

Catechumens as Missionaries: Connecting Formation with Daily Life

A Workshop at the July 2003 Annual Gathering of NAAC

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Aim: to explore ways the catechumenate can engage inquirers and catechumens in bearing witness to the coming reign of God in daily life.

I. Exploration: Touching base with our own lives

In pairs share where in your life is the greatest sense of struggle?

Then ask each other the following questions:

Who is there?

What is going on?

What is needed? What is blocking God's characteristic work?

How do you see God at work?

What is God asking you to do in this situation?

II. Cards on the table

I have a quarrel with catechumenal ministry when it gets co-opted as a tool for church growth. I assume that the catechumenate is God's vehicle for initiating people into the reign of God. Wayne Schwab's work and his book, *When the Members Are the Missionaries (WMM)*, gives us tools for making a course correction in the way we do catechumenal ministry.

III. Getting clear about member mission and members as missionaries

A. The larger context: God's mission

B. Church = Kingdom?

“He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

Mark 4: 30-32

C. Contrast in viewpoint (See chart that follows)

IV. Challenging assumptions

A. Christian initiation should be minimal inconvenience and effort for the candidates. *If catechumenal process caters to the “safe-house,” it subverts the call and power of God.*

B. Sharing in God's mission to the world should come in the post-baptismal period. *Candidates deserve to “test drive” the baptismal life. Start slow, but start connecting God's mission and daily life from the beginning. Many inquirers are seeking because they are trying to make sense of some arena of their daily life.*

C. Weekly group reflection should be on worship and the Scriptures. *This is good, but it is insufficient. The reflection is to be on daily life in the light of worship and Scripture. Weekly reflection over the months of the process begins to form catechumens and sponsors in a rhythm of experience-reflection that is at the core of faithful discipleship. Focusing on mission in one's daily life integrates ethics, decision making, discernment of spiritual gifts, skills in communication using non-theological and theological language.*

D. Are there other assumptions that need to be challenged?

V. Six Mission Fields

- A. Clarifying the mission fields of home, work, local community, wider world, leisure, church (See *WMM*, p. 189.)
- B. Basic questions and assumptions (See *WMM*, pp. 189-191.)
- C. The questions for each mission field (See *WMM*, pp. 191-194.)

VI. What do inquirers and catechumens need in the process of moving from seeker to missionary? (See *WMM*, pp. 149-150.)

- A. Companions who listen to their questions and stories with God's mission in mind.
- B. Worship: "Participation in public and private worship."
- C. The paradigm story: "a Christian world view of the depth of our human need for help and God's response in Jesus Christ as expressed in *Christus victor*."
- D. Small group opportunity:
 - 1. "to discern their present missions in each of their daily arenas?"
 - 2. to "experience . . . biblically based reflection on daily life and the basic Christian ethic of love and justice, the public face of love."
 - 3. to reflect on decision making and values, the way systems resist or collaborate with God's mission, and how I/we attend to the inner light and promptings of the Spirit.
- E. Other?

VII. The larger context of the catechumenate

- A. Accountability for mission in daily life — reviewing, affirming, forming, and celebrating the ministry of every baptized member — is an ongoing task of the the congregation.
- B. Preaching, liturgy, groups, informal and formal communications will be

strengthened by attentiveness to member mission in daily life.

1. Deeds need to be illuminated and announced when possible.
2. The ministry of members of all ages can be celebrated regularly as witness to the promptings of the Spirit at work in all the people.
3. A new business, a new home, adoption or birth of a child, marriage, acceptance of a vocation, retirement, election to public office, a new job can all be celebrated and affirmed as arenas where God is at work and persons are listening to the crucified and risen Lord.

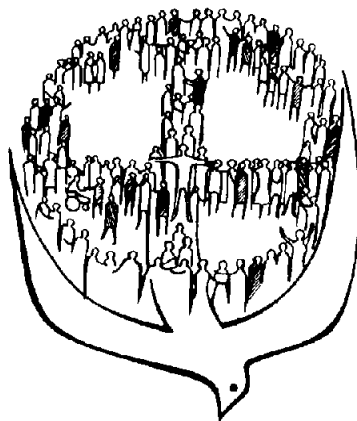
Resources

When the Members Are the Missionaries by Wayne Schwab (Essex, New York: Member Mission Press, 2002). Specific material related to helping people become missionaries, chapter 13.

Come to the Waters by Daniel T. Benedict, Jr. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996). See chapter five for specific resources related to settings and approaches to integration of catechumenate and daily life ministry.

Clipart found at <http://www.sijcomputers.com/cruzblanca/hermanoleon/>

I am indebted to Wayne Schwab and his book for much of the content of this outline



Church Focused on Church

Church Focused on God's Mission

Church has a mission	Mission has a church
Mission is to grow the church	Mission is to incarnate God's love and justice in the world
Grow the church	Grow the mission
Sunday as nest — "church day"	Sunday as launch for living Monday to Monday
"Body mission"	"Member mission"
Ministry is what happens in and through gathered church	Ministry is what happens in members' daily mission fields
Salvation understood as a benefit of faith and realized after death	Salvation understood as presence of the crucified and risen Christ and grateful participation in God's past and present victory
Organized around church as institutional structure	Organized around sacraments as our heartland and homeland for direction and power
Worship seen as asking us to do <i>more</i>	Sacramental thinking asks us to see what we are doing now differently
Baptism as entry into safe-house	Baptism as entrance into Jesus' victory and power through the Holy Spirit
Eucharist as personal and communal sharing with the church	Eucharist as personal and communal experience of God's direction and power for Monday to Monday
Seeing life in terms of church	Seeing life in terms of God's ongoing work
Christian education as transaction	Christian education as transformation