



December 1, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Did you know that 34% of ordinands first considered the priesthood in the elementary ages (6-13) and 64% before the age of 17? These are the catechetical years! The ministry of catechesis has an important role in helping young people grow in their universal call to holiness, discern that call, and respond to God's calling! This is what a vocational environment within the catechetical setting can promote. But catechists and leaders of catechetical programs in parishes may need the tools, resources and the plan to create such an environment.

The Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia, Bishop of the Diocese of Syracuse declared 2021 as the *Year of Vocations*, a year set aside to intentionally promote all vocations. During this year, Rhonda Gruenewald guided diocesan leaders, including catechetical leaders, with not only tools and strategies, but she also provided encouragement and support needed for success through workshops and presentations.

Rhonda spoke to parish catechetical leaders as the keynote speaker at our "Annual Diocesan Catechetical Leaders Conference, 2021". Her inspirational presentation focused on the catechist's vocational role as they share their faith and encourage their students to live out their Baptismal call to holiness. Rhonda encouraged catechists as frontline vocation promoters to accompany children through discipleship, encounter, and discernment. She shared that our "Faith formation classes are the incubators for future saints."

Rhonda acknowledges the role catechetical leaders have in developing vocations as a central theme in parish programs, not only focusing on the children, but also partnering with parents. She enthusiastically inspired our leaders with innovative ideas that can easily be implemented within a catechetical program, laying the foundations for creating a culture of vocations, all of which can be found in her books: *Hundredfold* and *The Harvest*. Our catechetical leaders were very positive after her presentation sharing comments such as:

- + [this was the] second time I have heard Rhonda and have learned much each time. The book *Hundredfold* and workbook have great information and ideas. I look forward to the new book, *The Harvest*, with activities. (Bonnie B.)
- + Excellent presentation! (Loretta H.)
- + Thank you, Rhonda! Lots of great ideas. (Lisa P.)

As your diocese may be in the process of charting a course for vocation promotion, I highly recommend *The Harvest* as a practical resource for assisting parish efforts in creating a culture of vocations. It is especially written for those who teach and catechize, which will aid catechists as they sow the seeds of faith as well as cultivate an environment of discernment that enables our youth to hear and respond to God's call.

Along with her books, her presence in providing workshops and presentations is invaluable to these promotional efforts. I am happy to share with you our experiences as our diocese intentionally focused efforts on vocation promotion with the guidance of Vocation Ministry.

May your efforts to promote vocations in your diocese bring new life to the Church through marriage, religious life and the priesthood.

In Christ,

Andrea Slaven, M.Ed.; M.A Instructional Tech.  
Director of Catechesis, Diocese of Syracuse

