journey.

Simply and directly stated, discernment is "the process of assessing and evaluating, particularly in relation to trying to determine God's will in a particular situation or for one's life direction."<sup>[1]</sup> So discernment, by this definition, is something that we are all to engage in. More directly, it is the unending process of listening for God's voice in our lives. But as in all "listening," conversation is implied.

To think of "listening" most often elicits images of an action that is equal to "hearing." But we all know people who hear just fine, but don't tend to do much listening, right? Listening is a way of being. It is a posture that we adopt in our lives, a posture that says, "What you have to say is valuable to me." At a deeper level, a listening posture says that, "I will be changed in my interaction with you."

Discernment can be built into our Christian Education. Sometimes our programming can take the form of the expert who is presenting. "Conversation" in such models promotes questions by participants to the expert, who then supplies the answers. This model, however, doesn't promote true conversation. Conversation allows room for everyone to add themselves, their thoughts and experiences of God. When conversation is the model, we all actively engage a topic in such a way that we can all be changed, not just by the answers, but by our common engagement with each other.

As you make plans for your Christian formation programs this year, whether for children, youth, or adults, consider a model where, for example, a ten minute video, or presentation, or film clip, etc, is followed simply by a few open-ended questions - questions that allow everyone to put something of themselves into the conversation, and questions that promote our common discernment of God's voice. Such models give flesh to the idea that a well asked question is worth more than answers to potentially unasked questions.

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<sup>[1]</sup> McKim, Donald K. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996)

Practices in Social Media in Ministry  
 Gathering Presentation 2 - The New Face of Racism/Bigotry (Part 1)  
 Gathering Presentation 3 - Liturgy & Music in Small Congregations (Especially Without Priests)  
 Gathering Presentation 4 - Ripe for the Harvest (Part 1)

**Friday, November 4th - Breakout Session 2:45 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.**

Gathering Presentation 1 - Nature: Disaster or Docent? The Possibility of Creation as Teacher for Living a Holy, God-filled Life  
 Gathering Presentation 2 - The New Face of Racism/Bigotry (Part 2)  
 Gathering Presentation 3 - Small but Mighty: How our small churches can thrive in the 21st Century  
 Gathering Presentation 4 - Ripe for the Harvest (Part 2)

**Saturday, November 5th - Breakout Session 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.**

Gathering Presentation 1-Art and the Image of God-Uncovering Our Relationship (Part 1)

**Saturday, November 5th - Breakout Session 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.**

Gathering Presentation 1 - Art and the Image of God - Uncovering Our Relationship (Part 2)  
 Gathering Presentation 2 - Backpack Shepherds: One Church's Experience Feeding the Hungry

**An Open Invitation!**

Let us hear from you!  
 The Christian Education and Formation commission wants to hear YOUR questions, understand YOUR concerns and listen to YOUR solutions. When we listen and share, everyone benefits....and this is as close to Dear Abby as we can get! Send your thoughts to [Judy Kile](#), CEFC

**Focusing on ministry....a quiet day**

Praying with the Prayer of Silence, by Cori Pursell M.A.C.S.

The "prayer of silence" or praying without words is often called the "via negativa" of prayer because we are no longer talking, petitioning or interceding in prayer, we are actively listening to what God would desire for us. In contemporary Christianity there are two streams of modeling this prayer; one names the discipline Centering Prayer and the other names it Contemplative Prayer. They each use a similar but unique way to enter into the silence. \*

Preparing and Guiding a Quiet Day in your parish can be a wonderful experience. Choose for your Guide one who is experienced in contemplative prayer and comfortable with silence as well as one who can protect the quiet for others. Choose a space in your parish that is the right size for the group with straight back chairs and good temperature regulation. Bring with you a bell, focusing candle and a clock which can be set for 20 minute intervals.

Begin and end your Day of Silence with prayer, using either the Daily Offices or excerpts from a spiritual writer whose writing centers on the prayer of quiet. In the morning you may offer two separate opportunities to "sit" for 20 minute intervals with a break in between. If you need to offer instruction this can be your first session. When sitting with experienced folks you can offer time after the second session to journal what has come up for them as a way to further their interior work.

A short brisk walk can be taken for those who are able right after lunch. The afternoon session can offer one additional sit with time for people to gather in twos and threes and to share what has happened during their day of listening. The encounter with Christ is one which heals, promotes forgiveness, releases old memories and all this can happen in the day of silence.

The benefit of praying together in community in a spirit of solitude is profound. Just as Jesus would pray in silence, we too can enter into a prayer which moves out from us and enters the unitive prayer of the community within which we pray. The fruit of this kind of quiet day of prayer is not always immediate but can be observed later as one waits with reverence. For those who come and for the parish where it is held much peace will issue forth from such a day.

\*Centering Prayer is the name given to the prayer of silence by Contemplative Outreach. The model they offer is as follows:

- Ring the bell slowly three times
- Each time say quietly in your mind, "Be still and know that I am God"
- Select a sacred word that focuses your attention on God, keep it ready as a guard over your heart.
- As each thought arises, allow it to surface and to move on.
- Do not become attached to any thought, to any feeling, to any emotion.
- If you find you have been hooked, gently return to your

Chairman.

sacred word.

- Do not be harsh with yourself if you find your mind filled with many things.
- Staying quiet and returning to the sacred word will allow a settling of the mind.
- Even if you should need to return to your sacred word many times, remember you are returning to God.
- When you hear the bell sound at the end of 20 minutes, arise bow to the Christ in the person who is seated closest to you and wait in silence moving any body part that needs attention.
- Give thanks for the time you are able to give to God in listening and being quiet

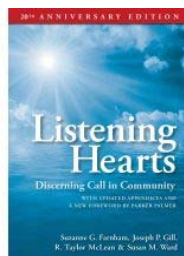
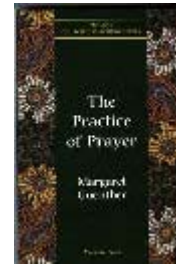
### Book Club

## BOOK CLUB

This section is set aside for articles, books and videos that might be of interest to anyone involved in Christian Formation - both for personal use as well as useful in our ministries.

**The Practice of Prayer** is Volume Four in [The New] Church Teaching Series.

Cowley Publications. The author is a priest, spiritual director & retreat leader. The jacket reads - *In this down-to-earth book on the essentials of prayer, Margaret Guenther answers many of the common questions of the spiritual life, such as How do we learn to listen to God in our prayer? and, How do we develop a life of prayer in the midst of busy, active lives? She includes practical descriptions of a number of ways Christians have prayed through the centuries, from using the Jesus Prayer or rosary to praying with the stories of scripture and prayer book liturgies. Guenther also discusses basic matters of Christian practice, such as making a confession, intercession, going on retreat, simplifying our lives, using a journal to pray, finding a spiritual director, and praying through times of desolation when God does not seem to be listening.*



**Listening Hearts** Discerning Call in Community by Farnmah, Gill, McLean and Ward 1991 ISBN 0-8192-1563-5. This book is designed for use in prayer and meditation and as the basis for group discussion. It provides suggestions on forming discernment groups and ministries, questions to raise in discerning call, as well as an informal history of the ministry. The author addresses the challenge of

remaining faithful and attentive to God's call and how a faith community can be a source of spiritual, psychological, physical and financial support.

**Spirituality for Ministry** by Urban T. Holmes,



1982 ISBN 978-0-8192-1916-9 examines the spiritual base that allows clergy to be interpreters of God's message and symbol bearers of God's presence in their congregations. Holmes explores the role of spirituality in the vocation of the ordained, the classic virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the place of worship, prayer and parish piety and the need for spiritual companionship. It can also be helpful to the layperson who desires more understanding and knowledge of how spirituality integrates with parish life.

