

The Best of Quest

Introduction

Originally produced by the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities (Archdiocese of Hartford), *The Best of Quest* represents a collection of selected units from across the almost 30 year corpus of *Quest* and *Summer Reflections*.

Selected from various years during the time of their publication, the featured weekly units reflect the proposed session format at the time they were written. The format that corresponds to the rubrics: Hearing the Lord's Gospel – Hearing the Gospel's Lord represents the session format proposed in the more recent years of publication.

Written seasonally each year, the original weekly units often contained references to contemporaneous events in the church and society. Slight modifications have been made where these occur to remove what now might be an anachronistic distraction.

The Best of Quest appears initially focused on lectionary Year C. Year A and Year B editions will follow.

These *Quest* and *Summer Reflections* materials are reprinted here with the permission of the Archdiocese of Hartford.

The *Quest* Story (1986-2017)

What would eventually emerge as *Quest*, the lectionary-based resource for small Christian communities began in 1986 as the immediate follow up to the archdiocese's participation in the Renew program. Upon the completion of the Renew experience and taking seriously the feedback of Renew participants ("If these small groups are such a good thing, why do they have to end?"), then Archbishop John Whealon established the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities to build on the experience of the Renew program.

From its inception the department sought to promote and support the development of small church communities as basic units of parish in a long-term vision for parish as “a community of communities”, a Eucharist-centered community becoming a more relational church for an ever more relational world.

As one of the first projects of the new office, its first Director, Priscilla (Pat) Linehan quickly gathered a team of writers to prepare Sunday scripture-based reflection material to continue to support small groups that formed during the Renew experience. Following the Renew pattern, this initial effort prepared material for six weeks in the fall and six weeks in the spring.

Joined on the staff by Sr. Joan Bernier, SND, Bro. Robert Moriarty, S.M. succeeded Pat Linehan as Director of the office in 1989. By that time, it was becoming clear that on their own initiative many of these parish small groups that emerged during Renew were now moving on to become continuing parish-based small Christian communities. As one small community member charmingly put it at the time: “We’re meeting even when we’re not supposed to.” Thus it was clear that there was a need of lectionary-based resource material that would support these communities for more than six weeks at a time.

With the word spreading, already in the 1986-89 time frame, that the Archdiocese of Hartford was producing materials for these post-Renew groups, requests to be able to share these materials were coming from other dioceses in the U.S. and Canada which were also looking to support their developing small Christian communities.

Beginning then, in 1989, the move emerged to extend the number of weeks of the year for which resource material was being produced. Over time, the reflection booklets expanded to cover all the weeks of the year.

In the early years, each edition carried a distinctive theme and a title to reflect that theme. *Quest*, the theme and title selected for the fall 1991

booklet was subsequently adopted as the permanent title/logo for what would become the two annual editions, (fall and spring.)

Already in the summer of 1990, Sr. Joan took it upon herself to prepare photo copied reflection material for the summer weeks. This material, known as *Summer Reflections* would come to be developed in full booklet form.

In 1991, the soon to be ordained, John McHugh offered his artistic talents that would soon transform the presentation of the booklets. Ordained in his mature years, Fr. McHugh, a professional graphic artist in his earlier years, began by lending graphic design to the titles of the weekly units and the booklet's cover. What has since become the *Quest* logo was his first contribution. In the years since, Fr. McHugh's contributions expanded to the inclusion of the full four color art work that came to be a hallmark of *Quest's* presentation. Fr. McHugh's widely appreciated contributions to *Quest* captured the spirit of John Paul II's thought when he spoke of *beauty leading us to the threshold of mystery*.

While serving as an art instructor at East Catholic High School, Manchester, CT and later as a free-lance artist, Aleta Gudelski served over the years to enhance the presentation of *Summer Reflections* with her finely wrought line drawings.

Promoted basically by word of mouth over their decades long run, *Quest* and *Summer Reflections* eventually made their way to dioceses, parishes and individuals in every state in the union, save one, and to communities in about 12 English-speaking areas around the world. For a time *Quest* was also translated into Chinese and posted on a website in Beijing. For a number of years the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities also produced a Spanish translation of *Quest*.

Produced fresh every season, *Quest* was prepared by diverse teams of nine people each. Totaling more than 100 people over the years (men and women, married and single, religious, priests, deacons and

seminarians of the archdiocese), *Quest* and *Summer Reflection* were written by the church for the church as acts of stewardship.

These generous men and women, many of whom wrote multiple times, are acknowledged here:

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