

Dear National Conference for Catechetical Leadership,

I am grateful for this new grace-filled invitation to serve as your Executive Director. I appreciate your abundant welcome filled with letters, cards, emails, social media posts, and flower/plant deliveries. The generosity of your care for me has been most life giving, and I want to express, from the deep place within my heart of which you have touched, my most sincere gratitude. Thank you.

I wanted to take this time to share with you a little bit about the woman I am within the journey of service. A few years ago I read Parker Palmer's, "Let Your Life Speak," and it has gifted me with tangible language for the journey into vocation. Palmer says, "*Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you... Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening.*" Yet in all honesty, listening to my life is never easy. I am always discerning carefully, and often times, arguing with the Voice that summons and commissions. But yet, as is the inevitable cycle of my prayer life, I surrender repeatedly the entirety of my life to the One that calls so lovingly; the One that graces me with gentle assurance. It is within and through such prayer that I am before you today, and through which, I can make this transition from California to DC; from Regional Coordinator of the San Fernando Region in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to Executive Director of NCCL.

Throughout my journey into vocation, I have learned I have a gift for building up the People of God. I accompany people, am attentive to their sacred stories, while being nurturing and affirming of their individual charisms. Leadership, in the way I have been called to represent it, is honesty and authenticity in the process of companionship. But yet, it has been in motherhood that I have learned the most valuable lesson of my lived experience ... the gently holding of tensions and paradoxical realities, while fostering skills of genuine presence despite perceived differences and contradictions. My two children, Vincenzo (8) and Elizabetta (3) are complete opposites, which constantly stretches me to grow into deep authenticity, beyond my own personal limitations and expectations. This momentarily unravels the mystery of God's vastness, within which, as a mother, I relish my participation, and through which, I have learned about ministry and Church.

As Executive Director of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, one must be able to represent the catechetical vision and realities of our local church, moving beyond one's own self, and into a fuller experience of Church. An image that comes to mind is the one of the tapestry. An Executive Director must take time understanding the distinctive threading of various cultures and generations in our Church, while recognizing the intricate weaving process of the lived faith, within Tradition, that intertwines the multitude of these lively colored

strands. Still, most importantly, one must be able to look at the whole beautiful image from a distant view, so as to best articulate the thriving vision of catechesis in the United States; a vision which honors the sacredness of each catechist's work, while also recognizing the manifestation of the Kingdom of God throughout the sharing, and living of faith, in the varied catechetical processes expressed in our communities. I believe these are skills that God has nurtured within me, both through the work I do, but more abundantly in the people I have met along the way, all of whom have gifted me with sacred truths in the unique stories of their lives. And now, as your Executive Director, I look forward to coming into that journey of service more intimately with each of you.

My life has been speaking.
I pray I am listening well.

Blessings on this shared journey,
Margaret Matijasevic
Executive Director