

Keep On Teaching

“Whom shall I send?” “Who shall go before us?” Twenty years ago, the “Keep on Teaching” catechetical ministry answered this call and created a new talk and a new walk in catechesis. “The Keep on Teaching” catechetical ministry gets its name from Paul’s powerful message in teaching that appears in Act 20:7-21. The “Keep on Teaching” catechetical ministry was created by the Naimah catechists of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The Naimah Catechists mission was to demonstrate Pope John Paul II call for inculturation within catechesis ... “Catechesis is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. Catechists will seek to know these cultures and their essential components, it will learn their significant expression; and help them bring forth their living traditions original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought (John Paul II, “On Catechesis in Our Time,” *Catechesi Tradendae*, #53).

The genesis of the Naimah catechists and the development of the “Keep on Teaching” manual started in 1989, through a collaborative effort of the Office of African American Catholic Ministry and the Division of Religious Education. This collaborative effort forged a new adventure of inculturating catechesis. Forty men and women from predominately African American Catholic Parishes were invited to undergo an immersion process; being plunged into the deep insights of catechesis from an Africentric perspective. The instructors were Sister of Social Service Eva Marie Lumas and Sister Dr. Oralisa Martin, founder of the African American Catholic Catechetical Conference in Los Angeles and founder of the ORACLE program.

Twenty years later, on Sept. 10, at St. Cecilia, Sister Eva Marie returned to rekindle the flame and spirit of the goals and nature of Africentric catechesis to an audience of more than 115 catechists that represented parishes and schools in the

Archdiocese of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. This year's "Keep on Teaching" participants were inspired with necessary spiritual food in answering God's call to "Keep on Teaching" in ways that can be understood. Catechists were challenge to renew their commitment to strengthen their faith formation and incorporate insights from an Africentric and Catholic perspective in their faith formation classes, youth groups, RCIC and RCIA classes. This challenge was undergirded with a reflection on Act 20:7-12, in which Dr. Kirk P. Gaddy advanced seven effects of Paul's teaching, mainly that Paul suggest that we must: 1. Strive for and maintain togetherness in the family, community, nation race and humanity 2. Define ourselves, name ourselves, speak for ourselves, instead of being defined and spoken for by others 3. Build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers' and sisters' problem our problems and to solve them together 4. Build and maintain our own business enterprises and to share the profits 5. Make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness 6. Do always as much as we can in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it 7. Believe with all our hearts in our God, parents, teachers, leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

The "Keep on Teaching" resource manual has been an anchor of profound empowerment for catechists who have participated in the forums and workshops for the past 20 years. The Naimah catechists under the faithful, dedicated instructional, collaborative and transformational leadership of Therese Wilson Favors, have enriched this year's resource manual with seven components, namely: Quotes from Sunday's Gospel with African Proverbs and wisdom sayings; an exploration of biblical stories - ordinary people who answered God's call; a comprehensible article on the history of Keep on Teaching; Scripture and prayer for catechists; general components of a session/class; an index of topic explored in past "Keep on Teaching" series; and characteristics of black spirituality. The Naimah Ministry in the

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Archdiocese of Baltimore is perhaps the only group of African -American catechists who write and produce an annual manual to supplement and enhanced the religious education experiences of children, youth and adults in the United States.

For more information contact Therese Wilson Favors at 410-625-8472 and mark your calendar for Sept. 10, 2011 for “Keep on Teaching.”

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