

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C - September 18, 2016

Catechetical Sunday

What is your deepest, your very deepest, hope?

What is the source of that hope?

Since this is a Christian assembly I would feel sure that the source of our hope is God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

How did *we* come to *recognize* that God is our hope?

Then, how do we share that hope with others,
especially with the next generation?

Over 40 years ago the US bishops established the 3rd Sunday in September as Catechetical Sunday with the hope of drawing our attention to the importance of life-long catechesis.

The word "catechesis" is from the Greek meaning to "echo". For example, in today's Scripture readings we hear echoes of our faith in the Gospel. It says:

"we cannot serve two masters", that is, we cannot serve two Gods. Yes, in every Mass we hear echoes that form and mold us into faithful Christians.

In my lifetime we have seen a change in the way families and the Church echo the faith.

Bishop Byrnes, one of our Detroit bishops, described the method in the Church's recent past as *Institutional Faith*.

Parents brought their children to the Church and Catholic school (the *Institution*) with the hope that the *institution* would do the best job of forming their children into good Catholics.

I was raised in a Chicago ethnic parish.

German family names: Mueller, Eigenbauer, Hecht, ...

German priests: Fr. Leibach, Fr. Schiller.

A German order of sisters.

My parents sent us to the Catholic grade school

- with daily Mass for all grades.

The Church *institution* provided us with our faith foundations.

It's is where we learned the prayers and we learned the doctrine.

{Paul put 3-legged table by altar w/ Institutional sign}

This *Institutional* method, was effective IF it was also supported by the family and by the (Christian) community.

Like three legs which support a table, the three legs which support our faith are: the parish institution, the family and the community.

In this *Institutional* model the church and school were the prominent leg, the strong leg.

Then came the 1960's and beyond ...which brought many changes to society, to values and to family structures.

Add to that, the media explosion brought new/various ideas and values into our homes.

The *Institutional* Model, so dependent on one "leg", began to wobble.

Today our hope, for our own faith formation and growth, depends on all three legs being strong.

Bishop Byrnes calls today's model "*Intentional Faith*".

{Paul: put Intentional label on table}

Intentional means deliberate, making an effort, a conscious decision, ... it isn't just going to happen automatically;

All three legs support our faith when they are *intentional*, deliberate in their choices, actions, and programs.

How might all THREE legs that support faith be *intentional* and give us hope?

Leg #1 How might the **family's** hope for faith-filled children become *intentional*? {Pat: Hold up sign and then put by table}

Here are some ideas on how families make this happen.

(1) *Intend* to model Christian values in our life styles -

be forgiving, be trustworthy, be respectful

Many experts believe that a child's value system is formed by the time they are 6 years old.

(2) *Intend* to pray at home ... meal prayer - be it the usual prayer, a spontaneous prayer or even a song; prayers for the ill

(3) As Fr. Don encouraged us to do in his bulletin column last week, *intend* to bring young people to Worship each weekend.

Why? To learn what it means to be Catholic; to pray and worship God at the Mass

How? Sit near the front; help them follow the prayers in a Breaking Bread, explain parts of the Mass;

The Omabele family impressed me with their strong commitment to bringing all family members to Mass each weekend.

Abigail's daughter's told us about her mother:

dousing teenager with cold water when teen did not want to get up for Mass.

- (4) ***Intend*** to guide our children to serve others and then, afterwards, talk about why we Christians, as followers of Jesus Christ, serve others.
- (5) ***Intentionally*** enroll our young people (and ourselves) in parish formation programs, like GOF - a list is coming!
- (6) ***Intentionally*** talk about our faith:
 - point out experiences of seeing God in creation, in life;
 - ask kids about the Gospel from Sunday
 - ... What was the story? What does it mean for us?
 - Discuss what we each learned at GOF.

Leg #2 How might the hope for faith to blossom be made ***intentional*** in our faith **community**, leg two? {Paul: hold up sign and put by table}

- (1) Be a witness by our presence at Mass
 - our presence supports the faith of others, both young and old
 - example {Elaine at 4:00; Jerry at 9:00; 11:00 Mueller pew}; when they are not in the pew we miss their presence and support
- (2) Be a prayer witness at Mass: say the responses, sing the songs, bring up our church envelopes
- (4) Be a faith learner ourself: attend GOF so young people see that followers of Christ never stop growing in faith;
 - ...Bible Study... Emmaus groups [learning does not end with our Confirmation ... it continues and continues ... just ask me - I am 74 years old and still learning!]
- (5) Volunteer as a catechist or a leader for Children's Liturgy of the Word [see Sr. Therese or Miriam at the back table]
- (6) Participate in serving those in need

Leg #3 How might the parish be *intentional* in developing a strong faith in its members? {Paul: hold up sign and put by table}

{Handout cards with list of programs.}

Side two (right side): Has a diagram of the table with three legs.

The chart above shows Service Opportunities offered throughout the year by leg three, the parish.

On Side one (left side): Has a listing of the many programs available to support everyone's faith

- Information brochures with registration forms are in the tall grey kiosk at the table in the back of church
- Lots of pens on the back table to use to sign up

This handout includes many of the programs & service opportunities offered by leg 3, the parish.

It is up to each of us to intentionally participate ourselves and it is up to families to enroll their children.

Three legs that **together** support Intentional faith:

The Family, the Christian Community, and the Parish

What are **your** hopes for your faith?

- for your relationship with Jesus Christ?
- for the faith of your: family, children, grandchildren, relatives?
- for your friends and neighbors?

It is up to each of us to INTENTIONALLY decide, to choose to strengthen each leg in our quest to fulfill those hopes for a deeper faith in Jesus Christ.

May we all be blessed as we take on another year of being *intentional* disciples in the way of the Lord!