

## **Sun, Surf, and...Summer Catechist Enrichment**

by Steven Ellair

In many parishes, summer marks a period of rest for catechetical programs. This slower pace is certainly well deserved and provides an important time for rest and rejuvenation. Many parishes have also found that, because of the slowed pace, summer is an excellent time to offer valuable catechist enrichment opportunities. With some simple planning, catechist faith formation does not have to end with the summer months. In fact, these months can become a pivotal time for enriching catechetical teams.

Here are some tips for planning effective catechist enrichment opportunities in the summer.

### **Keep Programming Focused**

Instead of focusing on broad-range programming, consider choosing a particular area of concentration for the summer. You may wish to focus on such areas as Scripture/the Sunday readings, Church teaching, prayer and spirituality, or specific classroom techniques. By keeping a sharp focus in one area, catechists can explore one theme more deeply in a limited amount of time.

### **Assess Availability**

Keep in mind that people have altered schedules during the summer months. Vacations, no school, and family visits limit the time that is available. Some parishes offer weekly enrichment opportunities where catechists can simply “drop in” when available. Others limit gatherings to once or twice monthly. Some only meet one time during the entire summer, and others don’t schedule any gatherings at all. Instead they provide materials that catechists can use for reflection and discuss when they meet again in the fall.

### **Be Creative**

Consider enrichment opportunities that move away from “classroom-style” offerings. Meeting at a local coffee shop, a catechist’s home, around a pool, at a park, or on the beach are all ideas that have been used effectively, especially in the summer months. These more informal settings mirror the more relaxed pace of summer and create opportunities for community building.

### **Collaborate**

Utilize the gifts of your team for planning, and consider asking one or two catechists to coordinate or lead the summer enrichment opportunities. You may also be near another parish with which you can share planning responsibilities and offer combined opportunities for catechists. The diocese may also provide excellent enrichment opportunities for catechists.

Regardless of which direction works best in your particular setting, with some additional planning, you can create summer enrichment opportunities that can have a positive effect on your catechetical team and the entire religious education program in your parish.

Happy summer!