

Building a Premier Culture of Formation + January 10, 11, February 5,9, 2011

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I want to first of all thank each of you for taking the time to join with one another for this historic day in the Premier See with the launching of *Equip for Ministry*. Over 400 laity, consecrated religious and clergy will come together from all corners of the premier from 110 parishes and 39 schools. And, these days would not be possible without the support of so many who have given untiringly to this latest archdiocesan initiative in the ongoing formation of disciples of Jesus.

Equip for Ministry began in 2008 with great visionaries, Carol Augustine, Margaret Brogden, Armando Daniel Garcia, Mark Pacione, Ruth Puls, Julie Rybczynski (Rib-chin-ski) and Joe Swiss. In 2009, they were joined by a team of pastoral leaders to reflect on the Principles for Building a Culture of Formation. In 2010 transitions were going on at the Catholic Center and before I arrived I asked that we delay the launching of *Equip* until January 2011. By doing so, we were able to realign our organizational structure and ensure that key staff members were in place. In 2010 Scott Miller joined the team along with most recently Mae Richardson our new Coordinator for Pastoral Leadership Formation with her principle responsibility, overseeing *Equip*. Our thanks also go to Michael Ruzicki our new Coordinator of Sacramental and Adult Faith Formation for assisting in the creative design of *Equip's* materials.

Ideas and visions don't necessarily get things done alone unless they also have financial support. The new Department of Evangelization has a great partner in its ministry, the Catholic Community Foundation. The CCF's very generous support is helping us meet our hopes with the design of *Equip*. In particular, I want to thank CCF's director, Jim Edwards for working closely with Ruth Puls and me, the new kid on the block, in guiding us through the grant process. A significant part of the \$41,000 grant to the department is being used for *Equip*.

Yes, today we launch *Equip for Ministry!* Just like the launching of a new ship there is a long period of dreaming, planning, preparation, altering of plans, building and the launching itself. As people gather for the christening of a ship there is much anxiety. The anxiety is sometimes simple like, will the bottle of champagne break when it hits the bow of the ship. Some gather around the ship and are disappointed that not all their ideas were incorporated in the building plan. Those in leadership worry about the impending date and will we be ready. And of course, when the bottle hits the bow and the ship rolls down the ramp, all hold their breath hoping that the ship floats and it does. Even after the ship is launched, there is time for fine-tuning the many elements to enable it to become truly sea worthy. And so it is with *Equip for Ministry!*

In my national ministry, I have seen an emerging trend across our nation to conduct our Catholic catechetical programs more in the framework of an indoctrination process. Some catechists may even see themselves as drill sergeants. Well, you know, I experienced some of that approach in my childhood and it worked some of the time. For many Catholics in my generation and behind me, much of our formal religious education ended at grade eight after learning everything in the great catechism which came forth from Baltimore. However, one of our greatest challenges among these Catholics is to entice them into realizing that it is not about just information or indoctrination but that as a disciple of Jesus Christ, our lives are in-formation until our last

breath. In front of me are emerging generations that not catechized and are wanting and ready to learn. However, it is not just about putting new wine into old wine skins. It is not only about getting information, which one can get on the internet. They want to be engaged. We know what happens when we put new wine into old wineskins. So, we as teachers need to be more cognizant of the new reality for teaching in the growing secularization of our society. Engagement is the means to our objectives.

In a phrase that Pope John Paul II borrowed from Pope Paul VI and which he used on many occasions, he said, “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

Pope Benedict XVI also uses this quote. However, he also addresses something else in our time in the formation of the new Pontifical Council for New Evangelization. He realizes that it is not just about finding or creating new methods or having a greater openness in sharing our faith or exploring new ways to witness to the Gospel. He shares an emerging theme for him on many occasions. It is about “re-proposing the faith in a culture that has lost the instinct to believe.”

We are here because we believe. However, we look at things from our own generational lens. For our youth and our young adults today, engagement is the name of the game. Our young Catholics are attracted to anything that engages them. We have to be there. Our young adults also know the value of stepping aside from all the engagement to recharge the batteries in contemplation. Our youth and young adults in many situations are the reason for their parents getting more and more engaged in the life of the church. Now, isn't that a new evangelization!

The challenge before us in an age where those entrusted to our care in the parishes and schools are more willingly to listen to those teachers among us because they are witnesses, is for us a time more about creating a culture of formation. It is about engaging Catholics in ways they least expect to experience the transforming power of the Gospel.

Archbishop O'Brien and I along with many of our colleagues in ministry, re-propose our “faith in a culture that has lost the instinct to believe.” You and I, along with over 400 participants in these three workshops, will build a premier culture of formation for the sake of the mission entrusted to each of us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This culture of formation is built upon eight principles: It...

1. Recognizes Mission, Call and Need
2. Respects and Celebrates a Multicultural Church
3. Acknowledges the Value of Lay Ministry
4. Calling for Competency and On-Going Formation
5. Provides for formation and Celebration
6. Establishes Clear Expectations
7. Maximizes Technology
8. Serves as Role Models and Collaborators

If the Gospel is to transform our culture, those who embrace the Gospel must know the culture in which they find themselves and they must also know the culture in which they were formed.

- A culture of formation acknowledges the reality that as disciples, regardless of our ecclesial status, we are always in need of ongoing formation.
- A culture of formation fosters the understanding that people come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have advanced degrees, others may not read and write, and some have different learning challenges.
- A culture of formation acknowledges that people in parish or school communities come from no or varying ecclesiologies, represent different generations, represent different economic levels, celebrate in a number of different languages, and were raised with different ethnic traditions.
- A culture of formation acknowledges that it is not about clocking hours to become competent but rather having clear expectations and supporting the ongoing formation of those teaching.
- A culture of formation recognizes that everyone in the church teaches one way or another. Its teachers realize that it is more about them in the eyes of their students rather than the book they are holding.
- A culture of formation realizes that we can teach on the telephone, the internet, in our preaching, in our liturgical planning and in any place where two or three are gathered.
- Yes, a culture of formation is about mission!

Parishes and schools with a culture of formation identify and celebrate these differences; however they also celebrate what they have in common. Around the table we are one and united.

- Strong leaders in parishes and schools unite us.
- Strong leaders are united in mission, teaching and ministry.
- Strong leaders see the goodness of the Lord and the goodness of one another.
- Strong leaders challenge each other; and correct one another in a loving way.
- Strong leaders know the treasure of community and hold one another's joys, hopes and tears.
- Strong leaders share their faith regardless of their role.
- Yes and strong leaders also bring people around a variety of tables to eat, drink and celebrate!

Parishes and schools with a culture of formation have a leader empowering key people to plan, share, create and evaluate.

- The focus is on doing God's work.
- People in the communities are challenged to live lives of holiness and discipleship.
- There is respect for the unique calling of each individual.
- There is a willingness to help people recognize their limitations and join with others to compensate.

Parishes and schools with a culture of formation find its very reason to exist.

- They realize their identity is a dynamic core of authentic Catholic tradition, teaching and practice.
- They are open to the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- They do not create barriers for their fellow disciples which stifle the work of the Spirit.
- They have leaders and collaborators who never get in the way of anyone trying to do good.

Yes, Archbishop O'Brien is asking all of us to create a premier culture of formation in our archdiocese. And, to do this we are all in need of ongoing formation. For those of us collaborating with volunteers, being a volunteer should not be an excuse for not being the best. As one of my colleagues says, "I cannot imagine sending a volunteer firefighter into a fire without the fire fighter being equipped...even though he or she is a 'volunteer.'" All of us whether we are ordained, lay paid or lay volunteer, we are all disciples of Jesus Christ and we are on a mission and for the sake of the mission we must be formed. The General Directory for Catechesis is clear:

- Jesus gave careful attention to the formation of the disciples whom he sent out on mission (They were not paid nor were they volunteers, they were disciples.)
- Whatever teaching role we may function in, we are formators of disciples.

As formators of disciples, let us explore our building blocks, our principles for pastoral leaders and pastoral staffs in building a culture of formation.

Principle One: Recognizes the Mission, the Call and the Need

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation exists have leaders and staff who recognize that the call to ministry is rooted in baptism. They recognize the great need for all to be about the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Is there a need without mission? Is there a mission without a call? Mission, call and need are integral with one another in our quest as disciples to be missionary in our lives, ministries and institutions. You and I set the tone for how we will move forward. We have pastors moving from one parish to another and principals moving from one school to another. We have leaders in new positions or another location and we can change our anxiety into a zeal for the mission entrusted to us.

What happens in the ministries and schools where we are is about us. It is about our initial call as a disciple. And, it is about our need to fulfill our mission first and foremost as disciples of Jesus. However, it is also about the great commission of "Go and Make Disciples."

We get up in the morning and most often say, "O, my God" when we look into the mirror. Maybe we should welcome the new dawn as an opportunity to say, "I am a disciple and my mission is to..."

Principle Two: Respect and Celebrate a Multicultural Church

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have leaders and staff who serve and celebrate a multicultural church. They exhibit sensitivity to and solidarity with the many different people who come together as one church.

Our mission is not to make the church multicultural. As disciples, we are called to recognize the multicultural reality which has been with the church from the beginning of time. The disciples were sent out to diverse communities and the most beautiful expression of this is at Pentecost. In a culture of formation leaders and staff will recognize that each of us embraces a language or languages, economic differences, looks and most of our backgrounds come from another land and; the list goes on. However, our insides are all the same. In a culture of formation, we will recognize that I bring only my cultural makeup to the table. I am only one expression of the divine life within. I am not superior to anyone with a different cultural makeup from my own. I will not look upon someone who speaks with an accent or dresses differently than I do as right or wrong but just different than me.

In a culture of formation, we celebrate the unity in the midst of the richness of diversity that God has created. From the earliest days of our nation, there has been a richness of language, religious belief and expression. And, to think in our own archdiocese we have a rich heritage of diversity that should not be squandered but lifted up and our individuality must not get in the way in a true culture of formation. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, if one feels inferior, it is only because that person gives someone else permission to make them feel that way. A true culture of formation embraces and welcomes the richness of diversity after all, God created us that way.

Principle Three: Acknowledges the Value of Lay Ministry

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have leaders and staff who value the work of lay ministers and co-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

In a true culture of formation, a disciple is a disciple. Ministry is ministry. Disciples need one another to fulfill the mission. None of us can do it alone. The first disciples could be referred to as the first lay ministers and in this the value of lay ministry was established by Jesus Himself until he singled out some of the first disciples to exercise a particular ministry among all the disciples.

The ordained are being ever more challenged to recognize and invite the laity into a collaborate relationship not because they need help but because it is **expected** of all the baptized. It is up to the ordained pastoral leader to recognize that he cannot do it all alone and should not do it all alone. Pope Benedict put it this way...

I believe that one of the important and positive results of the Council: the co-responsibility of the entire parish, for the parish priest is no longer the only one to animate everything. Since we all form a parish together, we must all collaborate and help so that the parish priest is not left on his own, mainly as a coordinator, but truly discovers that he is a pastor who is backed up in these common tasks in which, together the parish lives and is fulfilled.

In a culture of formation, the ordained not only recognize gifted role of the laity but invites those among the laity into leadership for the sake of the mission.

Principle Four: Calls for Competency and On-Going Formation

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation exists have leaders and staff that value competency in lay ministry, and regularly ask: “What are we doing to increase the competency of our lay ministers to serve the people of God? There is a high value placed on the ongoing human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of lay ministers.

In a culture of formation, leaders should have a high expectation of on-going formation for those on staff whether paid or not. With a pay-check comes even greater expectation for on-going formation and competency. And, not receiving a pay-check shouldn't be used as an excuse to be incompetent as a disciple for the sake of the mission.

We all know that competency comes in many forms. Those among us with advanced degrees can recognize one reality; we met the expectations of the degree requirements. It does not mean we know everything in the field and even more importantly the degree does not necessarily mean we are competent to be a teacher in the field. For those ordained among us, it is important for us to remember that with our degrees in theology, we too do not know everything in the field of theology and a degree in theology does not necessarily mean we can teach anymore than a non-ordained. Without ongoing development of skills and competency to teach and preach, as ordained or non-ordained disciples we can run the risk of making fools of ourselves in front of a lot of people given our captive audiences.

Competency does not come in the form of clocking hours. It is more than that. Competency comes with accountability to leadership that one is availing themselves to all that is necessary to be the best in what they are doing to foster a particular aspect in the life and mission of the parish or school. We owe it to those in any form of ministry what is not only necessary in equipping them for ministry but it should be the best. With competency we must reflect on input and output. Evaluations should be done in a positive way with suggestions for ongoing development.

Remember, your greatest evidence in your own competency will be in the people you recruit and form. You will be successful if they are successful.

In a culture of formation, leaders provide all that is necessary for their collaborators to be successful in their ministry.

Principle Five: Provides for Formation and Celebration

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have leaders and staff that provide and encourage opportunities for growth and for financial support for formation of lay ministers. They celebrate milestones along the way; installations in ministry, completed courses, archdiocesan recognitions, etc.

We all know that one of our greatest pleasures in life is to be recognized and affirmed in what we do. It is part of our human nature. Leaders should recognize those unique gifts in their midst

and single them out for skill development and ongoing formation. One thing we often hear in our respective ministry is, “It is always the same people do the same thing all the time.” I have been there. However, this expression is a weakness in leadership and the cultivation of leadership. It is never the case that there are not any other people out there. Some may be interested and realize that they do not feel competent to step forward.

In a culture of formation, financial support for ongoing skill development and ongoing formation is not an option. To not provide this will flat-line ministry. And a flat-lined ministry is more about maintenance than mission and an institution will only die out.

Principle Six: Establishes Clear Expectations

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have pastoral leaders and staff that provide clear expectations for ministry and assist lay ministers in meeting those expectations.

How many among us have job descriptions? Without a job description there are no expectations. Job titles are not enough. I don’t know about you, but I have expectations of my team mates which I am sure they will vouch for. And, we all have job descriptions. And, I know the Archbishop has expectations of me. Unfortunately, they are not all in my job description.

In a culture of formation there are job descriptions and, there are clear expectations. However the expectations should be a two-way street in a culture of formation. A leader’s expectation of the one entrusted with a responsibility and, for the one with the responsibility to know and experience the leader providing all that is necessary for this to happen.

In developing our archdiocesan culture of formation, Archbishop O’Brien has clear expectations of me and the E-Team. We are to provide a culture of formation that enables disciples to not only do their ministry well but to do it with great zeal and become contagious for others to become engaged in the fostering the Gospel in our parishes and schools.

Principle Seven: Maximizes Technology

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have leaders and staff willing to provide for increased use of technology in their parishes and schools.

Using technology is a no brainer. What sometimes burns me out is hearing people in leadership talk about our need to utilize technology and nothing happens. In many ways it is because we see a means that intimidates us. Institutions without websites are dinosaurs. Institutions that have websites with no engagement are not maximizing technology and need to if you want to engage our young people. And, as I have said before...young people are not the future of the church, however there is no future for the church without the young.

Our young people welcome the opportunity to be engaged in anything technologically speaking. There are countless young people who would step forward to get the parishes more technologically involved.

In a culture of formation one would not even think of forming people today without the use of some technology. Technology is a unique and essential way to engage our young people but not only them.

Special thanks goes out to the Catholic Center IT Division. Bill Glover and his team is supporting the core team in utilizing every form of technology that would assist in the effectiveness of Equip for Ministry. Their collaborative efforts will certainly allow Equip to become a diocesan model, as it should be from the premier see. The hours they have put into this program are exhaustive. (Acknowledge any IT staff.)

Principle Eight: Serves as Role Models and Collaborators

Parishes and schools where a culture of formation for ministry exists have leaders and staff who serve as models of formation; living out their call to holiness as they grow in areas of human, spiritual, intellectual and personal formation. They collaborate with one another, regionally, and on an archdiocesan level.

Not too long ago, over 500 youth gathered in Ocean City for Baltimore Youth Catholic Conference. It was great to witness our young people reflecting on the theme of heroes. It was good for them and it is good for us in leadership to serve as role models and collaborators. It is not only good, but it is essential.

Collaboration is an often misunderstood word. Some in leadership invite people to join them in a project and tell them all the details of what is going to be done and how it is to be done. This is not collaboration. In collaboration, we co-labor together on a particular task or issue. True collaborative leadership is when leaders have an idea or task and invite others into the process welcoming their gifts and talents to achieve the end result.

In a culture of formation, collaboration is essential to achieve the greatest results for the sake of the mission. In achieving this, you become a role model.

In conclusion...

Yes, we are launching *Equip for Ministry* today. It not only will assist us in building a culture of formation. It our archdiocese it will:

- Recognize Mission, the Call and the Need
- Respect and Celebrate a Multicultural Church
- Acknowledge the value of lay ministry
- Call for competency and on-going formation
- Provide for formation and celebration
- Establish clear expectations
- Maximize technology
- Serve you so that together we can become role models and true collaborators

...in building a culture of formation.

Fellow disciples of Jesus Christ, we gather with one another to launch our latest initiative to foster the mission entrusted to us through our Baptism, *Equip for Ministry*. As we launch this process to create a culture of formation, let us remember the words of St. Paul the Apostle in his letter to the Ephesians...

*...live in a manner worthy of the call you have received,
With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love,
Striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace:*

*One body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call;
One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

*But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.
And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets,
Others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers,*

to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry...for building up the body of Christ.