

# Descriptions and Bios

## Keynote & Workshop Presenters



### **Catechists: Sharing the Vocation of Holiness**

There is little doubt that without inspirational catechists sharing their faith and encouraging their students to live out their Baptismal call to holiness that we would have fewer men and women answering God's call to share their gifts with the world. Rhonda Gruenewald will encourage you, frontline vocation promoters, to accompany children through discipleship, encounter, and discernment.

Rhonda Gruenewald, a native Texan and a convert to Catholicism, started to work in the field of vocations at Saint Cecilia Catholic Church in Houston, Texas. This new-found passion became a Vocation Ministry of 20 members promoting, affirming and bringing awareness to vocations in every way possible. Rhonda wrote *Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry* and launched [VocationMinistry.com](http://VocationMinistry.com) to give tools to all who want to build up His Kingdom on earth. She is now traveling the country, speaking to educators, priests, and parishioners who want to promote vocations.



### **Jesus the Great Companion: The Eucharist as a Call to Accompany Others**

Through lectio and visio divina, Deacon Matt Halbach, PhD, presents Jesus as the Great Companion of the Church. From the Last Supper to the Great Commissioning of the disciples to Pentecost and beyond, Jesus promises to remain with his church (with each of us). The Eucharist is the primary way in which Jesus fulfills his promise to accompany us, to remain with us always. In turn, the companionship of Jesus—which we receive through the Eucharist—supports us and encourages us to discern, explore and, ultimately, commit to the way of life to which God has called us. Through the gift of the Eucharist, Jesus prepares us to accompany others in our own unique way.

Dr. Matthew Halbach was ordained in 2018 for the Diocese of Des Moines, IA. He is Executive Director of Catechesis for William H. Sadlier, Inc. and a major contributor to Sadlier's newest catechetical program, Christ In Us. Deacon Halbach is also a national author and speaker on the topics of mercy, accompaniment, clergy abuse, evangelization, and catechesis. He earned his PhD in Catechetics from The Catholic University of America in 2014 and is a reviewer for The International Journal of Evangelization and Catechesis. Deacon Halbach is a father of six children and a husband.



### **Listening for God in Everyday Life**

God speaks to us in many ways – through his Creation, through significant people and events, through our talents and interests, and more. This session will offer practical strategies and reflections for hearing and responding to God's voice in our daily lives so we can gain a clearer sense of God's vision for ourselves and our ministry.

Dr. Joseph White is a child and family psychologist and director of Catechetical Resources for Our Sunday Visitor Publishing and Curriculum. He formerly worked as a parish catechetical leader and spent seven years as director of Family Counseling and Family Life in the Diocese of Austin. A frequent guest on Catholic television and radio, Dr. White is the author of 12 books and numerous articles on catechesis and ministry and co-authored the *Allelu* and *Alive in Christ* catechetical series.



### The Gospel of Mark--How to Share the Good News with Children

The Gospel of Mark is the earliest account of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It's emphasis on the ministry of Jesus, his miracles, and of course Christ's Passion are important to teach to children. In this workshop, we will explore various ways to share the Gospel of Mark (and all four Gospels) with children. Come with your ideas and questions to this multimedia presentation!

David Dziena is Publisher for Pflaum Publishing Group, a division of Bayard, Inc. He has also served as Executive Editor and Parish Projects Manager with Our Sunday Visitor. Prior to OSV, he was Editorial Manager for nine years at Silver Burdett Ginn Religion, followed by RCL Benziger. He also worked for St. Joseph's Parish in Croton Falls, NY for a total of ten years--first as Director of Religious Education and then Coordinator of Youth Ministries. Since 1993, he has led Confirmation workshops and retreats, and catechist formation classes. David is the co-author of the *Catholic Prayer Book for the Separated and Divorced* (OSV); *Our Catholic Family: Activities, Conversations, and Prayer for Sharing Faith at Home* (Pflaum); and the general editor for *Singing Our Faith, Second Edition: Leader's and Catechist's Manual* (GIA). David graduated from Iona College in New Rochelle, NY with a Bachelor or Arts degree in Philosophy with a minor in Fine Arts and Religious Studies. He also received a Masters in Pastoral Theology from St. Joseph's College in Standish, ME. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife, Gloria, and has four children.



### Encountering Christ Through Online Prayer Experiences

What will be covered:

- Key considerations for planning prayer online
- Tech tips for optimizing the prayer experience
- Ideas for leading traditional prayers and other styles of prayer

Amy McEntee earned her MA in Theological Studies from the University of Dayton and has ministry experience in the areas of faith formation for children, youth, and adults. Amy has presented locally, nationally and virtually particularly in the areas of catechist formation, young adult ministry and technology in ministry. Currently she is the project manager for RCL Benziger, a reluctant runner and avid reader. She lives with her husband, Patrick, in Dayton, Ohio.



### Preparing Hearts and Minds: 9 Simple Ways for Catechists to Cultivate a Living Faith

When soil gets compacted, seeds cannot take root. Unless the soil is loosened, air, water, and nutrients cannot penetrate and those seeds that do germinate cannot break through the surface. In a similar way, the seeds of God's Word cannot take root in hearts that have been hardened. In today's increasingly secular world, hearts and minds have grown "compacted" and much more difficult to penetrate. As a result, much of our work in faith formation is like the seed that was thrown on rocky ground: it is unable to take root (Matthew 13:5-6). If we want the seeds of God's Word to take root so that those we teach might truly abide in God, we need to "prepare the soil" of people's hearts and minds so that God's Word may penetrate, obstacles that compete for nutrition may be removed, and a joyful faith may take root, break through the surface, and transform the world.

Joe Paprocki, DMin, is the National Consultant for Faith Formation for Loyola Press, a Jesuit Ministry located in Chicago, IL. Joe has over 40 years of experience in catechetical and pastoral ministry, has presented in over 150 dioceses in North America, and has authored over 20 books on catechetical and pastoral ministry, including the best-selling *The Catechist's Toolbox* and his most recent book, *Preparing Hearts and Minds: 9 Simple Ways for Catechists to Cultivate a Living Faith*. Joe has a Masters Degree in Pastoral Studies from the Institute for Pastoral Studies at Loyola University of Chicago and a Doctor of Ministry Degree from the University of St. Mary of the Lake at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, IL. Joe and his wife Joanne, who have 2 grown children and 4 grandchildren, live in the Chicago area.



### The evangelizing power of Art in catechesis

Come and see how Sacred Art images can 'help people to have an experience of the encounter with God' (DC 209). Experience their effect for yourself with images you can use for the Lenten and Easter seasons. Learn how images 'help believers to get to know and to memorize the events of salvation history in a more rapid and immediate way,' and display 'in an immediate way multiple aspects of the truths of the faith, touching hearts and assisting in the internalization of the message.' (DC 210). Images 'in fact bring to bear upon the one who contemplates them, the gaze of an invisible Other, providing access to the reality of the spiritual and eschatological world.' (DC 209).

Dr Caroline Faley was one of 10 people appointed in 2017 to the working party for the new Directory for Catechesis 2020. She had been responsible for catechesis at the Maryvale Institute under Dr Petroc Willey from Sept 1996 to October 2013. Learning through Art and Beauty has always been a key element of her style and her catechetical use of many works of Sacred Art can be found at <https://review.catechetics.com> She completed her STL at Leuven, PhL at Maynooth and Pontifical Doctorate at the Lateran, Rome. In Autumn 2012 her work was recognised when she was appointed as one of 10 women (3 lay women) experts at the Synod on the New Evangelization for the transmission of the Faith.

**The Dreams of St. Joseph: Listening to God's Call**

Father Hage will take us through the Gospel accounts of the Dreams of St. Joseph to see how St. Joseph role models for all how to listen and respond to God's call. Fr. Hage will then apply St. Ignatius of Loyola's rules for the discernment of spirits to help us understand how we can more effectively hear God's call in our lives. These rules of discernment will help sort out which voices in our lives are from God and the ones that are not from God, the voices we should listen to and the voices we should reject.

Father Jason Hage grew up in Brockport, NY and was a serious hockey player in high school, winning the New York State title his junior year. He attended Xavier University in Cincinnati and earned his Bachelor's in Philosophy. Upon graduation from Xavier, he entered St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, MD and earned his Master's of Divinity as well as his Sacred Bachelor's in Theology. Fr. Hage spent the first three years of his priestly ministry at Holy Family Church in Syracuse, where he worked intensely with the youth and young adult ministry programs. In 2015, Bishop Cunningham appointed Fr. Hage the coordinator of "Fisherman's Club", the diocesan outreach to college-age men discerning the priesthood. In 2017, Fr. Hage was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church in Hamilton, St. Joan of Arc Mission in Morrisville, with sacramental responsibilities at Colgate University's Newman Community. Bishop Lucia appointed Father Hage the Director of the Office of Vocation Promotion on October 1, 2019. On September 15, 2020, Bishop Lucia appointed Father Hage pastor of Eastern Pastoral Care Area 4 comprising St. Joan of Arc, St. Mary's, St. Bernard in Waterville, and St. Joseph in Oriskany Falls.

**RCFaithquest: Your Online Resource Center**

RCFaithquest is a curated website for resources as well as a blog site with regular posts to support catechists and catechetical programs. Marge Babcock will give participants a "tour" of the online resource center and useful ways to share content with learners.

Marge Babcock is retired from the Diocese of Syracuse Faith Formation Office. She is presently the RCFaithquest blog writer and curator. Her digital skills from the diocesan office have helped her be a resource at St. Augustine's parish. She presently serves on the Faith Formation catechetical team, Adult Enrichment and RCIA. Marge is also a Spiritual Director with the Spiritual Renewal Center in Syracuse.

# Roundtable Facilitators

**Elementary Catechists: Sharing Lessons and Classroom Hacks**

Catechists of students grades K - 6 will enjoy this roundtable discussion! Our facilitators will share some of their favorite lessons and classroom "hacks" to manage your classrooms, whether for Covid safety or in general. Join Terri Panuccio and Lucy Hawthorn and share your ideas, too!

Terri is the Associate Director of Faith Formation/Catechesis (whichever you prefer to use) at St. Mary of Mt. Carmel/Blessed Sacrament Parish for 11 years. Previous to that position, she taught 1st and 2nd grade Faith Formation and was the coordinator for First Sacraments. She completed the Formation for Ministry program through the Syracuse Diocese focusing on the Catechetical Leadership. Over the years, Terri has attended National Conventions including the Mid-Atlantic Congress in Baltimore, MD, the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) and the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress.

My name is Lucy Hawthorne and I'm currently loving my "encore" career as the Catechetical Coordinator for the parish communities of Holy Trinity in Fulton and St. Stephen in Phoenix. I retired in June of 2020 after 36 years as an elementary teacher. My time in education was spent primarily in the kindergarten/first grade realm. I've spent the good part of 20 years as the First Reconciliation / First Holy Communion sacramental preparation teacher at Holy Trinity. I am currently part of the parish RCIA team, a member of parish council and an active Eucharistic Minister. Faith and church are an integral part of my being and receiving the Immaculata Award in 2018 was a humbling, yet proud moment in my life. My goal as Catechetical Coordinator is to journey, alongside the children and families of my church community on their faith walk. I stumbled across an uplifting motto, "Let your faith be bigger than your fear," and consequently decided that this year I would make it my motivating force both personally and professionally.

### **Junior & Senior High Catechists: Adventures in the Adolescent World**

Catechists of students grades 6 - Confirmation will enjoy this roundtable discussion! Our facilitators will share some of their favorite activities and lessons to engage junior and senior high students in their faith. Join Amy Wojcikowski and Cindy Heath and share your ideas, too!



Amy Wojcikowski has been the Faith Formation Coordinator for Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, in Liverpool, NY, for the past 12 years. She earned her Master's degree in Pastoral Studies from St. Bernard's, and is the Pastoral Associate for Education, in addition to ministering to two linked parishes, The Catholic Communities of the Epiphany. She and her husband have two boys.



Cindy Heath has been the Director of Youth Ministry, Confirmation and TeenFaith—which is our Jr. High Program at St. Joseph's for 23 years. She “absolutely-positively loves” working with our youth and young adults, sharing our Catholic faith with them and watching them experience how our faith and love of God come alive in them. Cindy always strives to connect the teachings of the Church to the teens daily life bringing teens to those "AHA" moments, especially in helping others with service. I've been married for 39 years, have 2 wonderful adult children and 2 beautiful granddaughters.

### **Missionary Disciples: Serving the Community**

Catechists of all grades will enjoy this roundtable discussion! Our facilitators will share effective ways to connect the Gospel to serving the community. From family service, whole community projects and high school discipleship, see how faith can be put into action with relevant works of mercy. Join Madonna Hurchla and Cheryl Smith and share your ideas, too!



Madonna Hurchla is the Director of Faith Formation at the Parish of Saints John and Andrew in Binghamton. She has been working with adults, teens, and young children for about 40 years. Working with Girl Scouts and Faith Formation has brought to the forefront of her life that God's creation of the universe desperately needs attention. As Christians, we can not turn away from this responsibility. Hence, her love for social justice.



Presently Cheryl serves as the Faith Formation Associate at St. John the Evangelist Church in New Hartford. Previously, she was the Eastern Region Resource Center Associate for the Syracuse Diocese. She also served as the Catechetical Leader for Church of the Annunciation in Clark Mills starting in 1996. Cheryl was the recipient of the NCCL New Wineskins award for the *Power of One* Program that she developed. She has also been a presenter at various workshops for national conferences such as NCAMP (National Catholic Association of Media Professionals) and at multiple *Digital Discipleship* conferences. She has also been a presenter at various workshops for the Syracuse Diocese sharing ways to use technology in catechesis.