

# FAITH for today



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Fall 2011

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## From the Facilitator

by Jennifer Ludtke  
WDREF Facilitator

*Heavenly God, Maker of the Seasons, thank you for all that autumn teaches us. Change our focus that we see not only what we are leaving behind, but all the harvest and the plentitude that our lives hold. May our hearts grow freer and our lives more peaceful.*

In our prayer from the August meeting, we are reminded that our Catholic life is a both/and way of living. There is joy and sadness, ease and challenge. So many of our brothers and sisters in the vineyard are faced with changes and challenges beyond their control or asking. Despite the depth of our faith, we mourn for those who struggle. At the same time there are also signs of abundant grace – the numbers of young adults who are taking up this field of ministry, the hardiness of those who have spent 20+ years gathering wisdom and experience and who continue to share that with generous spirits.

Our August WDREF Board Meeting was both a time both of forward motion, carrying on the business and busyness that is intrinsic to such a group, and a time of pausing. We reflected Tuesday on the question: Is WDREF still relevant? Valuable? Active in support of parish catechetical leaders? Are we more than a convention and a retreat?

Ultimately the vitality of WDREF will be determined by the vitality of the local organizations, for whom, and out of whom, WDREF exists. In the coming months you will be hearing about unique, concrete actions for your organization that your WDREF representatives will be sharing with you. In addition, Board members will be following up on local action plans and WDREF's standing committees will determine what actions they will take as they reexamine the need to be more visible – more valuable – more active in support of parish catechetical leaders.

Answering this important question about WDREF's relevance and revitalizing both our local and state organization will be a long process, and not without demands on our time and energy. But I do believe that the potential is there for our organization to have incredible vitality and relevance. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen us – individually and as Church – throughout the challenges and joys ahead.

## WDREF Calendar

**January 16-17, 2012**

WDREF Board Meeting  
St. Anthony Spirituality Center  
Marathon, WI

**March 1, 2012**

WDREF Professional  
Development Scholarships Due

**May 7-10, 2012**

76th Annual NCCL Conference  
San Diego, CA

**November 8-9, 2012**

2012 WDREF Conference  
The Lodge in Siren, WI

# Retreat Reflections

Thanks to all who attended the 2011 WDFREF Retreat!

Jennifer Christ led WDFREF members in “Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude”...it was a rejuvenating and inspiring time for all. Jennifer pointed out that gratefulness is a “Great Fullness” of heart, drawing from scripture the metaphor of a softened heart, a heart of flesh as vital to living a life of gratitude.

Another metaphor she shared was that of the plant, which leans toward the light. Even when we don’t feel gratitude – we can lean toward it as we lean toward the light of Christ. Along the way, Jennifer examined barriers to gratitude such as judgment, envy, regret, and an unwillingness to forgive. She provided the group with practical tips on how to get past such barriers, and her easy smile made it easy to practice gratitude while on retreat.

The retreat included time for silent reflection in the beautiful indoor and outdoor spaces of the Spirituality Center’s holy ground. There was also time for camaraderie and fun in sharing our calling to ministry. Overall, our hearts were filled with peace, joy and gratitude. Here are some comments from the participants:

- It was more than what I expected. It was exactly what I needed.
- A good time to get away & nourish the soul - wonderful topic; wonderful presenter! I needed this.
- Thank You!
- Love Jennifer Christ!
- I appreciate free time to process.
- Loved the variety of prayer practices experiences: body prayer, lectio, joining the community for evening prayer.
- Thank you all for creating this time for me to replenish my attitude with my gratitude.
- These sessions are so important for us to do our ministry. Thank you for providing them. It is very helpful and achievable when the costs are around \$200
- Wonderful job - thank you all!

We want to extend a special thanks to Dave Baudry for the Smilebox video review of the Retreat! He did a wonderful job capturing our complete experience. Check it out!:

[View Retreat Photos](#)



Jennifer Christ, “Cultivating an Attitude of Gratitude.”



WDFREF Retreat Attendees



## Mareda

This fall's events included the "Margarita Fiesta Cruise" for Mareda members and guests in September, and the October General Meeting with presenter Leisa Anslinger from PastoralPlanning.com and OSV.

"Forming the Catechetical Spirit." a parish based program to provide basic catechist formation, will be offered in Racine, Brookfield/Menomonee Falls, Sheboygan, East Troy, and New Munster.

The next General Meeting and Presentation will take place Feb. 1, 2012 at St. Dominic Parish, Brookfield, featuring an address by Abp. Jerome Listecky.

## MDREO

MDREO kicked off their year with a program day titled, "Coaching Parents" with Denise Utter from Our Sunday Visitor in October. We are looking forward to our next gathering in December with Christopher Karstens speaking on fostering a "Liturgical Spirituality."

## ProCLAYM

Pro-CLAYM welcomes new Green

Bay Diocesan Director of Religious Education Sr. Jacqueline Spaniola, OSF. Sr. Jackie has many years of experiences as a teacher and administrator in Catholic Schools and parish religious education programs, and most recently served as the Adult Faith Formation Director for St. Peter the Fisherman Parish, Two Rivers.

Pro-CLAYM's annual Kick-Off Day took place Friday, August 26; Fr. Jim Neilson, O.Praem gave a challenging, humorous, and transformative presentation around the theme, "Do This In Memory of Me."

The Pro-CLAYM Board is working on several projects, including the challenge to revitalization issued by WDREF in August; and consulting on a renewal of the Diocesan Strategic Plan for Religious Education.

## DARE

The La Crosse Diocesan offices kicked off the catechetical year with the annual inservice for PCLs, entitled, "Transforming Hearts to Christ...Both Mine and Others." Bp. Callahan and Cardinal Burke both spoke, while other speakers

led a series of sessions on the new Roman Missal Translation.

The Gloria Schmelzer Award for Outstanding DREs, CREs, YMs and Pastoral Associates was presented to Sr. Mary Ellen Diermeier, Pastoral Associate at St. Ladislaus Parish in Bevent, and to Julie Studinski, DRE at St. Bronislava Parish in Plover.

## SUMMIT

Planning and preparation continue for the 2012 WDREF Conference to be held in Siren at The Lodge, Nov. 8-10, 2012, featuring keynoters Carole Eipers and Joe Paprocki.

SUMMIT meets four times this year, with topics such as: catechizing for the Roman Missal Changes, Prayer Experiences for Lent, and Family Programs/Home Catechesis.

The Lifelong Faith Formation Office continues to provide Catechetical Leadership Days and Regional Catechist Workshops. The ACRE Assessment will be given to children and youth grades 5, 8, and 11, and catechists will be given NCEA's Information for Growth survey.



## ADVENT: A JOYFUL JOURNEY

How do we get from the First Sunday of Advent to Christmas without detouring into the traffic-jammed regions of distraction, frustration or all-out anxiety? Gloria Hutchinson assures us that if we "walk mindfully, taking one Scripture-formed step at a time, we can get there from here in a spirit of calm readiness and joyful anticipation." These **Day-by-day Advent Reflections** can help to sharpen our awareness and bring a reflective calm into a hectic season.

## Board Highlights

The August meeting was a demanding one for board members, but a lot was accomplished! The board stayed focused and pushed all of our business and reports into one day instead of two so that we could spend Tuesday on a facilitated, re-energizing day. Here are a few of the key items from that meeting:

- Treasurer Danelle Kegley has been working intensely to deal with WDREF's budget and tax exempt status. Thanks to Joanie McKeown for the support and history she has offered during that process.
- The Professional Development Committee is nearly ready to launch the publication, *Best Practices in Catechesis for the Sacraments* in a digital format. Watch for this great collection of wisdom from all over Wisconsin to be offered at a location near you!
- The Communications Committee has continued its great partnership with Sarah Karlen, our Web site and newsletter editor. One innovation she brought that caught everyone's attention was the addition of "SkyDrive" – a way to store the board's documents "in the clouds" ("to the clouds!" was a laughing call that rang out quite often throughout the meeting).
- The Retreat Committee finalized preparations for the retreat, to be held November 3-4, 2011. Thank you to all who had spent so many hours organizing that opportunity. Next year will be the WDREF Convention – work is well in hand on that, and believe it or not, there is already some thinking about speakers and themes for the 2013 retreat and 2014 convention.

- The Safe Environment Ad Hoc Committee has also been doing its homework, and is in conversation with the Wisconsin Catholic Conference asking that the Bishops set a policy of reciprocity in regards to safe environment training. This may end up a part of the spring province dialogue.

- On Tuesday, the WDREF board as well as local organization presidents and visioning committee members leapt into a re-energizing process. Our facilitator, Bob Bright, brought a wealth of experience and a love for the Church that made him an ideal match for our needs. Looking at our WDREF vision statement, we explored how to be more visible – more valuable – more active in support of parish catechetical leaders. The process focused on each local organization examining their own unique situations and determining concrete actions. It is only by having vital, engaged local organizations that WDREF will in turn become re-energized. In the coming months, board members will report on local organization action plans. WDREF's standing committees will also meet to determine how they can help WDREF be more visible, valuable, and active for PCLs.



WDREF Board Members work with facilitator Bob Bright to re-vitalize our organization

# Who's Who Moment .....

WDREF Executive in the Spotlight

Jennifer Ludtke  
WDREF Facilitator



If you ask where Jenny is from, she'll just say, "South central Wisconsin." Jenny is the oldest of three siblings in the Decker family, and had a dad who was always looking for greener grass to settle on (and a patient mom who went along with it all). Born in Platteville, Jenny remembers living at two places in Beloit, two places near tiny Brodhead, and in a little town named Mayville where her dad was chief of police, all before graduating from Mayville High School.

Jenny attended the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph MN, and graduated summa cum laude with a major in Theology and a minor in Spanish. She married her husband Jim in June, 1991 and went straight on to Marquette University, Milwaukee to work on her masters degree in systematic theology. Jenny also earned a professional certification in youth ministry through the Center for Ministry Development. Jenny and Jim have two children: Danielle who is a senior in high school, and Joshua who is a freshman.

In her nearly 20 years in ministry, Jenny has worked at two different parishes. Her first paid position was at St. John the Baptist Catholic

Church in Jefferson. Starting off being responsible for the total program (birth through adult and youth ministry), she looked to her local organization, MDREO, for the mentoring and support she needed, especially that first year or so. Over time, she helped St. John's parish bring on board an elementary coordinator and a part-time youth minister. Those years at St. John's provided opportunities to try everything from religious education for all ages, sacramental preparation and RCIA, to 'lock-ins' and Vacation Bible School, to adult "mini-mission trips" and week-long youth mission trips.

She also had the opportunity to be a member of the Madison Diocese Global Solidarity Partnership delegation that visited Ghana, Africa, in 2007, and a member of the curriculum development team after returning.

Her current position at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church in Madison is director of adult faith formation and outreach. Once again she was given the opportunity to travel, this time to build relationships with members of St. Thomas Aquinas's sister parish in Waspsam, Nicaragua. Working with only adults has been

an interesting change. She's found that there are no built in audiences, so there's always a risk that a program or speaker may, despite the best of efforts, flop. On the other hand, when folks do attend something, you know that they are there with a sincere desire to learn more about their faith. RCIA remains a favorite group to work with, as it has been throughout her career.

Active membership in MDREO continues to be a key part of Jenny's professional life. Throughout the years, she has held multiple leadership roles, but it is always the networking and camaraderie that make MDREO a place to come back to month after month. She is excited to be not only a WDREF representative from MDREO, but also to have been discerned as WDREF's facilitator. Thinking about the big picture has always energized her imagination about "what could be" in the field of parish catechetical ministry, and being involved at the state level gives her the opportunity to share that enthusiasm and vision.

## Prayer for the implementation of the New Roman Missal:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Your gift of Eucharist is beyond us. It is beyond our imaginations, beyond our senses, beyond our ability to comprehend. Increase in us, your family, our desire to receive you, and share you in our lives.

Let our hearts be open to the new Roman Missal. The Mass is central to our faith, Lord. It is where we will find you; may it be where you find us, always seeking to show you our commitment to live life as your children. Amen."

## Highlights from the NCCL Conference • Atlanta, GA (May 22-26, 2011)

- **Sunday:** Echoes of Faith will be fully online, booklets will be available online in the near future. Sadlier will probably be in digital form sometime in 2012.
- **Monday:** Keynote: Fr. James Martin - His message focused on humor being very culture bound, and time bound. Think of Jesus as a humorous person—remember Jesus was fully human. He shared his top ten reasons for humor. He has written several books that are truly enjoyable. We must remember that sometimes our ministry should just be “Joy.”
- NCCL was presented with the Sadlier Award.
- **Tuesday:** The TED style keynote was introduced. Three different speakers: The first speaker was Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson; he gave a theological or technological insight to the “Upper Room” scripture. Dr. Paul Ashton gave the sociological/evangelization perspective on this story and Dr. Hosffman Ospino rounded out the keynote with the anthropological or the doctrinal lens. Each presented for about 17 minutes followed by group discussion.
- **Wednesday:** The TED style of keynote continued. The topic was on the future of catechesis. Bishop Paul Etienne gave the spiritual lens perspective, Pam Coster looked through a multi-cultural lens and Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski looked through the technological lens. Some of the key ideas that were stated were: teach the truth, God shows no partiality, be open to new ways, don’t blame, we have a choice and what conversations are we having in our faith communities and who is included.
- Wednesday evening was the 75th Anniversary Banquet Celebration where: Fr. Alfred McBride, O.Praem was the recipient of the NCCL Catechetical Award, Michael Wagner was the recipient of the NCCL Distinguished Service Award and the Dayton Deanery Evangelization Team, Archdiocese of Cincinnati received the New Wineskins Award for *Reclaim the Flame: Grow, Celebrate, Serve*.
- **Thursday:** Today the opening session featured Chris Lowney who talked about leadership. The PCLs gathered to share their “Best Practices.” Hopefully these will be found on the CL Weekly soon.
- Some of the key insights from the Business meeting are that a vote passes to change some wording in the by-laws. Also the following information was shared by the USCCB, along with Bishop Blair: 2012 theme will be *Catechists and Teachers as Agents of the New Evangelization*., a framework of secondary education was approved, these things are in conformity. Some textbooks will have a seal of approval...it does not mean the USCCB recommends it... we need ones that conform. Criteria for conformity can be found on the USCCB Web site.
- Continue to look at the bigger picture, we must be held accountable, nothing happens without courage. We need to be brave enough to do the right thing.

## Become a WDREF Member!

Become a member of WDREF and take advantage of these great benefits:

- Network with others in the field
- Share best practices & resources
- Engage in continuing education
- And more!

Joining your local organization automatically makes you a member of WDREF. Check the list below to find your local organization, and visit the [Our Organization](#) page on the Web site for contact information. A portion of your local dues helps support WDREF activities and projects.

### *Local Organization Presidents:*

#### **DARE**

Diocesan Association of Religious Educators (La Crosse)  
Contact: Emily Revak  
St. Joseph Church  
910 Wilson Ave.  
Menomonie, WI 54751

#### **MAREDA**

Administrators of Catechetical Leadership in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee  
Contact: Jim Beuscher  
St. Mary Catholic Faith Community  
9520 W. Forest Home Avenue  
Hales Corners, WI 53130

#### **MDREO**

Madison Directors of Religious Education Organization  
Contact: Becky Thompson  
St Joseph's  
310 Second St.  
Baraboo, WI 53913

#### **ProCLAYM**

Green Bay Association of Religious Education Administrators  
Contact: Kathy Lieburn  
St. Anne  
PO Box 30  
Lena, WI 54139

#### **SUMMIT**

Superior Mutual Ministry Team  
Contact: Gwen Nies  
St. Joseph Church  
PO Box 399  
Osceola, WI 54020

## WDREF Executive Team



**Treasurer - Danelle Kegley**  
**Facilitator - Jennifer Ludtke**  
**Secretary - Ann Fons**

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## **WDREF Mission Statement**

As the statewide organization of professional catechetical leaders, the Wisconsin Directors of Religious Education Federation (WDREF) promotes ministerial and professional development and provides ongoing formation, advocacy, support and recognition to our members through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.