

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

Christian Formation & Catholic Schools

Diocese of Ogdensburg

November 2011

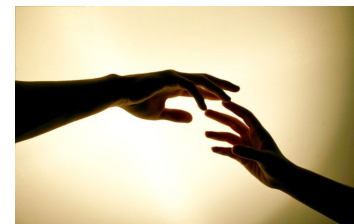
A Message from Sister Ellen Rose . . .

*"I believe it is time to change the story of Catholic education.
It is time to renew the life of Catholic education to tell stories of possibilities,
to share stories that awaken our imagination and give us courage."
(Karen Ristau, NCEA President)*

I recently attended a meeting for the Chief Administrators of Catholic Education. CACE is a department in the National Catholic Education Association. The annual meeting brings together Diocesan Directors of Education, School Superintendents and Diocesan Directors of Religious Education from throughout the United States.

This year's theme, "Awakening Possibilities" set the tone for a particularly positive and stimulating meeting. Certainly the task of Evangelization in our Catholic schools and parishes is critical to the life of the Church. In our times, however, it is often the declining numbers in Catholic schools and parish programs, school closures, dwindling financial resources and the challenges involved in training and maintaining competent catechetical leadership and catechists that become the topic of conversations and presentations at meetings. This year it was different. Speaker after speaker, round-table discussions and informal conversations with colleagues encouraged us to look at new possibilities.

I offer for your reflection some of the possibilities we were asked to consider.



Imagine what would happen if we:

- envisioned our school and parish programs primarily through the lens of Evangelization.
- regularly asked and answered the question, "Why am I doing what I am doing?"
- embraced the concept that it is not the Church that has a mission; rather the mission given by Jesus, "Go, make disciples!" has a Church.
- defined "Church" beyond those who are in the pews, acknowledging that most parishioners are not in Church on a regular basis.
- helped people to believe that God believes in them.
- treated people better than they deserved.
- recognized the local Church as the diocese not the parish.
- remembered what is good about the Church, what we love most about her.
- put into practice Pope Benedict's nuance to the "new" in the New Evangelization: Re-proposing the faith in a culture that has lost its instinct to believe.

Each of the above had a context and was developed by speakers in their presentations and workshops. But even as isolated statements I think they give us ideas to ponder and discuss with one another.

People who have hope live differently. While we do not know the details of what awaits us or the outcome of our efforts, we do know in general terms that our life will not end in emptiness. (Cf. *Spe Salvi*, #2, Benedict XVI). When the virtue of hope is operative in our lives we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Cf. Heb 12:2). We engage in the challenges that life presents but also embrace the possibilities that lead to revitalized efforts and/or new ventures that spread the Gospel and lead others to Christ.