



# ENCOUNTER

Evangelization and Catechesis of Children, Youth & Families

Office for Evangelization and Catechesis  
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Winter 2016

## Greetings from the Office for Evangelization & Catechesis

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“Winter’s back is broken!” My mother uses this phrase each year to indicate that spring is on its way. The days get longer, the air seems to be warmer and snow appears to be receding. If only it were true; the past two weeks here in Ottawa have brought record snowfalls, freezing rain and all the chaos of winter storms.

It is during these times that I wonder why we allow ourselves to be inconvenienced by the weather – why we just can’t seem to bring ourselves to slow down and be in the moment.

Years ago I spent some time in Itacoatiara, Brazil. As luck would have it, I was there during the rainy season. One afternoon, while homesick, I insisted on driving to the post office to see if there was any mail for me. I was warned that a downpour was imminent and it wasn’t a good idea to venture out, but I could not be deterred. Halfway to my destination the skies opened and torrential rain came, reducing visibility to nothing. I kept driving until suddenly the right front wheel sank into a hole. The car stalled – I was going to need help. The rain continued to pour.

The street was empty; there were no cars going by, no pedestrians, and the local businesses were closed. Across the road, I noticed a family sitting on their porch, watching the rain and this strange woman standing in red mud trying to solve her problem. I summoned them to come and help me. They didn’t budge – instead, they invited me to join them on the porch. Helpless and annoyed, I ran over and joined them. And there on that porch we sat around, chatted, laughed and waited out the storm. When the rain cleared, my new friends very kindly helped me get the car out of the hole and sent me on my way.

I couldn’t help but think of this experience last week as my one-hour commute turned to two while driving home in that record snowfall. Buses were stuck and cars were in the ditches. I wondered, what was my rush? Why couldn’t I and the thousands of others I was sharing the road with just sit and wait it out?

It seems to me that as we wait for winter’s back to be broken, we are called to sit back, relax and wait. It seems especially true during this season of Lent. Our time may be better used for prayer, for reaching out to keep a neighbour company, or for personal reflection, renewal and reconciliation. It seems to me that this is the way we ought to prepare to celebrate Easter.

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“THIS GRACE-FILLED  
MOMENT ALSO CONCERNS  
YOU, DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE.  
I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE  
AN ACTIVE PART IN THIS  
CELEBRATION AND TO  
REALIZE THAT EACH OF YOU  
IS A CHILD OF GOD.”

(Message for the Jubilee of Mercy for  
Young Boys and Girls, 6 January 2016)

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# AREAS OF OUR SOCIETY THAT NEED AN ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS CHRIST

AN EXCERPT FROM *DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS* BY JOSEPHINE LOMBARDI

“GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS  
TO THE WHOLE CREATION.” (MARK 16:15)

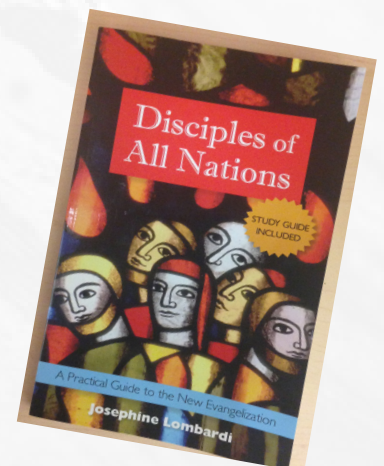
Pope Paul VI declared that Christians are to carry forth “the good news to every sector” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n.18). It is our duty to make God known, to re-propose Christ and salvation. This encounter will transform individuals, restoring them to divine health. The fruit of this transformation will in turn spill over into the various sectors that make up our lived reality.

The working document for the synod on the New Evangelization lists seven sectors in need of an encounter with Christ:

- **Culture: Encountering Christ in truth, beauty and goodness.** “It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel.” (EG, n. 69)
- **Social Sector: Encountering Christ in the stability of personal relationships and the protection of the family unit.** “The family is the fundamental cell of society.” (EG, n. 66)
- **The Economy: Encountering Christ in the just sharing of the world’s resources.** “... the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized....” (EG, n. 53)
- **Technology and Scientific Research: Encountering Christ in ethical research.** Science and faith are compatible: “Dialogue between science and faith also brings the work of evangelization at the service of peace.” (EG, n. 242)
- **Civic Life: Encountering Christ in authentic freedom and dialogue.** “Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue ... dialogue with states, dialogues with society – including dialogue with cultures and the sciences – and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church.” (EG, n. 238)
- **Media and Social Communications: Encountering Christ in life-giving media and communications.** There is a need for new approaches to evangelization. “There are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization, yet even good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them.” (EG, n. 26)
- **Religion: Encountering Christ in catechesis and faith development.** “We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize.” (EG, n. 266)

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For more  
information on  
*Disciples of All  
Nations*, please  
[click here.](#)



# CHRISTIAN MEDITATION IN THE DIOCESE OF ANTIGONISH

BY DEBBIE AKER, CATECHETICAL CONSULTANT

Building on the prayer opportunities of our new diocesan catechetical program, *Finding God*, the Emmaus Centre hosted a workshop on Christian meditation: Children, Young People and Prayer in the Christian Tradition.

Our facilitators – Paul Tratnyek, a Catholic educator in Ontario and faith animator with the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, and Glenda Meakin, teacher of Christian meditation and retreat leader in Canada, the US and the UK – provided our catechists and coordinators with the historical background of meditation in our Christian tradition. They guided the group into the presence of God through meditation practice and talked about the physical and emotional changes that occur in a person during meditation.

Participants offered positive feedback and indicated that the workshop was a great learning experience: “the actual doing (meditating) was helpful”; “I knew nothing about Christian meditation; I learned a lot”; “I didn’t think this type of meditation was for Catholics; glad I attended the session.”

We would like to share some of the resources provided during the workshop. The main resource we recommend is the **Canadian Christian Meditation Community** website. There are three items that we wish to draw your attention to on the website; all of them can be found under the Meditation with Children tab near the top of the home page:

- Video: *Something is Growing*  
This video demonstrates the value that children and teachers place on being able

to enter into the presence of God and the effect this time spent with God has on their daily activities.

- Online teaching resource: *Christian Meditation with Children BHCNCSB*  
This resource formed the core of our workshop.
- Online teaching resource: *WCCM Meditation with Children*  
This resource provides a general overview of the benefits of Christian meditation and the steps needed to enter into this form of prayer.

The workshop was very beneficial on a personal level for the catechists and coordinators, as it expanded their prayer life as well as offered them another form of prayer they could pass along to the children and young people of the Diocese of Antigonish.



For more information, please contact:

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# COME AND DO: CONFIRMATION PREPARATION AT IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PARISH

The following quote, attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, “Preach the Gospel at all times; if necessary, use words,” led to the decision to change the Confirmation preparation program in our parish. The children went from talking about it to doing it!

In our diocese, Confirmation is celebrated in Grade 7. It used to involve a catechetical year of preparation in a classroom setting. When the archdiocese decided to shorten that preparation to only a couple of months, we saw this as an opportunity to make some changes to our program. Our parish wanted the children to have an outreach experience so that they could put their faith into action.

Since then, we have been partnering with four different long-term care homes. Each week, I work with the recreation coordinator of each facility to develop a schedule of activities that the Confirmation candidates and the senior residents participate in together. The activities include arts and crafts, cards and games, special celebrations and discussions on topics such as Remembrance Day, and changes in society that seniors have experienced over time.

The seniors we interact with receive different levels of care depending on their individual and varied needs. As not all children grow up with older people in their lives, this is quite a learning curve. Not only are they spending time with older people, but these people have various challenges. The same is true for the seniors; not all have the opportunity to spend time with young people. Through this important service component of their preparation the Confirmation candidates learn valuable and concrete lessons about respect for the dignity of others throughout life.

Every September, the homes are excited to receive us. The residents look forward to the children coming each week. Six years on, it makes me smile to watch what goes on between these generations. We have only positive responses, and if you ask the youth, they will say that the time they spent with these seniors is the best time they had in all of their years of religious education.

Some feedback:

- “I really enjoyed spending time with residents and making them smile. I didn’t want our service project to end.”
- “I loved listening to their stories and planning fun activities for them. I made new friends and will continue visiting them.”
- “The most incredible moments for me were observing how nurturing and caring the youth are with the residents. They were kind with their words and their help in completing activities, patiently repeating themselves, helping people find their way back to their rooms and making sure they were comfortable.”
- “We really appreciated them coming; there was so much difference between our ages. We really looked forward to mixing with them. [We were] always interested in what they had to say and they too were very interested in our experiences.”



(cont'd on next page...)



Occasionally, a group is unable to participate in this endeavour, so they do other activities, such as raking leaves, helping at parish suppers, making a meal at Ronald McDonald House, helping the SPCA, raising money for charities, spending an afternoon with long-term hospital patients, and collecting blankets for the homeless.

Following the completion of the service component, candidates participate in four weeks of intensive preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation where they

can use their experiences in the outreach program to make connections with their learning. Not only does Jesus tell us to love one another, but he showed us how; this is what we want for our children.

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# LIVING FAITH: A RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S

**O**n the First Sunday of Advent 2015, an exciting new journey started with a new family catechetical initiative implemented throughout the Archdiocese of St. John's.

Since the end of the denominational system of education in our province, we have been involved in family-based catechesis, particularly using the *Born of the Spirit* catechetical series in parishes, a textbook series developed by the Canadian Bishops for use in schools, which we adapted for families. *Born of the Spirit* has run its course and, as of June 2015, was no longer available for use.

Throughout 2014 – 15, a series of consultations was held throughout the Archdiocese with a view to supporting family catechesis into the coming years.

Key messages were tabled at these meetings: the current approach was getting dated. Families were finding that using “years” or “grades” is school language, not family language. Families share faith and talk about God and the place of God in their lives differently than we do in classrooms. Also, there was significant confusion

around Sacramental preparation and family catechesis, with the latter demanding a more holistic approach to support the various types of families at the various ages and stages associated with family life. Faith development doesn't end at a specific year; it goes on for life. Something new had to be found, something that would support families better in weaving together faith and daily living.



Key to the recommendations coming from the consultation process was that there was a need to move away from school-based print textbook-type resources and create a resource that is more respectful of families and the realities of daily life, less school-centred, and more suited to building, fostering and growing faith in the family. Resources need to have a strong link to the Liturgy of the Word, the liturgical year and the life of the parish.

Work on a new resource is being completed at the Archdiocese in consultation with our parishes. *Living Faith: A Family Resource* was realized and is made available to families each week. Working together, we will grow this resource over the Church's liturgical years.

Each weekly resource is similar in approach: a presentation and reflection on the weekly Sunday scriptures, followed by activities and ideas for families to share faith around these scriptures. As well, there are doctrinal links supporting the Church's life. Lastly, each week there are profiles of how these scriptures and teachings are being lived out each day and opportunities for dialogue and action about ways we all can bring the Good News to our world today.

This is a part of myriad approaches being developed to support families. Other initiatives include the development of a sacramental program for Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Reconciliation, embedded in the liturgy and with rituals for the parish community, the updating and sharing of resources with and between catechists, planning of an Archdiocesan gathering of leaders and catechists, and online support of catechists through an Archdiocesan Facebook page as well as the development of a streamlined web page to support family catechesis. We envision much growth with digital media in the coming years.

Collectively, the Archdiocese recognizes that we all have a part to play as we work to support our families in understanding and living our faith. We wish to realize three things: work together to build and nurture the faith that has been handed down to us, grow as the people of God in love and in our ability to feed a hungry world, and do the best we can to assist parents to truly become "the first and best teachers of their children in the ways of faith."

We invite you to view our resource, *Living Faith*, on our web page: [www.rcsj.org](http://www.rcsj.org) under the title Christian Education.

We move forward in faith and hope.

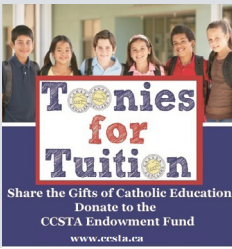
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# ONE TOONIE AT A TIME:

## HOW CANADIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ARE SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

When it comes to the discussion around Catholic education opportunities available across Canada, a particular word comes to mind: varied.

While some provinces are fully funded by their respective governments, including Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, others receive only partial funding – or none at all. The imbalances across the country gave the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association (CCSTA) an idea to help offer as many students as possible the chance to walk into a Catholic school classroom.

It all started with a toonie.

The CCSTA Toonies for Tuition initiative is an awareness and fundraising campaign to help provide support to students and families who could use the financial boost to help cover school tuition costs. From no funding in Newfoundland to partial funding in British Columbia, tuition bills vary, as do the needs across Canada. The money raised through Toonies for Tuition goes toward the CCSTA Endowment Fund, which provides funding to applicants seeking financial support for Catholic school costs.

Since Toonies for Tuition launched a decade ago, CCSTA has witnessed many ways in which funded Catholic schools have responded to the initiative with practical support.

Just last fall, St. Joseph's Catholic High School in Cornwall, Ontario, hosted a dress-down day and raised more than \$1,000 for Toonies for Tuition.

"The students learned about the privilege they have to obtain a wonderful Catholic education in Ontario for free while our brothers and sisters across the country have to pay their own tuition, whether partial or in full," explains the school's chaplaincy leader, Gordie Van Putten. "And in some instances, families cannot afford this, yet yearn for the faith-filled formation for their children."

CCSTA executive director Julian Hanlon says it's been inspiring to witness this kind of outreach.

"To have students understand and want to help other students receive the same opportunities they're getting in the school is unbelievable," he says. "Even though they don't know one another and live hundreds of kilometres away, these students want to help."

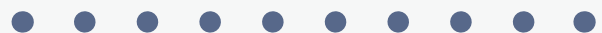
He adds that the initiative's success comes from the staff leading in the classrooms.

"Most of the time these fundraisers are initiated by school staff, who then ask the students to take it on," says Hanlon. "Their faith-based approach demonstrates the true Catholic mindset of reaching out a helping hand to those who may need it."

And the toonies do add up. Just recently, Paul Mantha, principal of Religious and Family Life Education at the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO), sent CCSTA a substantial cheque, enclosing a note that read, "Please accept our cheque in the amount of \$10,508 for our Toonies for Tuition fall campaign. As always, the CDSBEO is happy to be a part of supporting Catholic education for all."



Tom Fortosky and Mike St. Amand of Saskatchewan accept the Toonies Trophy in 2012, after the province raised the most amount of money for the initiative.



To learn more about the Toonies for Tuition initiative, please visit the CCSTA website at [www.ccsta.ca](http://www.ccsta.ca)

# HELPFUL LINKS FOR CATECHISTS



## CATECHIST FORMATION

- Newman Theological College Benedict XVI Institute for New Evangelization – Edmonton, AB
- St. Paul University – Ottawa, ON
- Dayton University – Dayton, OH  
Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation
- St. Francis Xavier University – Antigonish, NS

## PUBLISHERS

- CCCB
- Novalis
- Our Sunday Visitor
- RCL Benziger
- Pflaum
- Sadlier Religion
- Loyola Press

## OTHER LINKS

- *Laudato Si'* – A Canadian Response
- Pope Francis' Message for the Jubilee of Mercy for Young Boys and Girls: "*Merciful like the Father*"
- *365 Days to Mercy* App by Catholic Parish Apps, designed to accompany you on a spiritual journey during the Jubilee Year of Mercy
- *Criteria for Catechesis* - CCCB

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- New Evangelization Summit - Ottawa, ON  
April 15-16, 2016
- National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) – Jacksonville, FL  
May 22-26, 2016
- Steubenville Atlantic Youth Conference – Halifax, NS  
July 8-10, 2016
- World Youth Day – Krakow, Poland  
July 25-31, 2016
- Association of Canadian Catholic Adult Formation (ACCAF) – Ottawa, ON  
September 21-23, 2016

## SHARE YOUR STORY!

To submit an article for *Encounter*,  
please email [oc@cccb.ca](mailto:oc@cccb.ca)

## CHECK IT OUT:

**EMMAUS PRODUCTIONS  
YEAR OF MERCY VIDEO  
FOR CHILDREN**

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