

## **Roman Catholic Community of Practice**

### **Notes from Session at REA Annual Meeting: Nov. 4, 2018**

Ten members attended the meeting, which was convened by Maureen O'Brien.

#### **Introductions and Announcements**

Maureen asked attendees to introduce themselves, and passed around a signup list for contacting one another.

Maureen announced that per members' request last year, there is now a webpage on the REA site dedicated to the Catholic Community of Practice, at <https://religiouseducation.net/practice/catholic>. Notes from the 2017 meeting are posted there, along with a blog entry for our discussion topic for the 2018 meeting. Anyone can enter comments on the blog. To start a new blog, contact Maureen at [obrien@duq.edu](mailto:obrien@duq.edu) with your entry and she will post it.

Maureen also announced that the new International Journal of Catechesis and Evangelization is gearing up for its first publication and has issued an initial call for papers (see Catholic Community of Practice webpage for the CFP). The general editor is Rev. Raymond Studzinski, OSB, of The Catholic University of America. Phil Ganir of CUA noted that efforts are underway to find international scholars for the editorial board, especially Asians.

Other announcements from attendees:

- Theresa O'Keefe has just published *Navigating toward Adulthood: A Theology of Ministry with Adolescents* (Paulist, 2018).
- Fordham is hiring for a position in religious education.
- Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry is hiring for a position in Pastoral Care and Counseling/Practical Theology.
- CUA has two openings in Catechesis, one specifically for Liturgical Catechesis.

#### **Discussion**

As per last year's proposal, we focused our discussion on the "dynamics of disaffiliation" among young Catholics and how to respond, with reference to the findings in the Saint Mary's Press/CARA study, *Going, Going, Gone* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2017). Theresa drew on the findings from her book research to highlight and clarify issues and solutions. Some features of our rich discussion included:

- Per Theresa: Saint Mary's Press is seeking to continue their follow-up work from the study (including videos and other media content), but needs funding

- Young adults aren't finding rich resources in the church that make them want to stay, yet those that SMP is profiling are bright, inquisitive, faith-filled. How can we meet them where they are?
- The recent synod on youth and family has been an honest attempt to consider how the church has been so effective in driving people away.
- Theresa emphasized the value of intergenerational efforts in youth and young adult ministry, and how evangelical churches are finding that while they have very sophisticated youth ministry programs, the young people don't tend to stay affiliated afterward: the approach is too focused on "Jesus and me," without connecting them to the church community (citing the work of evangelical scholar Sharon Ketchem). Theresa's research indicates that it's crucial to put aside the desire for large numbers of participants and work instead to create meaningful relationships between young people and faith-filled adults .
- Hoffmann Ospino could not attend the meeting, but offered the following comments in an email:  
 "While I resonate with the reality and with the findings of the *Going, Going, Gone* resource, it is important to say that the focus of the document as well as many of the conversations on this topic tend to center in the Euro-American experience forgetting the fact that 60% of Catholics in the United States under 18 are Hispanic and about 10% or so are Asian. What kind of church and what kind of future are we talking about then? Yes, Hispanic, Asian and Black young Catholics are also joining the ranks of the nones in large numbers, but there is a different story, which can be more positive if the rest of the Catholic community treated them as "our children." This is precisely the argument of a recent book I edited: [\*Our Catholic Children: Ministry with Hispanic Youth and Young Adults\*](#) (Our Sunday Visitor, 2018)."
- Is disaffiliation the right category? In our reflections on the clergy sex abuse crisis, especially the recent Pennsylvania grand jury report, can we view this as a call to conversion, and those who leave the church as calling the rest of us to conversion?

### **Planning for next year**

Maureen invited discussion on next year's meeting.

We decided we would like to discuss the clergy sex abuse crisis and how to respond to it as religious educators.

We also would like to find a time during the annual meeting when more members can attend. Maureen will take this up with the Board.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Maureen O'Brien  
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