

‘Keep On Teaching’

“Keep on Teaching,” a catechetical ministry established 21 years ago in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, engages catechists who serve in the African-American Catholic community. Its emphasis is to inspire and encourage catechists to factor culture – both black and Catholic – and its deep roots into their catechetical planning and implementation.

Immersed in the story of St. Paul from Acts 20:7-12, a theme was identified: “On the first day of the week when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke to them because he was going to leave on the next day, and he kept on speaking (teaching and preaching) until midnight.” The story continues, filled with rich insights regarding faith formation including a bit of drama.

All through the night, Paul maintains a marathon of catechetical and evangelical discourse. As Paul taught, a young man named Eutychus who was seated on a window sill went sound asleep and fell from the third story to the ground. The lesson was disrupted while the crowd of listeners rushed to gather around Eutychus who was thought dead. Then, “Paul went down, threw himself upon him, and said as he embraced him, ‘Don’t be alarmed; there is life in him.’ ” Yes, Paul had hugged that man back to life; then they re-assembled, broke bread and “after a long conversation that lasted until day break, Paul departed. And they took the boy away alive and were immeasurably comforted.”

Catechist and preacher, Paul was faced with some of the same challenges that catechists of today encounter. Even the faithful fall asleep in the session, and given time restraints during the catechetical session, who has enough time to share the unending story of redemption and liberation that our “God makes a way out of no way”? Additionally, faith formation warrants a “transformative experience” and conversion may need to be a recurring faith building activity and aim of catechesis. Thus, the mission to “Keep on Teaching” is to have people transformed, alive in faith, knowing “who they are” and “whose they are” even if it means spiritually and culturally hugging our people back to life again.

For 21 years now, the Naimah Catechists (creators of “Keep on Teaching” ministry)

have been strengthened and inspired through the grace of God to keep teaching in ways that “factor culture in.” It is our humble way of following Pope John Paul II’s 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 expressions; and help them bring forth from their own living traditions original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.”

In pursuing the task of inculturation within the catechetical arena, “Keep on Teaching” became both a movement and a resource that respects black and Catholic ways of perceiving, conceptualizing and sharing the old, yet newly discovered story of God’s love for humankind. This was and continues to be achieved by offering and developing forums, workshops and resource booklets to assist catechists who yearn to strengthen their faith formation opportunities by incorporating insights from a Catholic and Africentric perspective.

For these reasons, catechists, youth ministry leaders both in parishes and schools, as well as parents, are invited to attend a workshop Saturday, Sept. 10, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. St. Bernardine Church on Edmondson Avenue and Mount Holly will serve as our host.

This year’s guest scholar at workshop will be Sister Oralisa Martin, Ph.D., who has taught youth for more than 25 years and is director and founder of the Oracle National Summer Institute for Youth. Sister Oralisa will explore catechesis for youths in particular, focusing on the topic of Catholic identity (for and with youths) that is culturally centered. She will also assist catechists in understanding youth culture.

Additionally, Charles Lwanga, a living relative of St. Charles Lwanga of Uganda, will provide a display and relic of St. Charles Lwanga as part of “Keep on Teaching.”

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