

Education Committee:

The Parish as an Educating Community:

How would you describe the parish's efforts to pass on to and strengthen the faith of its YOUTH? [PRM p. 45]

After worship, education represents the largest parish investment in personnel, talents, time and resources. Thus far we have always succeeded in providing the necessary number of coordinators, teachers, helpers, and tutors. We attend to all: the pre-schoolers to the adults.

Our education department annually invests a small part of total for the Pre-School and for the Kindergarten Program. All the programs have been financially self-sufficient by self-imposing promoting minimum individual registration fees and encouraging monthly and yearly fund-raising. Our program for pre-school to 8th grade represents the very best we can do at the present time. Our RCIA program should be improved in the area of individual awareness and parishioners' participation in the program. We conduct the entire Vision of Love program. A group initiated a Vacation Bible School in 2004.

- **The parish sponsors its own school or is a sponsor of a regional or merged elementary school.**

N/A

We have no parochial school in our parish territory and the nearest Parochial schools are in Butler [9 ml], Zelienople [13 ml] and New Castle [18 ml]. We contribute to the Bishop's Education fund with a yearly payment of 10% of our total parish income for an average contribution of about \$14,500.00. Few of our parishioners are attending parochial schools.

- **The parish provides a qualified director or coordinator of religious education. 1**

We are blessed with a very dedicated, conscientious, involved, competent and responsible couple coordinating our CCD programs. They are attending as many Diocesan and Deanery meetings and seminars as possible and relate well with the parishioners and the teachers.

- **The parish offers viable programs of religious instruction for families, children, and youth. 2**

During the school year we have offered a Preschool program during the two Masses on Sundays in addition to the CCD program through grade 8. . We have an adult program for the parents of our 1st Confession, 1st Communion and Confirmation students. It involves a series of meetings of all the affected parents together under the leadership of one of our trained parishioners and also individual meetings of each 'sacramental' household with the Pastor. We offer a adult scripture class. Throughout the school year, all our families with children attending any CCD class weekly receive photocopies of their children CCD home pages textbook in order to follow the teaching provided in class and to promote the possibility of parents further tutoring their students on those topics.

- **The parish provides for and supports initial and ongoing training for its catechists. 2**

Coordinators and the Pastor meet individually with the new teachers during the summer to explain the entire program and policies. Each teacher is provided with a binder containing specific information about the given class and students. The majority of the teachers meet monthly throughout the year to review their teaching performance, be updated, discuss new issues, help each other and the entire program in the common effort of Religious education. Our CCD program encourages and pays the expenses for any accreditation and further educational courses taken by our teachers. The teachers pursue full accreditation.

The parish encourages and supports parents as the primary religious educators of their children. 3

This effort is carried on throughout the year with primary emphasis during the beginning of the year [mid August-end of September] by taking advantage of our homilies, bulletins, teacher's program and messages and other publications [Pgh Catholic, Encyclicals, etc.] The parish has established guidelines for parents wishing to home-school children in CCD.

- **The parish has a viable youth ministry program for adolescents and young adults. 8**

At present we do not have a youth ministry program due to a lack of program organizers.

- **The parish supports students in obtaining Catholic high school education. NA**

We are too far away from a Catholic High School. Our students conclude their education in the public schools.

- **The parish provides/supports educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. 3**

Parents supported by the parish do so.

- **How would you describe the parish's effort to strengthen the faith and provide education to parish ADULTS? 3 [PRM 45]**

Annually courses have been offered during the time period of the CCD classes and during Advent and Lent courses are offered to teachers and parents on Dogma, Morality, and the Catechism. This year, an adult Scripture class was revived. Texts of ancient patristic

writings, Diocesan and National Bishop Conference documents, papal encyclicals, other adult documents on morality and Christian culture are periodically attached to every copy of the weekly Bulletin. Speakers attending meetings of the Guild have not triggered an increase in adult participation. The RCIA program has been carried on annually and it has covered a variety of subject matter. The area four 'Marriage Encounter Communities' have been meeting on a regular basis for the last 10 years and their topics of discussion are lively, original, serious and worthwhile. We have a library at the CCD center and another at the Rectory containing video and sound tapes, magazines and books..

- **The parish offers a variety of opportunities and adult learning experiences (e.g., Bible study, speakers, magazines, books).** 4

They are offered.

- **The parish supports its lay ministers and volunteers with regular and ongoing in-service programs.** 3

Our parish totally depends of the involvement of volunteers. Thus far that approach has been adequate. We train all our ministers, and have scheduled retreats for all lay ministers this year.

- **The parish provides opportunities to listen to and learn from parishioners of diverse backgrounds about the faith.** 3

This is done at the RCIA meetings. As a parish we encourage annual days of retreat where everyone can share their faith experience. The same technique is extensively used at all our Cursillo and Marriage encounter communities. Under the leadership of the Diocese we have re-evaluated our parish through small group discussions. At times Parishioners and laity from non-parishioners have addressed topics like Confession, Marriage, Cursillo, and foreign missions directly from our Sanctuary.

- **How would you describe the parish's educational attempts to meet the variety of educational needs of different parishioners?**

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Since our resources are limited, we systematically collect and publish in the bulletin the time and location of lectures, seminars, courses, retreats, programs offered by the area Newman club, Deanery parishes, or by the Diocese for adults in the various fields of religious, moral, spiritual education.

- **Parishioners share in baptismal and marriage preparation.** 1

Since 1985, parish couples have shared in a systematic program of parents' preparation for Baptism. Recently, a parishioner was named the parish marriage coordinator. Parishioners have been helping with the local Cana program and a number of our couples are running the program of Marriage Encounter weekends even beyond our Diocese. Some are involved in the Diocesan leadership of Marriage Encounter.

- **The parish provides occasional education programs in special need areas such as single parenting, divorce, caring for elderly or disabled.** 3

We list the programs and the available offices in the Bulletin. We initiated the deanery programs for the divorced and the elderly; but, because of the limited number of our members, those successful programs moved to the Butler parishes.

- **The parish arranges for sacramental preparation and catechesis for parishioners with disabilities.** 3

We address this through a tutoring system by providing the necessary volunteers.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A CATECHETICAL PROGRAM

- **As our diocese moves toward a revitalization of life of its parishes, consideration needs to be given to Catechetical programs and to religious education of high quality. The following checklist represents some aspects to consider in the process of **clustering** Catechetical programs of several parishes, or of the revitalization of programs in a single parish. This checklist is intended to be an aid in discussions of parish staffs and education committees of parish pastoral councils. Members of the diocesan staff are available to assist in developing quality Catechetical programs for the parish.**

Personnel: [PRM p. 46]

- **The parish has hired a professional Catechetical administrator.**

No.

- **The parish utilizes the services of a professional youth minister.**

No.

- **Resource personnel have been identified and utilized. 1**

When a family joins the parish, we record their area of expertise and availability. We publish and distribute the entire list. As soon as possible, we tap these people. The quality and quantity of our CCD teaching has significantly increased.

Secretarial assistance has been provided. N/A

We can afford a secretary on a part time basis only for the Rectory. A number of people offer secretarial service as part of their tithing or stewardship.

- **The parish has regular staff meetings which include Catechetical personnel. 1**

The Parish Pastoral Council Education committee meets quarterly with all catechetical personnel. CCD teachers meet with the program directors every month.

- **All Catechetical staff have job descriptions. 2**

Yes. Job descriptions are prepared and distributed for the Pre-school, Kindergarten and the CCD teacher as well as the RCIA.

- **If more than one pastor is involved, a delegated contact person has been named. N/A**
- **Catechists are properly prepared, certified. 2**

Yes.

Scheduling [PRM p. 46]

- **The liturgical cycle is respected. 1**

It is our major effort to make our children, adults, and RCIA candidates experience annually the unfolding of the liturgical year with its themes, colors, music, liturgies, and readings. Each Kindergarten, CCD, Youth, and RCIA group is involved in preparing a number of liturgies throughout the liturgical year.

- **The parish has devised a common religious education schedule that coordinates the activities of CCD, Catholic school, adult religious education, sports. 1**

We update our parish Calendar for all our events to respect the schedule.

- **Transportation to various Catechetical programs for children within a cluster has been determined.**

We have joined other parishes in some area events: Youth 2,000, retreats, common socials, plays, but nothing systematic. Transportation relies on car pooling, with written permission slips and adequate adult supervision. Our youth group is in contact with St. Gregory

- **Public school districts and their respective calendars have been considered. 3**

The area public school distributes its yearly schedule. We do not arrange our events when they are in conflict with theirs. Our area Churches have protested the disrespect of the Sunday by those planning sport events on Sunday morning. We as parish and parish families have never taken full advantage of the special dispensation [religious release] we could get from public school events in order to have our children attend special parish events: funerals, Holy Day Masses, Ash Wednesday liturgies, etc.

- **The parish coordinates scheduling for borrowed materials. NA**

The parish borrows little material.

Programming: [PRM p. 46]

- **The parish possesses current statistics concerning its population: numbers of elderly, adults, youth, children. 1**

We have updated statistics and corresponding charts on all the data listed above.

- **The parish provides inclusive Catechetical programs for persons with disabilities. 3**

A number of our handicapped students are trained with the rest of their classmates. More seriously handicapped students are privately tutored.

- **The parish has researched various appropriate Catechetical resources and has chosen the most appropriate for its situation.** 2

We have adopted new texts and have changed our textbooks after careful comparison of the various texts from different publishers.

- **Adult education is central to the mission of the parish.** 4

Adult education involves the Scripture class, the RCIA program, homilies, bulletins, Pgh Catholic, area seminars, and lectures.

- **A budget has been prepared and approved along with determinations concerning funding for the budget.** 1

The Pastor, coordinators and teachers are aware of the minimum budget needed to run our educational program [about \$ 5,000] and the Vacation Bible school [about \$1,000]. We increased tuition for the 2004-2005 year. We may have to revise some aspects of our educational fund-raising such as by promoting financial tutoring by some parishioners for needy students and new ways of raising funds. We need greater involvement/stewardship and parish project awareness by parents and students in the CCD fundraising.

- **Decisions have been made concerning the format for ministry to parents prior to the sacraments.** 2

Yes. We are implementing those decisions and they work well. We have good teachers, good programs and generally cooperating good parents. We need both parents to attend the preparatory meetings in order to produce the expected results

- **The location for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation and Reconciliation has been determined.** 2

In 1987, we adopted the policy of biennial Confirmation in order to assure the visit of a Bishop to our Church. We converted the cry room into our reconciliation room. Baptism is conferred at the weekend liturgies in the sanctuary.

- **The parish is connected to the Deanery Youth Council and the Diocesan Youth Council.** 6

Our Coordinators have attended a number of those events. We collaborate with the central Youth group of St. Paul in Butler and with other parishes. Our Youth group has attended Diocesan [Youth Night cruise] and National events [Visit of the Pope to Philippines, Denver & New York].

- **An inventory of all resources is up-to-date.** 1

Yes.

- **The Catechetical program involves efforts at evangelization, the initiation of new members, and support for the continuing conversion of Catholic people throughout the life cycle.** 3

The continuous conversion and renewal of the parishioners is our major concern. All the liturgies, homilies, programs, services, retreats, seminars are aiming at this process of Evangelization. As for the outsiders, annually we contact every household in the parish territory to initiate some process of public relations contact and evangelization to marginated, hurt Catholics and non Catholics alike. A number of people respond by contacting the Rectory or neighbors sometimes referring to letters mailed years ago. Annually we mail letters to potential candidates for RCIA, and annually someone responds.

Facilities: [PRM p. 46]

- **The most appropriate location for a religious education office and resource center has been studied and decided.** 1

We resolved this problem in 1987 with the construction of our present CCD center.

- **The most appropriate facilities for elementary and adult learning, youth ministry and RCIA have been explored.** 2

Yes. Our present CCD facilities are adequate. The furniture, heating, bathrooms, the access, the parking lot and its illumination are adequate. The security aspect of safety for our children has been improved. Before considering a larger CCD facility, we would increase the number of teaching sessions. Rectory remodeling in 2005 provides additional available space for adult programs.

- **Facilities are handicapped accessible.** 1

The rectory, the church, hall, and the CCD classrooms are accessible.

- **For Resources on the above** [PRM pp. 45-54]