

'Sent out to proclaim the message'

How to build disciples in central and southern Indiana

Editor's note: In Mark 3:13-15, Jesus chose 12 disciples and sent them out to proclaim the message of salvation.

Since then, the Church's mission to evangelize has continued, including here in central and southern Indiana.

Knowing those who catechize cannot give what they don't have, Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis, has encouraged catechists in the archdiocese to attend the St. John Bosco Conference for Catechists and Religious Educators at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, each summer.

This year, thanks in large part to funds from generous donors in the archdiocese, 15 catechists from central and southern Indiana—including Batesville, Connersville, Danville, Greencastle, Indianapolis, Liberty, New Albany and Oldenburg—were able to attend the July 13-16 conference.

The gathering—a combined educational/retreat experience—offered sessions specific to youth ministry, campus ministry, Catholic schools, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, and more, offered by nationally and internationally renowned leaders in Catholic catechesis. Each day also included the opportunity for Mass, adoration, confession and prayer.

Criterion reporter Natalie Hoefler followed the catechists to help them share with the local Church what they learned, and how parishes will benefit from their participation in the conference.

This supplement focuses on the experience of a few of those catechists, and a summary of a talk given by one of the keynote speakers.

For more information on the St. John Bosco catechetical conference, log on to www.steubenvilleconferences.com/adult/bosco#. The 2016 St. John Bosco Conference for Catechists and Religious Educators will be held on July 18-21. †



Right, a group of catechists traveling from the Indianapolis area to the St. John Bosco conference in Steubenville, Ohio, gather for prayer before making their return journey home on July 16. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



A cross of flowers adorns the grounds at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, where 15 catechists from central and southern Indiana participated in the St. John Bosco catechetical conference from July 13-16.

Mark 3:13-15: The key to evangelization is encountering Jesus

By Fr. Patrick Beidelman

In May of 2014, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin decided to place the management of the ministry of evangelization within the department that also coordinates the archdiocesan Office of Worship.

The primary motivation for this flowed from the essential relationship that is shared between our worship of God and the evangelical mission of the Church. This is most clearly expressed in the dismissal at Mass when all are sent to "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord," and to "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life."

So, our experience of prayer and worship, especially in the Mass, necessarily leads us out from our experience of the presence of the Lord to proclaim and share with others the good news of salvation we have received.

Throughout several consultations with those in pastoral leadership, as well as with those who are presently engaged in the promotion of evangelization, several needs and issues emerged.

While the conversations we have had identified many and varied ways in which effective evangelization is happening, many expressed that we need a clear, concise definition of evangelization before we can identify what methods we will use to cultivate intentional discipleship.

Others expressed a need for greater support of and resources for those of different cultures and language groups within our archdiocese.

Finally, there was a caution among those consulted that we not try to develop a "one size fits all" approach to our cultivation of evangelization in our parish communities. Each community itself has a slightly different culture and most certainly will discern different priorities as it relates to this aspect of the Church's mission.

So, what are some things that are emerging as possible next steps in the coordination of the ministry of

evangelization in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis?

Recently, Archbishop Tobin has given us some important foundational areas of focus upon which we can build our approach. Echoing Pope Francis, our archbishop recently said at a meeting on this topic that "we can't ask people to join us without giving them a personal encounter with Jesus Christ."

He went on to describe that this encounter is personal but not private. In this encounter with Jesus, there is always an invitation to community, for we hear the message of our salvation through the Church.

Archbishop Tobin would also have us view the call to missionary discipleship (which this encounter calls every person to) through this Scriptural paradigm:

"Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve, whom he also named Apostles, that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mk 3:13-15).

In this passage, we read about the call of the first Apostles that is also given to each of us who follow Jesus: (1) to hear Jesus calling us; (2) to come to him and be with him (personal encounter); and (3) to be sent out to proclaim the power and goodness of the Lord in all we say and do!

Throughout our acceptance of this call to be missionary disciples, we must engage at all times, as the first disciples did, in a deepening of our understanding of the beliefs and practices of our faith family so that our core development in the Church's teaching keeps us rooted in the truth of divine revelation.

This paradigm of Mark 3:13-15 brings us back to the connection between evangelization and our worship of God in the Mass and celebration of the sacraments.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that the sacraments are instituted by Christ and are the visible signs of the hidden reality and activity of God. They are signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ in the Church. (#774)

It is the encounters with the hidden reality and activity of God in the sacraments, especially in the Holy Eucharist, as well as with this work of the Holy Spirit that are so critical for the work of evangelization.

In the celebrations of the sacraments in the liturgy of the Church, the Holy Spirit acts in four unique ways, listed below (#1092):

- The Holy Spirit *prepares* the Church to encounter the Lord; that is, to hear Jesus calling us, as in Mark 3:13.
- The Holy Spirit *reveals* Christ to the faith of the assembly, *and* the Holy Spirit *makes present* the mystery of Christ here and now by his transforming power; that is, to come to him and be with him (personally encounter him), as in Mark 3:14a.
- The Holy Spirit *unites* the Church to the life and mission of Christ; that is, to be sent out to proclaim the power and goodness of the Lord, as in Mark 3:14b.

In the next few months, several resources and methods for evangelization will be provided for parish communities to choose from by which we can intensify our effort in evangelization and missionary discipleship in our everyday lives.

Together, let us hear the call of Jesus to be with him and to be sent out through the action of the Holy Spirit and the celebration of the Mass and the Sacraments. For this effort, we need only to turn to one simple prayer: Come Holy Spirit!



Father Patrick Beidelman is executive director of the Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization for the archdiocese, and rector of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish in Indianapolis. †

‘I don’t know and I don’t care’

FOCUS founder defines evangelization, catechesis, encountering Christ and building disciples

By Natalie Hoefler

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—Encountering Christ. Building disciples.

These are key terms discussed at parish staff meetings and heard from the pulpit.

How are they accomplished? Through two other often-heard words: evangelization and catechesis.

What do these terms and words really mean, and how do they play out in the lives of everyday Catholics, as well as those who teach the faith?

Curtis Martin, founder and chief executive officer of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), addressed these questions during his keynote speech on July 16 at the St. John Bosco Conference for Catechists and Religious Educators in July at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio.

Here are excerpts from his talk on defining evangelization and catechesis, addressing how to help people encounter Christ, and how to build up disciples.

‘I don’t know’ and ‘I don’t care’

“A teacher posed a question to his students one day: ‘How do you define ignorance and apathy?’

“One girl rolled her eyes and said, ‘I don’t know, and I don’t care.’ And the teacher said, ‘Exactly!’

“So how does this play into evangelization and catechesis?”

“Evangelization addresses the apathy, the ‘I don’t care.’

Evangelization is sharing the Gospel message.

“Once they know about it and care about it, then there’s no longer apathy. They thirst for more, and then you can teach all there is forever about the Catholic faith.

“But evangelization has to come first. If you try to teach the faith without them caring about it, you’ll lose them.

“Likewise, if you try to evangelize but then don’t catechize, they won’t know what they really believe.”

Wrestling with Scripture, encountering Christ

“Pope Benedict said, ‘I am convinced that if Catholics would begin to pray through the Scriptures daily’—what the Church calls *lectio divina*—it would bring about the new springtime.’

“Daily. Prayerful. Reading of the Scriptures.

“Don’t read [Scripture] piously—wrestle with it. Wrestle with the things you don’t understand. If you read something you don’t understand, stop. Pray about it. ‘Lord, what do you mean?’

“And wrestle with the things you do understand: ‘Lord, you want me to forgive *how many times*? I understand what you’re saying, but boy, that’s a lot! I can’t do that!’

“Read slowly. Don’t just read to check it off your daily list. Read to engage your mind and your imagination. Picture what’s going on. Place yourself there.

“Here’s what that looks like for me. Take Luke 24:27, where Christ is on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection and joins up with some travelers: ‘And beginning with Moses and all of the prophets, he interpreted for them all the Scriptures that concerned himself’ (Lk 24:27).

“This is the greatest Bible study in the history of the world—and there’s not a *single sentence about what he said!*”

“But turn [forward] a page, and the beginning of [the Gospel of] John gives a detail about him following Jesus, and it’s four o’clock in the afternoon. Why *that* little detail, but nothing about what Christ said when he interpreted the Old Testament for the travelers to Emmaus? I wrestled with that.

“But after praying about it, it hit me after a time. John was an old guy when he wrote the Gospel. He maybe thought, ‘Where do I begin?’

“Then he goes back to the beginning, the day he met Jesus Christ. ‘I remember it like yesterday! It was four o’clock in the afternoon. Everything in my life changed forever from *that hour.*’

“So ask yourself, what is your watershed hour? Peter was mending nets. Saul was on the road to Damascus. For me, I was in college.

“When you read the Scripture, sometime—maybe today, maybe next week, maybe in a year—you’ll encounter Christ. Encounter leads to conversion.”



Brad Macke, left, religion teacher and campus minister at Oldenburg Academy in Oldenburg, asks a question of Curtis Martin, founder and chief executive officer of Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), after a session at the St. John Bosco conference in Steubenville, Ohio. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

Three versus one million

“Once someone has had an encounter with Christ, the way to lead them to the Church or back into the Church is through accompaniment.

“You see, *programs* don’t lead people to Christ—*people* lead people to Christ. The program is just the skeleton.

“At the great commissioning [Mt 28:16-20], Jesus didn’t say, ‘I’m giving you two choices: programs or discipleship.’

“Programs are fine—as long as they’re raising up disciples. If you build programs instead of disciples, you’ll never get where you need to go.

“The model of discipleship we use in FOCUS is the model that Jesus not only commanded, it’s the one he modeled.

“Say you have somebody with the gift of evangelization, and they can reach a million people a year, and they do that their whole life.

“A million people a year—while awesome—won’t get the job done. Ten million people a year won’t get the job done.

One hundred million people are born every year—reaching 10 million people a year, you’re down 90 million each year.

“Here’s what Jesus did. He started with Peter, James and John.

“Jesus spent most of his time with those three. What if you touched just three people?”

[At this point, Martin had three people in the audience of more than 400 stand, then asked each of them to touch three people and have them stand. He then asked those 12 people to touch three people and have them stand, etc. Within two minutes, all present were standing.]

“So after a year of investing time in three people—you spend hours with them, developing a deep friendship, sharing faith, praying, loving and caring for them—maybe each of them is ready to touch three people and invest time in them.

“This demonstration shows the power of discipleship. Three doesn’t look like very many—especially versus a million. But you set up a tidal wave of energy.

“The model Jesus used didn’t set up a billion followers. He raised up a dozen and said, ‘Go make more, and teach them to do the same’ [Mark 3: 13-15].

“Imagine if one person reached just two people, not three. Then those two reached just two people. In 25 years, you would reach 33 million people. And in the 33rd year—the amount of Christ’s time on Earth—you’d reach 8 billion people. That’s more than the number of people on the planet.

“A webpage may get a million hits, or a Facebook page get a million likes, but who is going to love those people? In this model, every single person on Earth would be known, loved and cared for. And every person would be knowing, loving and caring. Maybe it’s a little awkward getting that first conversation started—but heaven is worth the awkwardness.

“If we follow what Jesus said, to go forth and make believers—wait, no, that’s not what he said. Make students—no, that’s not what he said. Make Catholics—no, that’s not it either. He said to make *disciples*.

“To live discipleship is to call people first to the encounter, and then the accompaniment, then we can fulfill the new evangelization.” †

Teachers and campus minister find helpful ‘tools’ and tips

By Natalie Hoefler

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—Catholic schools provide one of the largest catechetical arenas in any diocese.

With this in mind, the St. John Bosco conference offers a Catholic School track every year.

Quannah Jeffries, a teacher in the theology department at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, focused on sessions within the Catholic Schools track during the conference, the first he has attended.

He was struck by a running theme throughout the sessions: evangelization.

“So we’re here at a catechetical conference, but there was all this talk about evangelization,” said Jeffries, who attended the conference for the first time. “It’s plain that there had to be evangelization with catechesis. I’m hearing other teachers say that, ... and then we come here and it’s acknowledged, and we’re talking about it. That gave me a lot of hope.”

Brad Macke, a religion teacher and campus minister at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg, also attending the conference for the first time, agreed.

“I really liked Curtis Martin’s explanation on the difference between catechesis and evangelization,” he said, referring to the keynote speaker and founder of Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS).

“He said it’s the difference between ignorance—‘I don’t know,’ and apathy—‘I don’t care.’

Evangelization overcomes apathy, and catechesis overcomes ignorance.

“People have to care before they want to know more. If you try to teach people who don’t care, that doctrine can fall on deaf ears. So you have to evangelize them first, introduce them to the basic Gospel message.”

And neither of those can happen, said Macke, without another common thread of the sessions he attended: prayer.

“Another common theme was that we as catechists and teachers need to be rooted in prayer,” he said. “To invite people to Christ without me being close to him is contradictory. Prayer comes first. It’s easy to fall into *doing things* and not just *being*.”

“The conference really drove home for me how important it is for teachers to pray for the students together. I hope to offer to the other teachers [at Oldenburg Academy] who might want to get together once a week, even if for five minutes, to pray for our

students and their needs.”

Jeffries received the same message.

“Everyone participates in the formation of the students in their Catholic life and deepening their life in the sacraments—teachers, administration, even janitorial staff,” he added. “That was a big takeaway for the teachers—that this is all of us, not just the theology department.”

One concrete tip Macke walked away with from the conference came from a question he asked of Martin during a question-and-answer session after the FOCUS leader’s keynote address.

“I asked him what intentional discipleship looks like for Catholic school teachers,” Macke recalled.

“He said one way you could do it is to offer the vision of what it means to be a missionary disciple to the class as a whole, and throw that invitation to everyone. So if they come to you, that means that they’re interested and they’re not being forced.

“I’m really excited about that. That’s probably my biggest takeaway.”

Jeffries gained some practical teaching tips from the conference as well.

“There was one session that was specifically about using beauty in catechesis,” he said. “The focus was on art, but it could also be music, film, multiple things.

“People are moved by beauty, attracted to it, opened by it. So when you can show someone the beauty of something, it opens them to the truth of it. It’s a movement of the heart and the mind at the same time.

“I got a lot [from the session] in regard to resources where I can find artwork and commentary to bring that into the classroom more.”

Jeffries also gained a tool for something he was planning on implementing this year in one of his classes.

“I went to a session on praying with Scripture,” he said. “That’s something that I was going to intentionally do—a *lectio divina* in the classroom. I was going to have to put that together.

“But there was a pamphlet given to each of us right there, with Scripture verses and questions. So I can work from that as my model and have this tool to bring right into the classroom, and help them to read more meditatively and enter into the Scriptures.”

Jeffries appreciated the new ideas and material he received from the conference.

“It’s easy to get into a rut when you’re teaching, and



Quannah Jeffries, second from left, and Brad Macke laugh during a general session of the St. John Bosco catechetical conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, on July 16. Jeffries teaches religion at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, and Macke teaches religion and serves as campus minister at Oldenburg Academy in Oldenburg.

you never want to do that,” he cautioned. “Students and personalities change from year to year, and there are different things going on in the culture, so you have to be able to adjust. This [conference] is going to give me tools for adjusting and making my classes even better.”

With the additional “retreat” component, the conference is a benefit Macke and Jeffries would recommend to any teacher or campus minister.

“It was a good mix of head and heart,” said Macke. “It helped me rest in God’s love, to get back to the source of why I [teach and minister in a Catholic school].”

Jeffries agreed.

“I love this conference so much that I’m just putting it out there for folks to put it on their calendar for next year right now, and tell them, ‘Folks, you’ve got to do this—it’s just great.’” †



Paulette Davis, administrator of religious education at St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, takes notes during a session at the St. John Bosco conference on July 14.



Kim Sprague, left, director of religious education and youth minister at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish in Bright, and Denise Dubois, coordinator of youth ministry at St. Gabriel Parish in Connersville, smile during a session at the St. John Bosco conference.

EVANGELIZATION SUPPLEMENT

Conference’s youth ministry track provides ‘meaty formation and catechesis’

By Natalie Hoefler

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—Lisa Whitaker was raised in a “good Catholic family by good Catholic parents.”

She never expected that someone like her could stumble in her faith.

“I had an experience of falling away from the Church in college, some hard life experiences,” she admitted.

But out of those experiences, she said, her faith was renewed, and a calling to youth ministry developed.

“My own brokenness and my own challenges as a young person in high school and college, where my faith was not affirmed by my peers—that’s how I got into youth ministry,” she said. “For me, it was truly a calling from God.”

“I realized there must be other kids like me who came from good Catholic families that would fall. [God] urged me to reach out to them, to let them know that Christ loves them, the Church loves them.”

Yet, to help them, Whitaker realized she had a lot of growing to do.

“I knew *of* [Christ], but didn’t *know* him at that point,” she recalled. “I knew the Catholic-speak and gestures, but not why we do what we do and believe what we believe.”

So she started on a journey to catechize herself. She read Scripture and prayed daily, went to Mass and adoration as much as possible and sought opportunities to serve and perform works of mercy.

And she got involved in catechetical ministry. Throughout roughly the last 35 years, in both volunteer and paid positions, Whitaker has served in youth ministry, Rite of Christian Initiation of

Adults (RCIA) and overall faith formation.

She now serves in a full-time, paid position as director of faith formation and youth ministry for Most Precious Blood Parish in New Middleton, St. Joseph Parish in Corydon and St. Peter Parish in Harrison County.

It is a lot of work, she admits.

“I almost didn’t come [to the conference] because of busyness,” Whitaker said. “But professionally and personally, I needed this.”

And Whitaker also knew what she’d been missing.

She started going to the St. John Bosco conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio in the early 1990s. It had been about 10 years since she’d last attended. After travelling to the conference this year, she lamented, “Why did I ever stop going?”

“Not only do you get solid, meaty formation and catechesis you can sink your teeth into,” she said, “but you also get a spiritual shot in the arm. You have the opportunity to attend Mass, to adore Christ in the Eucharist, to go to confession, and time for personal prayer. It’s a beautiful experience.”

Whitaker focused on the youth ministry track at the conference. With two years of attending those sessions, along with some coursework, she will obtain a certificate in youth ministry from Franciscan University.

“The wonderful thing about this conference is they bring in documents of the Church, the most current statistics and findings, veteran youth ministers from all over the country—it’s just a huge, huge blessing to help us catechize,” she said.

One clear message she gleaned from the conference is the need to create disciples—among all Catholics, but especially among teens.

“We’ve got to help move folks from just catechesis—which is very important—but also to discipleship,” said Whitaker.

“Right now, our focus [in the U.S. in general] is off-balance. The scales are tipped heavily in catechesis, but it should be measured with discipleship, which is a relationship with the Lord and wanting to share that with others.”

In today’s relativistic society where truth is whatever many want it to be, Whitaker said this message of catechists helping youths develop a relationship with Christ is of utmost importance.

“We don’t live in a Christian society,” she said.

“The Church has—specifically now in this time—a unique opportunity to lead others to Christ. Where else are the kids going to hear to rely on Christ, that there is a God and he’s got your back, wants to be your most intimate friend, will never leave you, and wants you to be with him for all eternity in amazing bliss?”

According to Whitaker and the speakers she heard at the conference, the key to creating disciples is teaching youths how to develop a relationship with Christ through prayer.

She said this is done by “giving them the mindset that you’re not talking *at* God, you’re in conversation *with* God.

“Praying is not only about talking, but more so about listening and then responding to what the Lord is telling you to do or not do,” she continued. “I heard that over and over [at the conference] about that relationship with God in prayer, and from that, you’re going to do amazing things.”

In a world that can be challenging to Christians, Whitaker found hope—especially in youth ministry—through the message of one particular session.



Lisa Whitaker chats with a fellow St. John Bosco conference youth ministry track participant before a session on July 14 at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio. She serves as director of faith formation and youth ministry for Most Precious Blood Parish in New Middleton, St. Joseph Parish in Corydon and St. Peter Parish in Harrison County.

“[The speaker] said our mission field is here—you don’t have to go to other countries to evangelize,” she recalled. “We’ve got enough teens to evangelize in our high schools and colleges.”

She said the presenter recognized that the environment today is that of a neo-pagan society, but that challenge should not be a cause for hopelessness.

“He pointed out that St. Peter and the early Church didn’t run from the pagan Roman culture—they totally changed it,” Whitaker said.

“Evangelizing our youth in this culture is a challenge for all of us: priests, deacons, catechists, bishops, the pope, even the laity.

“But what a privilege it is that we’re at a point to be able to hand on the faith in love and mercy.” †

RCIA catechists gain resources, knowledge, network of support at 'invaluable' conference

By Natalie Hoefler

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—As Mary Wagner, a volunteer catechist at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, walked the campus of Franciscan University of Steubenville during the St. John Bosco catechetical conference, she enjoyed seeing familiar faces, and being recognized by others as well.

"I didn't know what to expect last year," said Wagner, who attended the St. John Bosco catechetical conference for the first time in 2014.

She was so impressed and found the conference so helpful that she not only returned this year, but plans to attend for the next three years as well.

Her goal: to earn a certification from Franciscan University in instructing Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes. The certification is earned by attending the RCIA track at the St. John Bosco conference for five years.

"I think those credentials are well-respected," she said. "I'd like to be a director of religious education one day, but even if I never do anything else [besides volunteer], I can't lose, because the education and the information and the resources I've been exposed to are just incredible.

"I don't know of any opportunity anywhere else to have this kind of access to this kind of knowledge."

And not all of the information comes from the speakers, she pointed out.

"I now have a whole new network of friends," both from within and outside of the archdiocese. "Three of us [from the archdiocese] are going to meet once a month for lunch, and another [who lives farther away] and I plan to share e-mails and texts.

It's more than just the "head" side of the conference that draws Wagner, however—it's the "heart" side, too.

"It's not only educational, but spiritual and reaffirming," she said. "It's a retreat-like environment, so you get fed on all aspects. It's like the [Mastercard] commercials: Cost of St. John Bosco conference—\$500-\$600. Benefits—priceless."

Wagner was joined on the RCIA track at the conference this year by two other archdiocesan catechists: Sandra Hartlieb, administrator of adult faith formation at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, and Manuela Johnson, who begins her first year serving as a RCIA team leader for SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi Parish in Greenwood this fall.

It was the first time attending the conference for both, but they hope to return for the next four years to earn their RCIA certification from Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio.

"It was a phenomenal experience," said Hartlieb, who has been involved in catechetical ministry for more than 25 years.

Hartlieb said she not only received "top notch" information, but witnessed from the speakers how to best deliver that information.

"The keynote speakers spoke with their whole bodies," she said. "It wasn't just someone standing at a podium telling. It was someone who was engaged and passionate about their message. That excited me, so I know that that's the way to witness—to be engaged with every part of yourself."

Hartlieb feels it's "really important that our catechists and I have an opportunity to come [to the conference]."

"We are guiding people in something that is going to affect their eternity," she explained. "Our job is to introduce these people to Jesus and to have a relationship, and if we do that right, they'll see that the best place to have a relationship with Christ is in the Catholic Church."

Johnson agreed, and commented on another important relationship developed during the RCIA process—the relationship between the candidate or catechumen and their sponsor, which was the focus of one session at the conference.

As result of the conference, she said she hopes to "recruit parish sponsors in advance of RCIA, starting to give them time to learn about their role and the



Jeffrey Earl, second from left, Sandra Hartlieb and Mary Wagner follow along with the words to a song on a large screen during a praise and worship service before a general session at the St. John Bosco catechetical conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, on July 16. Earl is director of Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) at Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Danville; Hartlieb is administrator of adult faith formation at St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis; and Wagner is a volunteer catechist for RCIA and other programs at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)

importance of their role in building disciples."

Jeffery Earl, RCIA director at Mary Queen of Peace Parish in Danville, also walked away from the conference with a respect for the role of sponsors in developing disciples.

"I don't have the time to spend [time] one-on-one with each candidate," said Earl, who, like Wagner and Johnson, ministers in catechesis while working full time. "But when we find people in the parish who are strong in their faith and can share their faith, they can develop those relationships."

One of the biggest messages Earl walked away with from the conference was also about relationships—his with God.

"What this conference drove home is that I can't make this be 'my' [RCIA] program—that's not going to work. It has to be God's program."

Earl, who has a master's degree in theology and more than 10 years of experience in catechetical ministry, found the conference to be "amazing."

"It's not always someone with 10 years of experience and a master's degree [who leads catechetical ministry in a parish]," he said. "It's a person who wants to do their best, knows their limitations, and is struggling because they don't have the formation they need."

"This type of thing where you come for four days and get this almost miniature semester of course work packed into four days is invaluable.

"And then the other side of it is you get the spiritual formation. It connects you to Christ again personally, and it renews your own prayer life and spiritual life.

"I don't think you could spend your money any better than sending [catechists] to training like this." †

EVANGELIZATION SUPPLEMENT



The catechists from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis who attended the St. John Bosco catechetical conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, pose on July 16, the last day of the four-day gathering. Kneeling are Lisa Whitaker, left, Manuela Johnson and Erin Jeffries. Standing are Connie Sandlin, left, Mary Wagner, Jeffrey Earl, Sandra Hartlieb, Kim Sprague, Lynelle Chamberlain, Brad Macke, Paulette Davis, Quannah Jeffries, Charlene Phillips and Gabriela Carrero. Not pictured: Denise Dubois.



Lisa Whitaker, director of faith formation and youth ministry at Most Precious Blood Parish in New Middleton, St. Joseph Parish in Corydon and St. Peter Parish in Harrison County, chats with a religious sister on the grounds of Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, on July 16 during the St. John Bosco catechetical conference.



Mary Wagner, a volunteer catechist at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis, prays in the Portiuncula—a replica of a chapel restored by St. Francis—at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio, during the St. John Bosco catechetical conference on July 16.