

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEWSLETTER
Christian Formation & Catholic Schools
Diocese of Ogdensburg
February 2011

A Message from Sister Ellen Rose . . .

The approaching beatification of John Paul II prompted me to consider the impact which he had in the area of evangelization and catechesis. Early in his pontificate John Paul introduced us to the term *new evangelization*. When John Paul used this term he was not suggesting a new message. The message is always Christ always the words and deeds He proclaimed about the divine plan of salvation offered to all. As the author of Hebrews notes, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:7).

The *new* in evangelization draws attention to the “new ardor, methods and expressions” that evangelization must embrace if Christ and His message is to be proclaimed effectively to the men and women of today.

John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesis in Our Times*, sets forth the importance of catechesis as one of the Church’s primary tasks as she labors to fulfill her mission of evangelization. I offer the following excerpts for your reflection.

“Catechesis cannot be dissociated from the Church’s pastoral and missionary activity as a whole. Nevertheless it has a specific character Catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.”

“. . . at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. . . .”

“. . . the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.”

“. . . in catechesis it is Christ . . . who is taught . . . and it is Christ alone who teaches – anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips.”

“. . . every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus. He will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinion and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechizing.”

“. . . catechesis is not a body of abstract truths. It is the communication of the living mystery of God.”

“. . . the parish community must continue to be the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis. It must rediscover its vocation, which is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have been baptized and confirmed become aware of forming the People of God. In that home, the bread of good doctrine and the Eucharistic Bread are broken for them in abundance, in the setting of one act of worship; from that home they are sent out day by day to their apostolic mission in all the centers of activity of the life of the world.”

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will be celebrating the Easter Season. What a wonderful time to reflect on our ministry of catechesis. We, like the early disciples, are called to proclaim the risen Christ! Like them, we rely on the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and enflame our hearts so that Christ and His message may be proclaimed in its full integrity. In the spirit of John Paul II, let us embrace this ministry with “new ardor, methods and expressions” so that others may come to know and love Christ and share in the life of the Trinity.