



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#1 - September 2010

Introduction: Premier Issue

Best Practice: The *Sunday/Monday Connection*

Welcome to the premier issue of **GEMS** – an energizing, motivating and thought-provoking newsletter for all those who believe in, are excited about, and/or are ministering in adult faith formation in varied ways today.

These newsletters are brought to you by a small group of people who have been involved in ministry, especially adult faith formation ministry, for years. The convener/facilitator of this group and principal author of the newsletters, Janet Schaeffler, OP, has been deeply involved in adult faith formation since 1971 as a coordinator in parishes and as an archdiocesan director of adult faith formation, as well as author, national presenter, facilitator, consultant and one of the authors of the Leader's Guide of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. The members of the committee are long-standing pastoral ministers and experts in adult faith formation in parishes, universities, and business.

Subsequent issues will cover one topic/theme; this first edition is two-fold:

- an introduction to “just what is this?” as well as
- delving immediately into a fascinating best practice

Introduction

GEMS wouldn't exist without you, each and every one of whom are facilitating, enabling, empowering others – walking with each and every one of our adult Catholics on their faith journey. You have shared – will be continuing to share –

- your effective practices
- your successes
- your challenges
- your dreams and visions

through our “adult faith formation best practices survey.”

The sharing of **your experiences**, then, will be spread far and wide – through **GEMS**: *Great Endeavors Mined and Shared*.

The focus of **GEMS** is, therefore, **practical** – a discovery of what is actually happening, as well as, the vision of what is hoped for by the ministers who are immersed in the real world of adult faith formation.

We will explore:

- themes flowing from the topics on the survey (e.g. hospitality, publicity, content for adult faith formation, technology, etc.)
- on-going research; advice from experts and practitioners; and resources concerning the themes explored
- actual adult faith formation best practices

Originally, the best practices survey began as a national survey; it has now become international. (Arch)dioceses in other countries have shared it with their parishes.

The survey - the sharing and mining of the great endeavors - is **on-going!** If you have not yet completed a best practices survey (it takes only a few minutes of your time!), we invite you to do so.

Successful people are dreamers who have found
a dream too exciting,
too important to remain in the realm of fantasy.
Day by day, hour by hour,
they toil in service of their dream
until they can see it
with their eyes and touch it with their hands.
- Earl Nightingale

Share your experiences, your pearls of wisdom, your sparkling vision. It will add to the practicality and beauty of **GEMS** for each of us. For a copy of the survey contact Janet Schaeffler, OP at jansch@juno.com.

A Best Practice: The Sunday/Monday Connection

This is not only *our* featured best practice in this, our premier issue, but it was recognized by NCCL. At the Annual NCCL (*National Conference for Catechetical Leadership*) Conference in April 2010, a first-time award was given: the New Wineskins Award. This award was initiated to highlight and celebrate extraordinary achievement occurring in parishes in the ministries of evangelization and catechesis.

Thus, our first GEM is *The Sunday/Monday Connection* -- dreamed of and carried out in ministry by Fr. Anthony Shonis, currently ministering at Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Henderson, Kentucky. He has done this unique process for the last ten years at four parishes and two black Catholic missions.

What is The Sunday/Monday Connection?

Each year on Labor Day, Fr. Shonis invites parishioners to sign up if they would like him to visit them at their place of work during the coming year.

Then, throughout the year he visits one or two parishioners each week in their workplace at a time convenient for them. The purpose is not for a tour or to meet their employer or employees, but to be with them in their work setting, asking them two questions:

- What do you do?
- How do you feel about what you do?

These are the two questions Studs Terkel asked people in his famous book, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (The New Press).

Father concludes the visit by giving the person a card with a prayer by Cardinal Henry Newman that begins, "I am created to do something or to be something for which no one else is created; I have a place in God's world, which no one else has..."

Fr. Shonis then writes up the people's reflections in the coming Sunday bulletin in a column entitled, "The Sunday/Monday Connection." Twice a year he invites the workers to "a one hour session in small groups to share ideas and a discussion on the relationship between faith and work."

Through the conversation, Father guides them to see a connection between the Dismissal Rite of the Liturgy with a commissioning to go out and make the world better/more just.

EXIT

Father Shonis says, "The most important sign in the Church is the exit sign since we are *sent* to bring the good news to the world. And, one of the places that that begins is our work."

During these follow-up discussion sessions, the participants are given two gifts:

- A complimentary subscription to *Initiatives* (www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm)
- *The Mass is Never Ended: Rediscovering Our Mission to Transform the World* by Gregory F. Pierce (Ave Maria Press)

What are the Benefits/Responses?

In Fr. Shonis' words: "The people's responses are positive IN EVERY WAY." For himself, he goes on to say, "The more you know about parishioners, the more you can empathize with them and appreciate their struggles."

Now "when I look out over the congregation at Mass,
I see (people) not only as families but as workers."
(Fr. Shonis in *America*, 8/31/09)

Some Other Resources for the Spirituality of Work:

- www.livingfaithatwork.org
- www.theologyofwork.org
- *Spirituality At Work: 10 Ways to Balance Your Life on the Job* by Gregory F. Pierce (Loyola Press)
- *Beatitudes for the Workplace* by Max Oliva, SJ (Novalis)

A very current resource, indicating how pertinent and necessary this topic is today (and always has been) in the lives of everyone: this month's issue (September 2010) of *Catholic Digest* focuses on and has feature articles such as "Your Job/Your Work is Holy!"

The U.S. bishops' 1998 pastoral letter, *Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice*, calls all Catholics to discipleship through their everyday work.

"Catholicism does not call us to abandon the world,
but to help shape it.

This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and responsibilities,
but transforming them.

We are corporate executives and migrant farm workers,
senators and welfare recipients,
university presidents and day care workers,
tradesmen and farmers,
office and factory workers,
union leaders, and small-business owners.

Our entire community of faith must help Catholics
be instruments of God's grace and creative power
in business and politics,
factories and offices,
in homes and schools and
in all the events of daily life...

The vocation to pursue justice is not simply an individual task –
it is a call to work with others to humanize
and shape the institutions that touch so many people."

A Related Sparkling Gem of a Suggestion:

We always commission and bless our parish ministers. What about blessing our parishioners, commissioning them for their work in the world? It could be done on Labor Day. A different occupation could be highlighted monthly, possibly connected with a patron saint for that occupation. Even **though the Dismissal Rite does this each Sunday, a specific intentional** commissioning might bring this more alive for everyone.



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Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Best Practices can be found at www.pastoralplanning.com. Go to Adult Formation: *Nuts & Bolts: Planning and Best Practices for Adult Formation*.