

## WHAT DOES FAITH FORMATION INVOLVE???

**Faith** ... a gift from God; **Formation** ... shaping, molding.

**Faith Formation** ... helping to shape and mold the gift of faith. If repetition serves to leave an impression, then allow me to repeat again from the Baptism Ritual of the Church: "Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. May they be also the best of teachers bearing witness to the faith in all that they say and do". Faith Formation is the prime responsibility of parents. So what is the work of the Church?? The Church gives a formal dimension to the nurturing of the faith that began in the home. The Church helps to give some 'fullness'. And the Church is entrusted with this task as the visible Presence of Jesus Christ in the world today. We are not starting something new.

BLESSED SACRAMENT, like all Parish Churches, is continuing the MISSION of Jesus: preparing the Church on earth to become part of the Church in Heaven. That's awesome! In different words: if we live the life of Jesus here on earth, we will inherit the promise of the Kingdom in the world to come, the eternal world, HEAVEN. This is not a choice that the Church on earth makes; it is a task that the Church on earth must do.

Our FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM, as a Parish, caters to the needs of different segments of the community:

for the young up to the age of 6 or so (EARLY CHILDHOOD FORMATION);

for those in elementary school up to the age of 13/14 (ELEMENTARY CHILDHOOD FORMATION);

for those in Junior and Senior High School up to the age of 18/19 (HIGH SCHOOL/YOUTH FORMATION);

for those in post-High School/College (YOUNG ADULT FORMATION);

for those from age 24/plus (ADULT FAITH FORMATION);

for those seeking to know about the Catholic faith, tradition and practice and below the age of 13 or so (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN/RCIC);

for those seeking to know about the Catholic faith, tradition and practice and above the age of 15 or so (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS).

Each level of formation is entrusted to the care of **CATECHISTS** (persons who teach the Catechism) who themselves have the proper formation to pass on the GOOD NEWS. They should be 'formed' in the faith, tradition and practice of the level at which they become messengers of the Good News of the Gospel. They must have the 'tools' (**Content** of Theology and the proper teaching methods, **Methodology**) to make their **Catechetical Ministry** effective.

Just by way of example ... let's put it this way ... one cannot conduct a class in Culinary Skills (Cooking) if one does not know the manner in which the proper combination of foods and additives will result in something delectable – that is, tastefully edible!! How can one formally teach the faith without knowing the Good News as it has been lived down the centuries of time (tradition and practice). **A WELL-FORMED CATECHIST IS A PRICELESS GIFT OF THE CHURCH.**

### A WORD ABOUT THE FAITH FORMATION OF JR-SR HIGH SCHOOL/YOUTH MINISTRY

Like other subjects in our development of 'secular' (worldly) knowledge, it is necessary that the bases (language, math, history etc.) receive increased challenges of content as time moves along. So, math, for example, moves ahead from its simple applications of plus, minus, multiplication and division to more challenging combinations of Algebra, Trigonometry, Calculus and the like. Why not the same with the teaching of the faith? The simply stated Commandment: THOU SHALT NOT KILL, as years move ahead, involves the challenges of 'What does KILL mean? What are ways in which a person is deliberately deprived of life? Slander and calumny ... are these also ways in which 'killing' happens? Do we have a moral responsibility to uphold the good name of another? Our answers to these possibilities are also a development of the commandment THOU SHALT NOT KILL.(a 7-yr old child may not even be able to give meaning to SLANDER or CALUMNY but an 18-yr old with a High School education could talk intelligently about the possibilities and ramifications of SLANDER & CALUMNY!).

Our youth today are challenged in many and various ways about the understanding and implications of the Ten Commandments. Do they even know them? Can our youth state the Commandments in their simplest form? Does HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER also include unknown adults older than them? Faith Formation at the High School level must challenge our young people to make the transference of SIMPLE TRUTHS to FULLER UNDERSTANDING. I have learned, over the years, from the experience of having to develop young minds that we, oftentimes, underestimate the abilities of our young people. They can grasp the implications of the truths of the faith. They are smart; they love challenges; they are up to it! Just as they are able to develop their skills in handling the basketball, they can also learn to handle their challenges to the faith if they are given the tools to work their minds and hearts in proper combinations to adapt the ways of Jesus Christ. This is the task of YOUTH MINISTRY. We are to develop CHRISTIANS WITH A CATHOLIC MINDSET.

Any comments ... pass them along to CHELSEA MOORE, **DIRECTOR OF JR-SR HIGH SCHOOL/YOUTH MINISTRY.**

## A WORD ABOUT FAITH FORMATION IN THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA)

Yes, it happens ... there are men and women in the world who, perhaps by the example of Catholics within the family or maybe by acquaintance, are touched in a special way by the witness given the Gospel. They want to know the who, what, why and where persons, out of conviction, attach themselves to the Catholic way of life. Maybe, they say, I too can be a part of their faith tradition. And so they inquire!

The question is: HOW DOES THE INQUIRER BECOME THE 'CATHOLIC' WITH CONVICTION?

Holy Mother the Church, from early times, has had to keep folks abreast with the message of Jesus Christ. New converts to Christianity were instructed over a long period of time. This was the beginnings of the RCIA (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS). They were shaped and formed as Christians, followers of Jesus. The early name for this group was PEOPLE OF THE WAY. It was only later, in Antioch, that the followers of Jesus were called CHRISTIANS for the first time.

Over the centuries, this process of formation took different forms. Nonetheless, it was the life and teachings of Jesus that was the basis for incorporation into the Christian fold. The first converts to the ways of faith were adults. They, in turn, 'formed' their families, their children and relatives. And the Church has come down to 2020!

Sister Colie, the **DIRECTOR OF THE RCIA PROCESS**, from experience and her own commitment to the Religious Life of Women, has helped in this process, here at Blessed Sacrament, for the past twenty-two years. Wow!

If you know of anyone, family member or otherwise, who wishes to inquire into the Catholic faith and tradition, please let Sister Colie know. Give her some contact information, and she will be glad to follow up. And when you do this, also pray that the initial faith of inquiry will blossom into a full-grown Christian!

I should also mention that the children of such inquirers will also receive formation either in the RCIC (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF CHILDREN) or some alternative arrangement that Sister Colie will devise.

## A WORD ABOUT THE FAITH FORMATION OF THE ADULT COMMUNITY IN GENERAL

Apart from special groups that have been mentioned over the past few weekends, there remains the larger section of the parish community that are hard-working, dedicated parents/singles, who also need to keep abreast with the faith and its practice. These persons too are thirsting for the continued formation about the life and teachings of Jesus. In general, most of the adult community are seeking guidance from the 'teaching Church' about everyday issues of the 'Catholic' response to challenges faced in the workplace, the grocery store, while on vacation or even self-generated queries! What they want is continuing ADULT FAITH FORMATION.

Such formation may not be serially continuous, but it is certainly related to "How does the Catholic face the challenges of everyday life?" This formation may spring from current matters of a moral nature or maybe even matters of justice that do not appear very Christian, much less Catholic. My understanding from conversations with folks is that, in the past, much attention was given to the formation of children and sparse attention given to the formation of adults. Hopefully, under the leadership of Sarah, **DIRECTOR OF FAITH FORMATION**, a listing of possible current topics can be brain-stormed, and arrangements could be made to offer presentations to the adult community at large. Give Sarah a call (Parish Office) and make suggestions that could be considered. Sarah is in charge and is very capable of making choices/decisions.

--Fr. Derrick--