

Dear Association Members and Friends,

As we publish our third annual newsletter we rejoice in the growth of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, in the many rich experiences we've had with the children as we've listened together to God's word, and in the growth of our community as catechists. Our "fledgling year" as an association (since its formation in St. Paul during the 1984 summer courses) had its share of growth pains. As we gathered in St. Paul this past summer for a retreat and association meetings prior to the summer courses it was clear that some parts of our two-year experimental structure were thriving but that other parts had not proved to be truly compatible with the particular spirit and aims of our association. Therefore, some things were reaffirmed while others were restated or renovated. During the time in St. Paul the board met twice, the committees on materials, newsletter and formation each met once, and there was an all day meeting of the general membership. We offer here a report of some of the fruits of these meetings (including a report of the November board meeting), particularly for those of you who were unable to attend.

ASSOCIATION MEETINGS - ST. PAUL - JULY, 1985

NAME: The name we adopted after a mail-in vote of members, "Innamoramento: An Association for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd," had to be changed to "The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: An Association of Adults and Children," because the name, "Innamoramento," has a connotation in Italian which is not appropriate to our identity as an association.

MATERIALS: It was reaffirmed that the nature of our work demands a certain approach to material making and distributing. We want to be attentive to the needs of people who want to equip their atriums but lack of certain skills or resources inhibit them. We recognize that the careful, prayerful preparation of one's own materials is an integral part of the catechist's formation; therefore, we feel the best help we can offer is that of helping the catechists to be able to make their own materials (drawing also on the talents and resources of the community built around the atrium...the parents, members of the parish, etc.). The materials manual which Sister Sheila Sentiff has prepared under the direction of Sofia and Gianna Gobbi is intended to serve this purpose. The manual is available to anyone who has participated in a 3-6 level training course and is for sale through the association. We also agreed that there might be some materials particularly difficult to make (such as the statue of the Good Shepherd, the model of Jerusalem, or the material of the Books of the Bible) which could be made available for purchase through an individual catechist (or through his or her "artisan connection"). Such materials would first be approved by Sofia. Catechists would be notified of their availability through the newsletter. It was strongly emphasized, however, that the association would not be in the business of producing and selling materials.

THE CENTER: During our first year as an association, Christian Family Montessori School served the association differently than other atriums. Its atrium was thought to be "the atrium of the center" in keeping with one of the original aims of the association that the work of the children be visibly connected to all our work, including administrative work. Thus, we began with the notion that "center" means office and atrium. There was also a financial link between the association and CFMS in that ten hours per month of Rebekah's paid time as association coordinator were spent in observing in the CFMS atrium and consulting with the atrium staff in order to help insure that the work there was truly representative of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (particularly since it served as a visitor center by virtue of being connected to the national office). In St. Paul this summer we recognized that this arrangement had been a divisive

point in our community and was no longer appropriate. The CFMS atrium no longer receives any "privileges." The financial link between CFMS and the association was removed in order to help us understand that all atriums benefit equally from the association, that all atriums are an equally valuable representation of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and that we are one atrium, one work. The board also voted to give up our rented office space at St. James Catholic Church (where CFMS is located) primarily for financial reasons. The office is now to be found in corners of Cathy's and Rebekah's homes. The association mailing address remains the same.

CATECHIST'S FORMATION: When we speak of formation of the catechist we mean much more than just the successful completion of a training course or even the preparation of one's album or a set of beautiful materials for one's atrium. More important than these particular aspects of formation is that of the on-going spiritual formation of the catechist. During the general membership meeting we posed the following questions: "How shall we call each other to a life of prayer? Should our work call us to a particular spiritual discipline, regular participation in Mass, a particular sort of prayer life?" We agreed that prayer and participation in the Eucharist are essential if our work is to remain under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Sofia had given much thought to this matter over the past years. She suggested that if we are to have a particular spiritual discipline as catechists, it must not be superimposed from the outside, not mandated as in a religious community (such as having to say the rosary every day, etc.). Rather, it should be something that comes from inside our work. Sofia then recalled with us our aim as an association: "To involve adults and children in a religious experience in which the religious values of childhood are predominant, primarily those values of contemplation and enjoyment." She pointed out to us that First Communion is a central moment, an experience in which the children show us, in a particular way, these values of contemplation and enjoyment in the long, slow preparation and in the celebration of First Communion. She went on to say that the spirituality of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd can be called a Eucharistic spirituality. Therefore, our preparation for First Communion with the children is deeply significant to our formation as catechists. The children's retreat for First Communion should also be truly our retreat. Sofia then proposed that we let each other know of the dates of our First Communion groups (via the newsletter) so that we can join in some way with what other catechists and children are living. Other catechists present at the meeting suggested that we pray for one another during the year and that we might meditate on particular liturgical texts or the Our Father during the year.

MEMBERSHIP: Several persons expressed their concern that our 1984-85 membership appeal letter too closely linked being a member with paying money (the \$30.00 "membership fee"), although it was never intended to be mandatory that one pay that amount in order to be a member. It was decided that for the 1985-86 membership appeal letter we should stress that all catechists and children are considered members if they so choose, that a request for \$5.00 should be made for mailings during the year, and that an opportunity for one's giving further financial support (via donation) be made available, since the association does have operating costs beyond mailings.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Barbara Kahn reported that, miraculously enough, we had been able to meet our expenses during the past year. Some of these expenses were part-time salaries for the Coordinator and Administrator, office rental and supplies, mailings, publication of the directory and the materials manual, publication of the newsletter, and scholarships for the summer courses. There was an additional appeal made for the scholarship fund which enabled nine persons to attend the summer courses on full or partial scholarships. During our meetings in St. Paul, it was decided that there should be an additional

part-time salary for the Newsletter Editor. Financial statements were passed out at the general membership meeting, additional copies of which may be obtained from Barbara Kahn. To date, our income has been from membership fees, summer course tuitions, and donations. Questions were raised as to the possibility of grants. Are there reservations about applying for such funds? Sofia cautioned us about becoming too much interested in business and suggested that we must carefully consider each case where funds are being offered. It was agreed that, for now, it is best to keep our expenses as low as possible and to continue to rely on the above-mentioned income sources.

SUMMER COURSE SITE FOR 1986: We recalled our original intention (at the inception of the association) of moving the summer course site periodically in order to build community in different areas of the U.S. and Canada. The courses were in Washington, D.C. for two summers, and then they were in St. Paul, Minnesota for two summers. Several sites were mentioned: California, Phoenix, Houston, Toronto, Chicago. It seemed that Toronto might be the place best prepared at this point to sponsor a course. Patricia Coulter has been doing the catechesis there for the past ten years and is part of a larger community of catechists there in Toronto and surrounding areas. Furthermore, a bishop there, Marcel Gervais (whom some of you met at the summer courses in St. Paul in 1984), has been particularly interested in and supportive of our work. Decision on the course site was then left pending until after Sofia, Patricia, Maria Christlieb and Rebekah would meet with Bishop Gervais in Canada in mid-August.

NEWSLETTER REPORT: Carol Dittberner reported that 350 issues of the 1985 newsletter were printed. Because of the length, it did not come out until March. The newsletter paid for itself. It was decided that two newsletters a year would be too costly, both time and material-wise; that they would keep the same format for this coming year with one issue; and that they must ask for a separate subscription fee in order to cover costs. It was determined that a subscription would cost \$5.00. The catechists were encouraged once again to send in prayers and drawings done by the children as well as a report on one's atrium for use in the newsletter.

MISCELLANEOUS CONCERNS: Several catechists felt that our retreat and general membership meeting did not allow enough time for us to share our experiences as catechists and that this kind of sharing is vital to building community among us. They asked, "How can our gatherings provide more of an opportunity for this sort of sharing?" Also, some catechists felt they had not had enough of an opportunity for input into board decisions during the previous year. The question was raised, "Do we need more formal avenues for association members to let their feelings and opinions be known?"

ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING - NOVEMBER 22-24, 1985

In attendance were Barbara Kahn, Carol Dittberner, Cathy Maresca and Rebekah Rojcewicz. We regretted that Sandi Yonikus could not be with us due to illness. We were graciously given a home on Lake Erie (near Cleveland) by Frannie Murphy and her family where we stayed for the two days of our meeting. Our time together seemed particularly blessed with a spirit of love and trust. Our opening meditation, the reading of the Transfiguration, seemed to set the tone for the whole weekend. Here we would like to share some of the agenda items we discussed and decisions we made.

SUMMER COURSE FOR 1986: A large portion of discussions pertained to the summer course, retreat and community meeting for next summer, including location, staff, budget, structure, etc. Rebekah first reported on the mid-August meeting she attended in Canada with Bishop Gervais, Sofia, Patricia and Maria. Based upon the outcome of that meeting and input from other catechists, the board came up with the specific plans for the summer course and meetings as stated in the course/meeting announcement included in this newsletter. We agreed that the most suitable location for this year seemed to be Toronto. In view of our lack of approved course materials (Sister Sheila and others are now working on a "travel set" of materials but can only attend to the 3-6 level for this year), and our lack of trainers, it would be best to offer courses in only one location this year and at only the beginning level. By doubling the size of the group (from 25 to 50) we would better accommodate the need in Canada for training new catechists while also providing enough places for Americans. The board also decided to continue calling this course an introduction to the work with the 3-6 year old child...meaning a second summer would be needed to complete the 3-6 level work. We agreed that since Sofia was willing to come, she should be the one to select the teaching staff and work out with them the actual course format.

One of our bigger discussions came in regard to the proposed retreat and association meetings for next summer. Based upon input from many catechists, the board felt strongly that the greatest need was for more of an opportunity to share our experiences with each other and for more time to prayerfully discuss association matters than was allotted last year in a four day retreat and one day general membership meeting. We then proposed a sort of combination retreat/meeting experience following the course (Aug. 11-15) which would be called the "Community Meeting of the Catechists of the Good Shepherd" and would include each day a time for meditation (on themes from our work) and Mass, association meetings, and sharing of our experiences as catechists. It was also recommended that this meeting be dedicated to those already involved in the work (meaning that it would not be really appropriate for someone just introduced to the work or to the community).

The board also felt it important to provide an opportunity for a limited number of "returning catechists" (those who've already begun training) to participate in the summer course for one or more weeks in order to hear the kerygma again, work on one's album or with materials, meet with Sofia or other catechists, etc. The only restriction would be in participating in the small group experience in the afternoons (the time in which new catechists are learning to work with materials, make an album, give presentations, etc.). Please see the course announcement for further details.

DIRECTORY: Our new directory will include a list of atrioms as well as of individual catechists. The question of the children's membership was raised. They are considered members, but we feel we could not possibly list all their names in the directory. In essence, they are included as the atrioms are listed. We hope the new directory will be ready in March. Thereafter, it may not be published more than bi-annually with an addendum of new members being sent out annually.

PROPOSAL TO SPONSOR TRAINING FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN CATECHIST: During last year's summer course we received a letter from Judy Walsh-Mellett and Millie Dosh which had been signed by many other catechists. It was a request for a scholarship to be provided by the association for training a catechist from Central America. They had discussed this with Maria Christlieb in terms of the person attending the training in Mexico, and Maria thought this would be possible. The board decided to encourage Judy and Millie to investigate exact costs and to find the right candidate. For our current budget we felt we could commit to \$500.00 to start with and then seek ways to find the remainder.

SCHOLARSHIP PROCEDURE: In response to a letter from a catechist, Carol Dittberner asked that the scholarship procedure be explained. The scholarships are announced in the course announcements and newsletter. Anyone may apply and state their need, telling something about the group they are serving. Last year all the requests were held until the 15th of May and a summary of them was prepared. Rebekah, Barbara and Cathy each reviewed the requests and then jointly decided on the disbursement. As it turned out, they divided the money (the \$1000.00 allocated in the budget) equally among all those who had requested aid. An additional \$600.00 was obtained through a scholarship appeal letter which was disbursed as above. A catechist had proposed that we add a finance committee to the board or that we have people handle the finances who are not on the board or who are not receiving a salary. (Note: Barbara Kahn is the board's Treasurer or Finance Chairperson, and she receives no salary.) The board proposed that for this year Rebekah, Barbara and Patricia Coulter be on the scholarship committee. (Patricia has declined to be on the committee, so a third, non-board member person is being sought for the committee.)

EVALUATION OF ASSOCIATION STRUCTURE BY THE MEMBERS: As we are ending our two-year experimental structure as an association we feel it is very important to involve all the members in the process of evaluating where we've been and discerning where we need to be headed. The board proposed that some sort of evaluation form (not to thwart individual means of expression but only to be used as a tool) be sent to the members during the winter and that a group of catechists (non-board members) be asked to receive and collate the responses. Tina Lillig and other catechists from Chicago have agreed to do this. It is likely that there will need to be a second mailing before our meetings in Toronto, when we will be adopting a revised or altogether new structure.

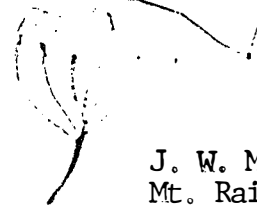
With hopes that this summer will bring many of us back together again,

Rebekah

Rebekah Rojcewicz
Association Coordinator



It is a good thing
to give thanks
unto the Lord and to
sing praises unto your
name O most High.



J. W. Miller, age 7,
Mt. Rainier, Maryland.