reluctant to recognize how a cultural context can enhance the cultural expression of Catholicism that it receives. At the Boston College conference, Bishop Cupich had a helpful way of explaining how a culture can enhance “the faith” — not in the latter’s essence but rather by bringing out something that had remained latent. In his phrase, a culture can bring out something of Christian faith that had been a “recessive gene.” Let me give one of my favorite examples.

Catholicism’s encounter with modernity helped to bring forth its recessive gene about human rights. The grand listing by Pope John XXIII in Pacem in terris and the championing of human rights that we find in Vatican II’s Gaudium et spes was initially brought to the fore of Christian faith when the Church was confronted by the French Revolution and the modern quest for liberty, fraternity, and equality. In fact, throughout much of its prior history, the Church preached and practiced to the contrary. But modernity forced the Church to return to its sources and to see, as if for the first time, that indeed all people are created in the divine image, entitling all to equal rights and dignity, that the prophets had championed as much, that Jesus had amplified such social teaching, and so on. Of course, it was “all there already,” but it took modernity to bring it to the fore.

When Catholics bring a dialectical attitude to American society, we will indeed find aspects to be condemned — its materialism, militarism, racism, lack of respect for the rights of the unborn and the elderly, and more. But there will also be aspects of American culture from which Catholics and our Church can learn — structures of oversight and accountability, an appreciation for public discourse that especially concerns unsettled issues, the practice of consultation with all members of a community, and so on.

Total catechetical education as I’ve briefly outlined it here has the potential to “hand on the faith” in our postmodern culture, doing so in ways “according to the mode of the receiver.” By God’s grace, it seems to be our best hope to promote lived and living Catholic faith.

## Chapter 11

### Handing on the Faith through Community-Based Faith Formation

**Our Common Challenge and Shared Privilege**

**BISHOP BLASE CUPICH**

The shadows inched longer over the narrow streets of the small port city I was visiting last fall. I knew it was time to head back to my hotel. Sunset would soon turn into nightfall. It was then that one of the street vendors caught my eye. He had wrapped up his wares early and was joking with the others as he said farewell for the day. Many youths like him from North Africa are attracted to tourist towns along the southern Italian coast. They make enough to get by and hope to make enough to get ahead by hawking their hand-carved wares, knock-off watches, and clever street toys for visitors.

As he left his friends, the young tall black man walked with purpose along the same street leading to my hotel. Curious, I held back a bit to see where he was heading. Suddenly, he made a sharp left down an alleyway. Reaching the same corner, I spotted him about fifty yards ahead at a spigot. He had turned it on and was washing his hands, face and feet. He then pulled out of his sack a tightly knitted carpet. Placing it on the pavement, he faced eastward, bent down on all fours and began to pray. I understood. The setting sun was calling him to join his distant Muslim family in prayer to Allah, the One God.

Later that evening I recounted this scenario for my travel companions. They shared my admiration for the young man’s faith and how his relationship with God obviously centered his life. One woman remarked that the practice of his Muslim faith was all the more remarkable given that he was living in an alien land and culture. In all likelihood there was
little in his new surroundings that supported the traditions of his family and faith and probably a lot to undermine them.

Seamlessly our conversation turned to the situation many of these Catholic parents and their peers are facing with their children and grandchildren. For some reason, the story of this young man’s witness in practicing his Islamic faith hit a sensitive nerve. It touched a commonly felt anxiety about the faith lives of their own children and grandchildren, and the decreasing participation in the life of the Church by these later generations. Admittedly, their children and grandchildren are growing up in a more secular world than they did. The influence of Catholicism in the culture and family is much less evident today. But, this only made these veteran Catholics all the more curious — or should I say — more envious of the young Muslim. He deliberately stepped away from the crowd in an alien land and culture to make time for prayer according to his tradition. Was that too much to expect of the Catholics of his generation?

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The anxieties these parents expressed are not new to me. I heard similar comments during our diocesan synod consultations. Over a two-year period we gathered in a series of parish “speak-up” sessions, regional meetings, and a final general assembly, to identify our most pressing challenges and to adopt strategies and goals to address them. Quickly a consensus emerged about the top priority. People insisted that we do a better job in passing on the faith to the next generations. What we were doing was not working.

In what follows I will describe the steps our small rural diocese and our parishes are taking to improve the way we pass on the faith. Simply put, we are moving away from a model of catechesis as schooling, which places the responsibility solely on a few and tends to create false expectations about the nature of faith formation. In its place we are adopting an inter-generational/eccliesial approach done in the context of the faith life of the community, involving every member of the parish.

By way of introduction, I will first recount in greater detail the concerns people expressed during our synodal consultation. Their critique of our catechetical efforts was important in our attempt to identify what specifically was not working. The significant changes we decided to make in our catechetical approach are a direct response to the insights and suggestions people offered. With that background in mind, I will then provide a brief overview of the inter-generational/eccliesial model. I will also comment on how it differs from the schooling model, and thereby addresses the concerns expressed in our diocesan consultation.

Developing a process to bring about such a dramatic shift from a model of catechesis as schooling to an inter-generational/eccliesial approach to ongoing formation is key. It requires a great deal of thought and sensitivity to each particular situation. As a result each parish has been given the freedom to develop its own process and timeline for implementation. With a view to all the parishes I will give a composite summary of best practices that are being used by our parishes.

Finally, I will offer a preliminary evaluation of the faith formation model we are using, both its gains and challenges. I will conclude with some observations on this new approach as it relates to the Church’s great tradition of handing on the faith. In doing so, I hope to offer some suggestions as to how to keep our focus as we take up this task anew in our time.

What We Are Doing Is Not Working

Many people came to this conclusion about the general status of our religious education programs, but for varying reasons. Parishioners pointed to dwindling and aging populations to conclude that our efforts were not inspiring children to make a lifelong commitment to the faith. Parents referred to the minimal grasp that their children had of the basics of Catholic teaching and tradition. Teachers and catechists expressed concern that the present system of religious education was creating false expectations about the nature of faith formation and how it takes place.

The Absence of a Lifelong Commitment

The aging population of our Sunday congregations was evidence enough for the average parishioner that we are failing to pass on the faith to our youth. While most people were not sure what could be done about this, there was a general sense that any new approach should aim at inspiring our young people to continue in the practice of the faith. It was obvious that our youth were not active once they left high school or when religious education classes ended. One mother starkly described the crisis we are facing at this moment in the life of the Church and
crystallized what is at stake. After describing her disappointment that none of her children practices the faith, she mused that she and her husband could most likely be the last generation of Catholics in their family.

**Religious Illiteracy**

After years of CCD classes many children seem not to know the basics about what Catholics believe or the essentials of our tradition, e.g., how many Gospels are in the Bible, when Jesus lived, and the meaning of words like “Incarnation,” “Exodus,” “Real Presence,” and “sacrament.”

Young people were some of the first to express concern in this regard during our consultation. They complained about being ill-equipped to respond to the challenging comments and questions about Catholicism posed by classmates of other faith traditions. A teen expressed her frustration: “I feel cheated that my non-Catholic friends know more about the Bible and their religion than I know about my faith. I really do not know what it means to be a Catholic.”

Some parents noted that the extent of this illiteracy is much more significant than failing to master a few facts, dates, or definitions. John Cavazinni recently echoed these sentiments: “This vast ignorance is not just a question of missing bits of information, retinal holes marring an otherwise excellent field of vision. It is something more like a retinal detachment, a whole field of vision pulling inexorably away toward blindness. Not only are the words gone, the bits of information, but the system in which the words made sense is fading.”

Our parents expressed this same frustration and asked for a new approach that would relate the content of our faith to the context of their children’s lives. Failure to do so has created a moral vacuum in the lives of their children. In the place of a religious field of vision, their children are opting for other “value systems” to shape their view of the world and their attitudes about important issues such as human dignity, sexual mores, and social justice.

**False Expectations**

Teachers, catechists, and pastors also weighed in, agreeing that change was needed. It is true that our present system is leaving children religiously illiterate and only superficially connected to the faith life of the Church. However, the main problem with the system was not poor textbooks, unprepared or indifferent catechists, or bad children. Rather, according to them the model of schooling as catechesis creates false expectations on a number of levels.

First, catechesis as schooling done in a classroom gives the impression that faith formation is no different from learning math, science, or history or any other school subject. Learning these subjects requires no personal commitment. Children’s interest in any of them is often tied to their natural aptitude. We should not be surprised that children are leaving our programs with little commitment. According to some of our teachers, the schooling model unwittingly subverts the goal of catechesis, namely, to initiate young people into a life of ongoing faith formation.

The schooling model also affects the attitudes of parents. When teaching religion becomes just another subject to learn, it is viewed as the responsibility of the “experts,” i.e., the teachers or the pastor. As this mind-set takes hold, parents tend to be less involved — and eventually less supportive — of their children’s faith formation. One educator offered this apt description of the false expectation I am speaking about: “I am afraid we have led parents to believe that it is possible to drop their child at the church for religious education, run to the dry cleaners, the bank, and the grocery store, then come back an hour later and pick up a Catholic!”

Again, when religion becomes just another subject to teach to children, and not a matter of faith formation, parents lose sight of the value of their own practice of the faith. “The real issue here is one of witness and how it is at the heart of the faith formation of our children,” according to one parish priest. A more recent trend confirms the impact of reducing religion to just another school subject and removing the value of witness. More and more we are seeing families suspend their Sunday Mass attendance during the summer months when classes are not offered.

The trend of waning parental support for religious education and formation is being mirrored in the broader community. The practice of leaving one night a week open for religious education has been abandoned even in rural communities in favor of sporting events and school activities. This only puts more pressure on already crowded family schedules and makes it easier for parents to justify giving a lower priority to religion.
In sum, there was a growing consensus that the very design of the schooling model is the heart of the problem. It has created a false understanding of what it means to pass on the faith by undervaluing the importance of witness. It also has created the illusion that the responsibility of faith formation belongs to just a few and requires little parental or community involvement and support. The general sentiment was that a totally new approach would be needed if we are going to be serious about handing on the faith to the next generations.

Designing a New Direction

From these diocesanwide discussions it was clear that the design of a fresh approach to catechesis had to address three issues: (1) We need to pass on the faith in a way that creates a thirst for God and the Church in the lives of young people. Childhood catechesis then becomes the beginning of one’s long and ongoing faith formation. (2) Consideration has to be given to the context of Church life and practice when it comes to sharing the content of our faith and tradition. (3) The participation and witness of everyone is needed. Everyone is responsible and has to be involved. We found such a design in the inter-generational/ecclesial models that many dioceses were beginning to use.

From a Catechesis of Schooling to an Inter-Generational/Ecclesial Approach

The problems and challenges of passing on the faith which we identified through our synod process have been brewing for a long time. This is true not only in western South Dakota, but throughout the nation as Cavodini highlights. As a result we were interested in learning more about how other dioceses and parishes around the country were responding to this crisis. Many were finding success in shifting from a catechesis of schooling to a new model of catechesis, commonly called inter-generational or church-based faith formation.

These new approaches have a common starting point in the vision of catechesis offered in the General Catechetical Directory of 1999:

Catechetical pedagogy will be effective to the extent that the Christian community becomes a point of concrete reference for the faith journey of individuals. This happens when the community is proposed as a source, locus, and means, of catechesis. Concretely, the community becomes a visible place of faith-witness. It provides for the formation of its members. It receives them as a family of God. It constitutes itself as the living and permanent environment of growth in faith.

Shifting from a model of catechesis as schooling to a catechesis as community-based faith formation has enormous consequences and implications. It redefines who is responsible for passing on the faith, it forces a reconsideration of how content relates to the context of learning, and it reinforces the role of the family.

First, with the inter-generational approach, everyone is responsible. The responsibility for passing on the faith does not belong exclusively to a few, whether that is the pastor, the religious education coordinator, the teachers, or the parents. Whether one is actually involved in the programs or just someone who witnesses by the practice of the faith, all take responsibility for creating the circumstances for handing on the faith to all. That means that faith formation is not just for the young. It is inter-generational because faith formation is a matter of lifelong learning.

Second, the context for learning the content of faith is the events in the life of the Church. This means that the parish must begin thinking about its keeping of feasts and seasons, its social justice and spiritual renewal efforts and its fellowship gatherings as “teachable moments.” Each of these is the context for learning the content of our faith and for creating a corporate Catholic identity in the parish.

As a result, this events-centered and lifelong learning approach has an impact on the design of the curriculum, requiring it to be both systematic and cyclical. Typically, this means a six-year rotation of the major content areas found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The four pillars of the Catechism (profession of faith, celebration of the Christian mysteries, life in Christ, and Christian prayer) are covered over a six-year period: (1) Church Year feasts and seasons, (2) sacraments and Church rituals, (3) justice and service, (4) Creed, (5) morality, and (6) prayer and spirituality. The six-year curriculum makes it possible to explore the Catholic faith with breadth and depth. As a spiral curriculum, the six
themes are explored more deeply when the six-year cycle begins with year one again.

More specifically, it should be noted that each year’s curriculum is divided into monthly segments during which time there are both age-appropriate and inter-generational gatherings. Nonetheless, there is a multigenerational experience of the theme which is tied to specific events of the Church’s life. In the Year of the Sacraments, for instance, the entire community prepares for the celebration of Pentecost by learning about Confirmation. Marriage is covered during December as the community prepares to celebrate Holy Family Sunday, the Wedding Feast of Cana, and “World Marriage Day.”

Finally, what happens at home and in the family reinforces what takes place in the community as it learns and develops a corporate Catholic identity. The parish helps the parents do this not by teaching them all they need to know about the faith so that they can in turn teach their children. Rather, the parish has the responsibility of assisting families, especially parents, to create a pattern of family faith sharing which involves learning, praying, serving, and celebrating with the Church. This means providing them with home materials that are designed to expand on the event learning that is taking place in the entire parish during a given month. These event-specific home materials help families to celebrate traditions and rituals, continue their learning, pray together, and reach out in service to others.

In sum, this model invites all generations in the parish to respect their own and each other’s baptism as a source of mutual spiritual growth and lifelong formation. Sharing the content of the Catholic faith takes place in a systematic and cyclic way as it is tied to the celebration of the events in the life of the Church. Teaching takes place in the home, at age-specific sessions, and at inter-generational gatherings, as all ages in the parish participate in these ecclesial events.

The Implementation Process Is Key

Change does not come easily for any of us. The changes involved in this shift to an inter-generational model involve more than religious education. It also means rethinking the way parishes operate and function. Both individual parishes and the diocese have a role in this process.

Those parishes that have been most successful in bringing about this shift from catechesis as schooling to catechesis as inter-generational/eccleral faith formation have invested a great deal of effort in the process both in terms of decision making and communication.

The idea is that if we are serious about asking parishioners to assume responsibility for the faith formation of all members, then they have to be involved in the decision making through ongoing communication. Such a change cannot be a top-down decision made by the pastor or just a few people mandating a new approach and placing a new obligation on parents and the people of the parish. The message of mutual responsibility has to be matched by a corresponding form of involvement and decision making. Without this starting point, there is little chance of getting people to rethink their approach to parish life and of convincing them they have a common responsibility for passing on the faith. In this instance, how things are done is as important as what is said.

By way of example, one pastor began with his parish leadership. They spent some weeks evaluating the religious education program, and came to a consensus that the Synod’s call for a change had to be made in their parish. Not only did they approve going forward with the inter-generational approach, they also worked on a strategy to implement it. The first step was to host a parish picnic, at which families were introduced to the new approach. By scheduling a noneducational event for families to gather in a relaxed atmosphere, they immediately conveyed that the new approach had a wider aim than schooling children. The goal of the new effort is to include everyone and to build up the parish community and families.

At the picnic and in the weeks that followed, various small gifts such as bookmarks, yo-yos, key chains, and holy cards were distributed with the logo of the inter-generational program, GIFT (growing in faith together). This allowed people to take something home with them that would keep the conversation about this new program alive in their homes.

The parish leadership used every opportunity on the weekend and in mailings to inform people of the new effort, realizing that people need to hear something new a number of times. Information was designed to anticipate possible misconceptions and questions. The parish developed a team of families strategically located in the various neighborhoods. These parents served as a core group prepared to address concerns and encourage participation.
One expected objection was that parents were once again being stretched to do something that institutions had failed to do. Could not the priest be more available to teach the kids in Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD)? Why isn’t the diocese doing something to better train and retain teachers? In response, every effort was made to be clear about what parents were being asked to do and what the parish would do to support them. Additionally, the parish leaders took the occasion to speak about the issues raised in the synod process. If parents are really concerned about their children making a lifelong commitment to the faith, then their involvement, the involvement of the whole adult faith community was necessary.

It was also important to avoid any misunderstanding that parents were being threatened or forced to cooperate lest their children be unable to participate. The leadership stayed on message: the parish was not threatening but enabling parents, especially those who had doubts that they had something to offer for the faith formation of their children and others in the parish. One parent put it succinctly in a discussion with a neighbor: “This new program is about preparing our kids for life and eternal life. What better description is there for a Catholic parent?”

The diocese also makes two important contributions in the process of implementing this new approach in the parish. The first is to provide outside resources to train parish leaders, facilitators, and other personnel in developing a curriculum and providing the organizational framework. During initial workshops, pastors and other parish leaders had an opportunity to learn more about an inter-generational approach. Follow-up sessions with consultants were also sponsored and coordinated by the diocese.

Secondly, the diocese can support the parishes in setting standards and policies. Early on, pastors noticed that those parents not wanting to participate in this new approach were transferring their membership to other parishes that maintained the schooling model. After consulting with the presbyteral council and the diocesan pastoral council, a decision was made to craft new education standards and policies that would reflect the need for parental involvement and a parish commitment to ongoing faith formation.

These reformulated policies did not mandate a particular program, and parishes were allowed a grace period of three years to meet the standards. Pastors and parish leaders were asked to make a commitment to redesign their programs, and they were given the leeway to make the decisions on how they will comply with the new standards. The aim is to instill in parishioners a sense of mutual responsibility for religious education. Forcing implementation along a narrow framework and timeline was seen as counterproductive to this eventual goal. As one of our pastors told me, “We need to adopt policies that nudge not shove if we are going to be credible about parishes taking responsibility.”

A Preliminary Assessment

Gains

Most parishes report that the response on the part of parishioners and families has been almost overwhelming. Parents welcome the chance to be better connected with their children’s learning, and they find support through the interaction with other parents. Pastors also report that participation in their parishes on weekends and at monthly meetings is up significantly. Many parishes are providing an evening meal at the monthly inter-generational gatherings. This makes it easier for working mothers and fathers to participate, but it also has spawned a new group of volunteers to prepare the meals.

Since the parishwide gatherings are less frequent, smaller parishes seem more willing to twin with each other in sharing their otherwise sparse teaching resources. Pastors are also reporting that a parishwide faith formation program impacts the way families deal with issues and problems. One father spoke of now having a “neutral corner” to talk to his children about serious matters. While this new approach places more demands on the time of parents who already suffer from time-poverty, the benefits to their family life have made it easier for them to take up the needed task of reevaluating and adjusting their priorities.

When parishes decided on this new model, there was a concern about the impact on single-parent families. A special effort was made to support them by arranging for two-parent families to partner with them if needed. These partnerships have developed into a much larger network of support for family living than was anticipated. Likewise, the monthly inter-generational gatherings have provided a context for people of different ages and family situations to meet.
Finally, the rapid spread of the inter-generational model of catechesis has caught publishers unprepared. Only now are some beginning to close the gap and design resource materials and textbooks for the specific needs of this new approach. While there is a downside to this present gap between program and texts, it has created a unique opportunity for dialogue between publishers and those working on the grassroots level.

**Challenges**

The gains have outweighed the challenges, but the challenges are not insignificant and deserve attention. The first is the loss of families who have not been able or willing to make a change. Some parishes estimate that up to 20 percent of the families formerly enrolled in religious education have dropped out or transferred to parishes offering the schooling model. This loss is disappointing to pastors and parish leaders but must be placed in context. As one Director of Religious Education noted, these families participated infrequently in the program and in Sunday Mass. They were not supportive of the teachers and demonstrated little if any commitment to taking responsibility for the formation of the children’s faith lives. This does not mean that we write them off. The parishes will have to develop a special outreach to these families. At the same time, there is a general consensus that the program is much healthier without the burden of trying to form children of parents uninterested and uncommitted to faith formation.

More also needs to be done to train facilitators of age-specific and inter-generational parish gatherings. The content and curriculum provided by the centers offering these programs are very well done but require greater attention to pedagogy. Smaller dioceses like our own and many of our rural parishes lack the necessary personnel to lead the gatherings and fashion the material so that they are age-specific. The new model of relating content to the context of living and celebrating our faith in worship demands new skills and a different kind of preparation.

As a result, two things should be kept in mind. First, we must recognize that this is a time of transition. A full inter-generational approach may need to be phased in over a number of years. Even the authors of such programs recognize that they are in the very early stages of introducing this new model of faith formation. As one of them told me, “it will take at least four to six years in a parish community for this new approach to become anchored in the practice of the whole parish community.” As noted above, publishers are also behind the curve and have not yet caught up to the new and specific needs of this model.

Consequently, we have to remember, especially in this time of transition, that the faith formation of our children is our priority. That most likely may mean that we will have to schedule age-specific gatherings with greater frequency and continue using familiar texts for the time being, so that children receive a full and systemic catechesis. Children should not fall through the cracks as the adults attempt to make a very revolutionary change, albeit with the great promise it holds.

Secondly, the diocese has to step in and help parishes evaluate their programs. Dioceses also should provide ongoing training of leaders and facilitators lest the burnout of catechists experienced in the former model be replicated in those introducing this new approach.

**Keeping Our Focus: A Concluding Observation**

G. K. Chesterton once said that discouragement is the most diabolical of all temptations. Discouragement convinces us that we are alone, adrift, and on our own as we face life and the future. Many people today are discouraged about the future of the Church and the faith lives of their children because they feel that we are adrift in uncharted waters. They feel somewhat homeless after going through the seismic shifts in the Church, society, and our culture these past years. The support systems and points of reference they counted on in the past seemingly have evaporated. The question that one mother asked is on all of their minds: “Will they be the last Catholics in their families?”

But if we are honest about it, Christians have asked this question since the earliest days of the Church. Those living in the final days of the age of the apostles no doubt wondered about the future. How would the Church continue after the death of the last person who knew the Lord as Jesus of Nazareth? We should remember that it was out of this context that the New Testament, especially the Gospels, were born. The Evangelists, especially John (20:31) and Luke (1:1–4), make a point of saying that they are writing not just to recount the life of Jesus, even if it is a recounting through their communities’ experience of the Risen Lord. Rather, they claim that their retelling the events of Christ from their experience has the power to create the very same experience whenever
this retelling is proclaimed to future generations. "This is written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31).

I believe that these early Christian communities, which faced challenges not unlike our own, have something to teach us by the approach they took in passing on the faith. Three things are noteworthy. First, they were faithful to the past. Second, they knew the importance of their own witness. Finally, they took up this challenge with a deep faith that the generations following them would be gifted with the Spirit to respond to the perennial truth of the Gospel and be able to make it their own for their time.

These three attributes should mark our efforts as we take up the task of passing on the faith in our time. We should never underestimate the importance of having a firm grasp of our tradition and the basics of our faith. If we do not want our youth to be theologically illiterate, then the adult community must prize and value its own ongoing learning. Also, the adult community must be able to demonstrate to young people not only that they have a grasp of the faith but that they are grasped by it. This means giving witness to our youth that our faith is the point of reference for the decisions we make and the kind of life we live.

Finally, we need to take up the work of forming young people in the faith with the confidence that God's grace is active in them calling for a response. Practically, that means teaching in a way that shows that we value them as partners in passing on the faith in our time. In sum, they both receive and have something to offer.

I wish that I would have had a chance to tell that young Muslim man how much my friends and I admired him for the witness he gave by practicing his faith in an alien land and culture. I even think it may have encouraged him. While that opportunity has passed, it does prompt me to suggest that all of us involved in passing on the faith should not overlook the importance of letting our youth know that their own practice of the faith is inspiring to their elders. By letting them know that they have much to offer as well as to receive, we plant a seed in their hearts about their future responsibility in handing on the faith. We create in them a thirst for Christ that can only be satisfied by doing the same for others. That seems to me to be at the heart of an inter-generational approach to faith formation and the hope it offers all of us in a moment of great challenge.

Afterword

Continuing the Conversation

JOHN C. CAVADINI

It is difficult to find oneself in the position of commenting on such a distinguished set of papers and on the learned and truly clarifying discussion among all of the participants — leaders in scholarship, education, and publishing. I learned so much from listening to the reflections of fellow members of our symposium that it seems otiose to add anything further! I will begin, then, by naming two areas of major contribution — areas of such strong agreement among participants that they seem to offer recommendations for the future. I will then turn to one area where I believe the conference participants did not fully address all that is implied in the topic "Handing on Catholic Faith." I will conclude with some observations on the role of beauty in the practice of handing on the faith.

In Handing on the Faith, What Is Primary Is Practice

The "catechumenate of culture," as Paul Griffiths puts it, is really a catechumenate of particular practices more than anything else. The culture of commodification inculcates a way of being, a *habitus* that can only be countered by a set of practices which proceed from an essentially different inspiration from that of the culture at large. William Dinges’s paper specifies one dimension of this cultural catechumenate as a formation in "individualism" and recommends the primacy of the practice of Church, one might say, as the only suitable principle of formation to the contrary. Mary Johnson’s paper demonstrates the extent to which a certain kind of practice of the faith has been eroded. The case seems effectively made