



Five questions:

with Debbie Aker, diocesan catechetical coordinator and Planning Chair of the Atlantic Catechetical Conference hosted by our diocese in Membertou, NS, Oct. 20-22.

1. 'Spirituality of the Catechist' was the conference theme this year. Why this theme?

In the past, the ACA Conferences have been structured around assisting catechists and coordinators with program facilitation skills. This year the ACA members thought it would be valuable to explore the

spirituality of the catechist, providing catechists with the means to look inward and reflect on their relationship with God, self and others.



2. Looking inward is a unique approach for the conference. Were there any challenges?

The challenge was and is in fleshing out what we mean by spirituality. The four petals around our logo helped participants to identify with various aspects of their ministry which they may not have considered: **Teachers of the Good News, Inviters to Service, Leaders of Prayer and Builders of Community**. Sr. Janet helped us to see and relate to the many facets which make up our spirituality.

3. For those four 'petals' within the theme, can you give examples for everyday life?

Teachers of the Good News happens each time we remind ourselves or others that in the midst of great suffering hope remains and comfort is possible, that's Jesus' promise to us. **Inviters to Service** happens when we work together with others respecting each other's gifts and talents. We are **Leaders of Prayer** when we say a simple grace of thanksgiving at meal times, pray silently for the needs of others or walk with grandchildren in the forest. And we are **Builders of Community** when we work to encourage inclusiveness and celebrate diversity.

4. Sr. Janet Schaeffler was the keynote speaker. What highlights did she share?

Sr. Janet opened up a new way of thinking about being a catechist and expanded our prayer life. To quote from some of the Conference evaluations:

"Sr. Janet showed her knowledge and experience as well as her humility and humanity"

"Her Reflection Questions (Sr. Janet's) were questions I would never have thought about before"

"She (Sr. Janet) reminded us not to get too caught up in the lesson and always let the children know how much God loves them." Her website is also a good resource: www.janetschaeffler.com

5. What are some things we can do to continue our journey within?

Sr. Janet reminds us that our spirituality, our relationship with God, self and others, manifests itself in how we live our everyday lives. Developing our prayer lives, making time to be still, creating rituals around important family events and sharing our time and talents are all ways we can continue to develop our spirituality.