

Prayer helps close the breach between Gospel and daily life

By Ken Ogorek

Our chief shepherd and catechist—the vicar of Christ in southern and central Indiana—Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, calls the rupture between the



Gospel and daily life “the great divide of our time.” It’s no exaggeration to say that Satan wants you to compartmentalize religion so it’s “that thing I do on Sunday, and maybe a few more days a week when I pray.”

Catechetical Sunday’s theme this year, “Prayer: The Faith Prayed,” is meant to help folks realize that

religion is a way of life. Every area of your life is illumined by your faith in God and love for his holy, Catholic Church. Conversely, each aspect of your life is great raw material for prayer. God doesn’t want you to hold back in prayer. He wants you to pour out your heart to him each time you spend time with him in prayer.

Catechetical Sunday isn’t a one-and-done phenomenon. Yes, it’s a specific day when we honor catechists for their great service to us. Its tone and theme, though, are meant to permeate the entire program year of parish faith formation efforts.

Our U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) make great resources available to all Catholics and people of good will via its excellent webpage usccb.org. On the USCCB homepage is a link to Catechetical Sunday resources. See, for example, a family resource by Mike Aquilina called “Praying with the Fathers of the Church: A Reflection per Day for Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter.” Plan now to use this tool with your family later this year and early next year.

Author and speaker Jim Gontis offers “Another Look at Sacramentals and Devotional Prayers.” What a great resource for growing in knowledge of prayer and ability to communicate with God in this way!

“The Word of God as a Source of Prayer” by Chris Chapman includes contemporary examples and practical suggestions. Father Robert Hater, longtime Archdiocese of Cincinnati catechetical director, offers the theological reflection “Embracing Our Universal Call to Holiness.”

This year, don’t let Catechetical Sunday pass you by then be forgotten like yesterday’s football score. Avail yourself of the resources above and participate in catechetical opportunities offered by your parish, deanery and beyond.

Most of all, be mindful of your prayer life. Just visit with God for a few minutes each day. Call him to mind often as you go about your daily activities.

When you reach out to God often in the relational conversation that constitutes healthy prayer; when you listen to the handful of major ways God talks to you daily in sacred Scripture, Church teaching, and sacramental experiences; when you tell God what’s on your mind and ask him to inspire your heart so each area of your life is touched by faith, you can’t help but connect the Gospel and daily life. Your spirit is refreshed regularly. A skip in your step—attitudinally if not literally—is noticeable. The great divide of our time is healed. Satan is confounded.

When your prayer life is vibrant, a certain joy is evident to those you encounter in daily life. They might ask you what your secret is. You might have an opportunity to introduce them to Jesus. You might be an answer to unspoken, even unknown, prayer.

(Ken Ogorek is director of catechesis for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He can be reached at kogorek@archindy.org.) †



Children and Father J. Peter Gallagher are all smiles while surrounding a chocolate chip cookie rosary on July 1 during vacation Bible school at St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceburg, where Father Gallagher serves as pastor. The vacation Bible school program, which Father Jonathan Meyer helped develop, is an example of the authentic renewal of catechesis that has taken place in the Church since the end of the Second Vatican Council, and which has taken on new energy since the mid-1990s. (Submitted photo)

Authentic catechetical renewal seeks to bring faith and life together

By Sean Gallagher

Catholics across central and southern Indiana—indeed around the world—have “a right to solid, effective catechesis,” says Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis.

He has worked hard over the past nine years to continue an authentic renewal of catechesis in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis so that this right is respected.

And he’s also been doing this at the national level for the past year and a half as president of the National Conference of Catechetical Leadership.

“It’s invigorating,” Ogorek said. “It’s not without its challenges. As a parent, I’m familiar with what we sometimes call ‘growing pains.’ And so growth often involves a bit of struggle.

“Having said that, it’s invigorating and a blessing. I

just ask for prayers that authentic catechetical renewal will continue by God’s grace in our country and beyond.”

Ogorek and other catechetical leaders in the archdiocese and beyond spoke recently with *The Criterion* about the importance of the authentic renewal of catechesis for all the faithful.

He sees three “key traits” of catechetical renewal that began after the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, and took on new strength in the mid-1990s with the promulgation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the Vatican’s General Directory for Catechesis.

The first trait is what Ogorek describes as “affirmative orthodoxy.”

“We acknowledge that the basic doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church are not only true, but they’re also

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Prayer program teaches participants how to hear God’s voice in their lives

By John Shaughnessy

Phyllis McNamara understands when people say they’re overwhelmed by the daily demands of work and family life, but she also has a hard-to-deny comeback for anyone who says they’re too busy to spend time with God each day.

“He’s giving you a whole day, so you can set aside some part of it with him,” says McNamara, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis.

“Once you start doing it every day, it becomes a habit. And then you look forward to that time, and then it becomes a part of your life that you can’t do without.”

For McNamara, one of the best ways for learning how to develop a closer relationship with God is a program called “*Oremus*: A Guide to Catholic Prayer.”

The guide book for *Oremus*—Latin for, “Let us pray,”—declares, “You will discover how God speaks to you, even in the smallest encounters. Following the tradition of the Catholic Church and the wisdom of the saints, you will learn how to express yourself to God in prayer, and how to hear his voice.”

McNamara has helped people develop those skills as the leader of an *Oremus* study group program at Christ the King. Years before, she learned the value of listening for God’s voice and talking with him when she was devastated by the greatest tragedy a parent can experience.

“My daughter Julie died 10 days before her 17th birthday in 1989,” recalls McNamara, who also has a son, Jim. “She had an asthma attack and died.

“I was a single parent, and my kids were my life. You can die from that kind of pain, and that’s what I wanted to do. I wouldn’t have survived if I couldn’t talk with God. I still get sad sometimes, but then I’ll remember she’s safe, and I know who she’s with. That’s what God promises. I know he’s got her because he’s told me.”

While the program helps people see that “desolation and consolation are a normal part of everyone’s walk with God,” it also shows how prayer can be used to connect with God in routine moments of life.

“Some of the young mothers in our group said, ‘How can I pray while I’m doing the dishes?’” McNamara says. “I tell them, ‘You’re thinking about God. You’re doing this for your family. That’s prayer.’”

As a spouse and the mother of two girls, Connie Sandlin acknowledges, “I know I should pray every day, but sometimes I get distracted.” One of the most impactful parts of *Oremus*’ eight-week video program for her was an admission from the priest who developed it and leads it—Father Mark Toups, chancellor of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux in Louisiana.

“You hear his personal story and his struggles in his prayer life, even though he is a priest,” says Sandlin, the

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'Faithful Citizenship' can help Catholics form consciences for election

By Sean Gallagher

Glenn Tebbe has witnessed up close the nitty gritty work of politics in the halls and offices of the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis during the annual sessions of the state's General Assembly.

As executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), Tebbe is the public policy spokesperson for the Church in Indiana and an advocate for the Church's view on promoting the common good among Hoosier lawmakers.

Voters across the state and nation will play their part in the difficult work of politics on Nov. 8 when they will choose a new president and a wide range of office holders at the state and local levels.

While Tebbe knows that this work often involves much learning and discussion—not to mention partisan wrangling—he also knows that prayer should come first as Catholic voters form their consciences for the election.

"In terms of forming your conscience, that's a critical aspect," Tebbe said.

"Conscience is listening to God speaking to you about what the proper thing to do is at this time and in this circumstance in order to do good and avoid evil.

"Prayer is a time to listen. But prayer also includes seeking the truth about topics of concern through God's word and the Church's teaching. All of those are essential steps that help one to form one's conscience. Prayer is part of all that."

An important resource to help Catholics across central and southern Indiana and across the nation prayerfully prepare to participate in the upcoming election is "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," which the U.S. bishops revise and re-issue during presidential election years and is available online at usccb.org and archindy.org/faithfulcitizenship.

"It's a great summary of Catholic social teaching and the pertinent issues with regard to our obligations to civic responsibility," Tebbe said. "And it does a nice job of over-viewing the salient issues that we should be thinking about

regarding candidates and their impact on these issues."

"Faithful Citizenship" encourages Catholics to be involved in public life and to apply their faith to public policy issues. It also explores the basic principles of Catholic social teaching, and applies them to issues affecting political campaigns today. Finally, it helps Catholics determine how to balance the call to do good and avoid evil in the political process.

"For anybody that's serious about this, it's written in such a way that it's easily understood," Tebbe said. "And it's broken up into parts. You can sit down with it and take your time. You can read it in pieces. An adult education class can do it over several weeks."

Holy Family Parish in New Albany has sponsored a series of study sessions of "Faithful Citizenship" this summer. Zachary Mocek, pastoral associate at the New Albany Deanery faith community, has led the sessions and posted online video summaries of them on YouTube.

He has used study guides for "Faithful Citizenship" that are posted at usccb.org for the sessions that include Scripture readings, prayer and discussion on various sections of the document.

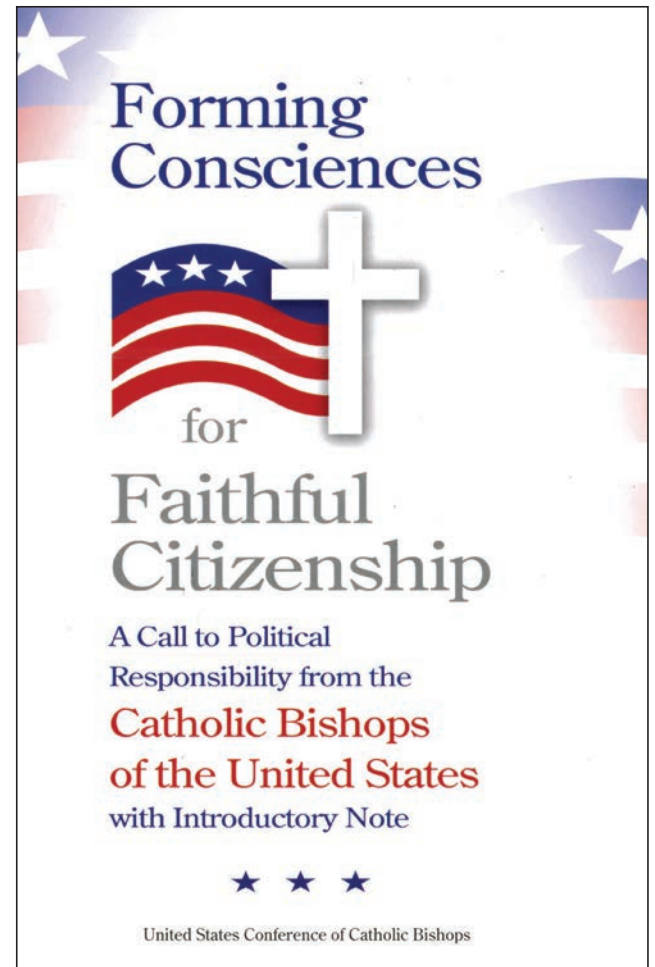
"You don't have to give an hour-long lecture on what this is," Mocek said. "You come together for 60 to 90 minutes to pray together and discuss these highlighted points [in the study guide]. It's very beneficial."

In addition to the study guides, four bulletin inserts on "Faithful Citizenship" are available at usccb.org.

"That's something that I think all parishes should distribute," Tebbe said. "It's relatively inexpensive to do."

"There's just a plethora of things for parishes, parish leadership and individual people. They can download the resources and use them in reflection, conscience formation and prayer. It's out there for everybody to use."

Ken Ogorek, archdiocesan director of catechesis, said "Faithful Citizenship"



"Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" is a teaching document revised and re-issued by the U.S. bishops during presidential election years that helps Catholics prayerfully consider their participation in the political process from the perspective of Scripture and Church teaching.

effectively applies the wisdom of Scripture and the teachings of the Church to the concrete circumstances of the political process.

"This resource brings those two ingredients together and allows us to reflect on issues of the day in light of God's outreach to us in Scripture, and in various teaching documents of the magisterium, both not-so-new and those that are very current," he said.

In leading members of Holy Family Parish in reflecting on "Faithful Citizenship," Mocek always returns to the critical part that prayer should play in their participation in public life.

"That's the most important part of it," he said. "We gather all of the information, and then we talk to God about it and we pray about it. How do we know what to do, and how do we know what he wants us to do if we don't talk to him? That's been a major highlight at the end of each session. I re-emphasize the prayer part of it." †



A sign in English and Spanish is seen as people wait to vote outside a polling place in Kissimmee, Fla. The U.S. bishops call in "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" to take part in elections in order to promote the common good. (CNS photo/Scott A. Miller, Reuters)

Tebbe notes importance of voting despite candidates with "very serious flaws"

By Sean Gallagher

The U.S. bishops have revised and issued "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" during presidential election years for decades to help Catholics prayerfully consider their participation in electing office holders from the perspective of Scripture and Church teachings.

Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) and the public policy spokesperson for the Church in Indiana, thinks "Faithful Citizenship" might be especially helpful in this election year where, he noted, the presidential candidates for both major parties "have very serious flaws."



Glenn Tebbe

"No person is without flaws," Tebbe said. "All of the candidates previously had their virtues and flaws. But these two candidates have very serious flaws in terms of their positions and how they might lead. I think it does pose a harder choice."

One option that voters can consider, Tebbe said, is to not vote for any presidential candidate, an action that "Faithful Citizenship" says is a legitimate choice under certain conditions:

"When all candidates hold a position that promotes an intrinsically evil act, the conscientious voter faces a

dilemma. The voter may decide to take the extraordinary step of not voting for any candidate or, after careful

deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods" (#36).

"You have an obligation to vote," Tebbe said. "But it doesn't mean that you have to vote for every position on the ballot. So, if you choose to not vote for somebody for a particular office, know that you have to look at the consequences that somebody else is making a choice."

He also noted the extraordinary nature of making such a choice.

"It's obviously an exception," Tebbe said. "It's taken only with due deliberation. If a person in good conscience says, 'I can't vote for either one,' they are not obligated to vote for either person."

Tebbe did encourage Catholics in Indiana, however, to vote for candidates for other offices despite how they may be troubled by candidates for president or another office.

"Don't be discouraged by the fact that our presidential candidates are so poor," Tebbe said. "Those aren't the

only people on the ballot. There are other positions on the ballot that are quite important and that have direct impact on our lives—as much if not more so than the presidency. Don't let the presidential campaign discourage you from voting."

In any case, Tebbe said that it is important for Catholics to live out their faith in society at all times, not just at election time.

"We are called to witness to our faith each day of our lives, not just during elections and not just when we're barking about public policy or arguing with people about which direction we should go with regard to one issue or another," he said.

"Being a disciple is not just an episodic, now-and-then kind of thing. It's every day, all day long in the choices we make and in the witness we give to everybody."

(A link to "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" and other related resources can be found at www.archindy.org/faithfulcitizenship.) †

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—Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference

Shelbyville parish helps with new USCCB program on prayer

By Natalie Hoefer

“It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray ...’” (Lk 11:1).

Some 2,000 years later, Christians are still seeking to learn how to pray.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is launching an eight-session series to address this desire. The series is called “Prayer: The Faith Prayed.” Through expert-led webinars, videos and articles, Catholics—whether catechists, teachers, parents or simply interested individuals—now have easy access to online tools to grow in this imperative pillar of faith.

The USCCB did not create this series in isolation. Rather, they sought feedback from those in the know.



Michael Steier

Members of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville were among those whose feedback helped make the series better by their input, says Michael Steier, associate director for the USCCB Secretariat

for Evangelization and Catechesis.

“We need the connection between the parishes, the dioceses and the country,” he says of the request for parish feedback on the program. “[Pam McClure, St. Joseph administrator of youth religious education,] generously agreed to invite participation of adults—some catechists and some not catechists—who were interested in growing in their prayer life.

“They were very supportive and positive in their program review, and very often praised program features that they found helpful and that they encouraged us not to lose after the pilot was over.”

The program, which is online and will be available in English and Spanish, is based on the fourth pillar of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and chapters 35-36

of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

“The series is of great use for catechetical leaders in parishes or teachers in Catholic schools, or parents providing home school education, and people who want to grow in their prayer life,” Steier explains. “One person said she was pleasantly surprised that this course will assist people who want to grow in faith but don’t have a specific mission to accomplish.”

The program offers history, information, applications and examples of prayer highlighted in eight sessions: What Is Prayer? Seeds and Flowering; Forms of Prayer; Teaching Prayer to Persons with Disabilities; Sources and Manner of Praying; Prayer in Communion with Mary; Prayer and Penance; Praying the Lord’s Prayer; and Leading Others in Prayer.

Each session offers tools in a variety of media—webinars (the primary source for learning), video vignettes, articles, PowerPoint presentations and other tools.

Burlington, Vt., Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, former auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, created a series of short video vignettes of about three minutes each focusing on gestures used during Mass.

“I recommend people look at Bishop Coyne’s vignettes, even if they don’t do the whole series,” says Steier. “They are a great way to get a lot out of a little bit of time.”

The vignettes can be viewed by visiting goo.gl/0QqaT1.

Beth Schoentrup, a former leader of adult religious education at St. Joseph, says that she “enjoyed the sessions a lot.”

“The piece on prayer and various forms of prayer, I thought that was very strong and would help adult catechists,” she says.

“Really, many of the speakers were strong. I liked the way some of the speakers looked at things from a different angle, but still a Catholic angle.”

Some of the other comments Steier received from the St. Joseph reviewers helped him know what the series got right:

- “Liked working through the program



Above is a scene from one of the “Prayer: The Faith Prayed” vignettes by Burlington, Vt., Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, former auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. The vignettes are hosted on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

at my own pace. Some [programs] you have to take wherever it’s offered and the pace is dictated by the leader and number of participants. With this, I could choose whatever time and date to participate.”

- “Loved Father DeSiano linking scriptural characters to religious orders.”
 - “I liked the exercises and the meditation on the body in motion that Bishop Coyne did.”
 - “The series built one session upon the other. That was very helpful.”
 - “I liked the illustrations in the PowerPoint presentations.”
 - “I benefited from the good historical background and scriptural background that helped demonstrate prayer forms, especially the Psalms.”
 - “I felt encouraged to slow down, savor and try new ways of prayer.”
 - “The presenters encouraged real and true intimacy with God. This reminds me we have to listen when we pray, not just ramble and give one-sided statements.”
- One piece of feedback Steier received from the St. Joseph reviewers led to a

positive addition to the series: the creation of vocabulary sheets.

“It was suggested that some terms were used that some [people] might not be familiar with,” he says. “So we looked at key words causing issues or that could cause issues, and went to the glossary of the catechism for comments on those words.”

The program is almost complete, with Steier estimating it being finished sometime between late October and Christmas.

What has already been developed can be viewed by logging onto www.usccb.org/leadership, then selecting “Prayer: The Faith Prayed” from the list on the right hand side of the screen.

Archdiocesan director of catechesis Ken Ogorek is excited about the program.

“The evangelism and catechesis secretariat of the USCCB has been putting out some really good resources,” he says. “Anything they do is top quality. They’ve really made it a point to invite some very talented people to share their gifts.

“I really encourage people to capitalize on any of their resources.” †

Prayer: The Faith Prayed

CATECHETICAL SUNDAY UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS **SEPTEMBER 18, 2016**

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RENEWAL

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good and beautiful and helpful, because God loves us," he said.

The next is that Church "abhors false dichotomies." At different times in the Church's history, he said, difficulties in catechesis have cropped up because there was too much of a focus either on the content of the faith or the experiences of the person being catechized. These should not be seen as opposed to each other, Ogorek said.

"Yes, there are things in life that are either/or, especially in the area of moral absolutes," he said. "But a lot of the mystery of our beautiful faith is a both/and dimension. It's head and heart. It's teaching and witness. It's the Gospel and everyday life."

Ogorek also said that authentic catechetical renewal celebrates human experience, but also acknowledges its limits.

"When we teach the faith, we certainly need to incorporate and address human experience," he said. "There are some aspects of God's infinite majesty where human experience is always going to fall at least a little short."

"Sometimes we just need to proclaim divinely revealed truth and then perhaps use it as a starting point to shed light on our human experience, rather than believing that, in all cases, we can start with human experience as a key to unlock every aspect of our faith."

Father Robert Hater, a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, has worked to shape the authentic renewal of catechesis for more than 50 years.

At 82, he could easily enjoy his golden years in retirement. But he continues to teach at a seminary and college in Cincinnati, assist at a parish there and serve as a theological consultant for a catechetical textbook publisher.

In his 2014 book, *Common Sense Catechesis: Lessons from the Past, Road Map for the Future*, published by Our Sunday Visitor, Father Hater emphasized the importance of the preparation of catechists to ongoing catechetical renewal.

He said they require two things: a knowledge of the basic teachings to be taught, and ways to present it clearly and effectively.

"The catechist in today's society has to be well prepared," Father Hater said. "They're busy people. They're not professionals. They're being asked to do something that is sometimes quite challenging."

A growing number of people who came of age during the mid-1990s when catechetical renewal took on renewed energy are now taking leadership roles in passing on the faith in parishes across central and southern Indiana.

Jackie VandenBergh, coordinator of adult faith formation at St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield, was a young adult during that time and tries to bring faith and life together in all she does.



Jackie VandenBergh

"Seeing a connection between our faith and our daily lives makes a great and often immeasurable difference in our lives," she said. "For some, questions about faith, God and the meaning of life are born in the midst of tragedy, trial, trauma, illness or a life-altering experience."

"Having both a relationship with Christ and the perspective that comes with our faith, we are able to see and encounter God working in our daily lives to the point that we could even experience gratitude in the midst of suffering."

Father Jonathan Meyer, pastor of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, was a young college seminarian during that period and looked forward to passing on the faith with vigor and conviction as a priest.

"There was a great drive within me to be involved and even create, if need be, programs or experiences to help young people know the Lord and serve him," he said.

In recent years, Father Meyer has helped develop a distinctly Catholic vacation Bible school program focused on Scripture and the mysteries of the rosary that he has used in his parishes and has started to spread to other faith communities.

"It works as a really good way to drive home a theme," he said. "Every day, the music, game, snack, color of clothing the kids are asked to wear, points to the biblical passage which is [related to] the mystery. If kids go home and know the five mysteries of the rosary for that year, we are winners."

Kristina Vogt, director of religious education at St. John Paul II Parish in Clark County, is even younger than



Children from St. John Paul II Parish in Clark County and their parents decorate personal chalices on April 6 at the New Albany Deanery faith community as part of the children's preparation for receiving their first Communion. (Submitted photo)

VandenBergh and Father Meyer, coming of age when Twitter and Facebook were becoming commonplace social media platforms.



Kristina Vogt

She now tries to keep up with newly emerging digital media to pass on the faith effectively to the people of her New Albany Deanery faith community.

"You're not changing content," Vogt said. "It's about adapting your method to reach those people. We just have to present it in the right way."

Ogorek said that the efforts of catechetical leaders across the archdiocese and the country to further authentic catechetical renewal are building on a foundation laid in large part by Archbishop Emeritus Daniel M. Buechlein.

"A lot of the fruit of those efforts in the 1990s are part of our heritage," Ogorek said. "In some way, they're the gifts that keep on giving."

Archbishop Buechlein worked to put catechetical renewal on solid footing in central and southern Indiana after becoming shepherd of the archdiocese in 1992, and later led the influential U.S. bishops' Sub-Committee on the Implementation of the Catechism.

This committee made sure that catechetical textbooks were in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

"I think that Archbishop Daniel helped catechists be clear on what it is that we are supposed to teach, the content of our teaching," Ogorek said. "His support of good assessment encouraged catechists to think about the extent to which they were getting through to the folks they were trying to teach."

"Archbishop Daniel was also supportive of faith formation commissions. A parish faith formation commission helps the parish catechetical program improve each year in response to the real expressed needs of the faithful in the parish."

Ogorek said that Catholics across central and southern Indiana all have a part to play in continuing authentic catechetical renewal.

"Pray for catechists, for parents who are doing their best to pass on the faith to their kids," he said. "Affirm really good catechesis when you see it. And if you see something that is well-intended but maybe not as effective as it could be or should be, I think the faithful should feel free to speak the truth in love to folks who are leading catechesis in their parish and the archdiocese."

(To learn more about catechesis in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, visit www.archindy.org/catechesis.) †

OREMUS

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pastoral associate and director of religious education at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Clarksville.

Even more powerful for Sandlin is the image that Father Toups created in the early part of the video series that she shared with about 30 parishioners during

this past Lent.

"He talked about encountering God before you even pray," Sandlin says. "God is waiting for you. I think about that now before I pray. He tells you to picture yourself sitting next to Jesus. That whole first week is about encountering Jesus before you pray."

Both Sandlin and McNamara noted that another strength of *Oremus* is the short series of prompts that are used to draw

people to share a more personal response to the Scriptures they are reading. They both focused on the prompts, "I sense the Lord was telling me ..." and "I ended the prayer wanting ..."

"What I love is that there are no right or wrong answers," McNamara says. "This is all you, and how you're being directed by the Holy Spirit to answer the questions. It's all about, 'What speaks to you?' and 'How do you want God to talk with you one on one?' It made prayer quieter, more thoughtful, instead of rushing through it."

That thoughtful approach to prayer was enhanced by the use of a journal during the program, Sandlin says.

"I'm not one who usually keeps a journal, but I did find it helpful," she says. "It helped me put my prayers into words—to talk to Jesus about it."

It also helped her to make her prayer more personal—an approach that was different and difficult for her at first.

"I pray a lot for my girls, my family. But this was different—'What does Jesus want for me?'" Sandlin says. "Several of us really struggled with that. We don't always think of ourselves. We started talking and said, 'I'm a child of God,

too, not just my children.' I had to start thinking, 'What do you want from the Lord?' It helped me see the value of daily prayer. It made me realize what I was missing."

That reaction was shared by the 30 parishioners who participated in the *Oremus* program during Lent at St. Anthony of Padua.

"They kept going to [Franciscan] Father Joe [West, the parish's pastor] after Mass, telling him how much they loved this program," she says. "It improved their prayer life so much that after

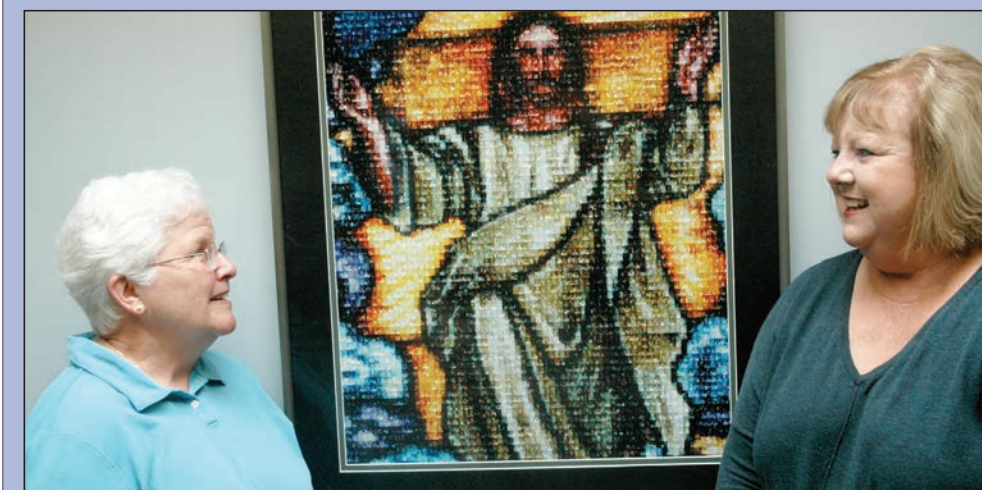
it ended, they wanted to continue meeting. We meet the first Monday of each month."

McNamara knows the difference that talking to God and listening to him has made in her life.

"It teaches you not just to do memorized prayer," she says. "I learned that you just have to be quiet. I just had to stop trying to control everything. I just had to listen because God is talking to you all the time."

"It's given me peace. Peace of heart. And confidence. Because I know I'm really not by myself. God is with me."

(For more information about *Oremus*, visit the website, www.ascensionpress.com.) †



Phyllis McNamara, left, has led a Catholic prayer program called *Oremus* at Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis—a program designed to help people develop a closer relationship with God. Here, she talks with Cindy Flaten, director of religious education at the parish. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)