

Descriptions of the Break-out Sessions for the Witnesses for Christ Conference

1) A Compelling Resource for Parish Small Groups

Fr. Brian Konopa, Susan Halter, Peter Schmitz, Lisa Doering, Linda Schwartz
Mary, Mother of the Church Parish, La Crosse

Would you like to become a parish of Missionary Disciples? One excellent way is through the Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) Faith Study Series. This series is more than just an opportunity to add to your knowledge of the Catholic faith. It calls for a conversion of heart and mind and, according to the CCO objectives: "Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, it is designed to bring participants to a real and effective encounter with Jesus Christ and to progressively build them into the Missionary Disciples the Church needs them to be." This workshop will provide an overview of CCO's mission, objectives and goals as well as the learnings and experiences of those who have facilitated CCO faith-sharing groups over the past two years.

2) Fostering Holiness in Children – Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Carolyn Kohlhaas, Formation Leader for CGS; Peg Klinkhammer, Coordinator of CGS Atrium in
Wisconsin Rapids & Rosemary Hokamp, CRE at Our Lady Queen of Heaven in Wisconsin Rapids

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) is a Montessori-based method of Catholic faith formation through which children ages 3 to 12 can grow in their relationship with God through a deep engagement in Scripture and liturgy. Utilized by schools, parishes, and religious communities, the work of CGS is "catching fire" and spreading throughout the US and the world. Join us for an overview of CGS, the developmental needs of children, and a look at how this Method can be a gift to you and to the children and families you serve.

3) Theology of the Body: A Basic Overview for Forming Youth

Christopher Ruff, Director for Ministries & Social Concerns, Julie Studinski, Youth and Adult Ministry
at St. Bronislava Parish in Plover and St. Francis Parish in Knowlton and Cassie Thayer, Catechetical
Leader at St. Patrick Parish in Mauston

Chris Ruff, who studied Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body extensively at the JPII Institute in Rome, will present an overview of what it is and why it is so vitally important for young people today. He will drill down to the heart of it and explain why it is about so much more than just human sexuality (though it certainly includes that). Julie will focus on equipping and energizing facilitators to present Theology of the Body to our youth using the very best programs, such as *YOU* for High School and *Theology of the Body for Middle School* from Ascension Press. She will introduce you to approaches that will help you feel comfortable presenting this important and necessary topic. Cassie will introduce Ruah Woods Resources, which present the gift of each person as a child of God through hard-bound beautiful story books. She can speak from fruitful experience to these Theology of the Body Resources being used in Kindergarten through 5th Grade, revealing that the children greatly enjoy the stories and engage well.

4) Effectively using Conversion Stories to Catechize Youth

Clare Ruff, Catholic Liaison, Director of Events and Outreach – Hosea Initiative; Chris Rogers, Director
for Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Our Lord repeatedly used parables to convey truths that were challenging. Stories have the power to inspire and motivate precisely because they are personal and non-confrontational. This workshop will explore the art of effective storytelling as an impactful tool for evangelizing people of all ages. As part of the presentation the speakers will tell the powerful conversion stories of 3 modern individuals (2 of them saints) who grappled with issues relevant today and became vibrant witnesses of the Gospel.

5) Partnering with Families in Youth Ministry

Bill Keimig, Assistant Director of the Catechetical Institute; Bob Rice, long-term youth minister and teacher at Franciscan University of Steubenville; Steve Allgeyer, President of Ministry Advancement for Life Teen Inc; Joel Stepanich, Director of Resource Development for Life Teen International.

Parents are the hinge-point of *successfully* and *consistently* reaching most teens. It is *essential* therefore that those in youth ministry understand their role is to provide support, empower, and partner with families. Franciscan at Home provides engaging and beautiful online workshops at franciscanathome.com. These four, lively presenters will engage participants to principles and practices that lead to actively partnering with parents. Cost for the workshop is \$5 per month or \$13 per month to have a mentor. Go to franciscanathome.com to sign up. Click on “Youth Ministry Track”, then “First Year Youth Ministry” where “Partnering with Families in Youth Ministry” is located.

6) Pastoral Care amid Confusion about Sexual Identity

Fr. Paul Check, long-time director of the Courage Apostolate; Chris Ruff, Director for Ministries and Social Concerns; Terry Bell, FOCUS Team Director, Roncalli Newman Parish in La Crosse.

In the midst of a confused culture, how can we affirm and teach God's fundamental design for the human person as male and female, created in His image and called to a life of self-giving love? How can we do this in a way that is sensitive to the ears of our young people (and their parents) and to their sincerely-held though often misled beliefs? And yet in a way that is also unafraid to speak the truth -- because we know God has written that truth deep within every human heart? These are the questions that Chris Ruff and Chris Rogers will address as they consider the most common misconceptions about identity and gender.

7) Praying with Scripture

Ann Lankford, Director for Catechesis and Evangelization

Would you like to have a deepened appreciation for the importance of the meditative reading of Scripture in your daily walk with the Lord, and to teach your children, grandchildren, students? Pope Benedict XVI stated that, “the ancient tradition of *Praying with Scripture - Lectio Divina*... will bring to the Church a new spiritual springtime.” Experience the prayerful pondering of sacred Scripture in the timeless *Lectio Divina* in which the Holy Spirit makes a connection between the passage and one's own life. Franciscan at Home provides engaging and beautiful online workshops. Cost for the workshop is \$5 per month. Go to franciscanathome.com to sign up. After registering, click on Catechist Track, then click on Advanced Catechist Certification, then click on *Praying with Scripture: Lectio Divina*.

8) Relationship, Intentionality, and Accompaniment: The Cornerstones of Ministry

Jennifer Kulzer, High School Faith Formation, Confirmation Preparation and RCIA at Blessed Sacrament Parish in La Crosse & Andrew Brueggen, Youth Minister at St. Patrick's Parish in Onalaska; Cassie Thayer, Catechetical Leader at St. Patrick's Parish in Mauston; Jacqueline Van Hemert, Catechetical Leader at St. Mary's in Altoona and Michael Van Hemert, Catholic School teacher at Regis High School in Eau Claire.

The Gospels show us that when Christ would teach He did it in a way that imparted knowledge and evoked a personal response from each of those He encountered. As our youth are feeling increasingly isolated because of the effects of today's culture, we need to become more like Christ and let each person we encounter know his or her worth as a son or daughter of God. This session will give practical tips on how to become intentional in your ministry for accompanying people of all ages.