

the CHURCH in the 21ST CENTURY CENTER BOSTON COLLEGE

SESQUICENTENNIAL
ISSUE

C21 Resources

FALL 2012

A CATALYST AND RESOURCE FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



*Handing
on the Faith*

EDITED BY THOMAS H. GROOME

The Church in the 21st Century Center serves as a catalyst and a resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church in the United States.

C21 Resources, a compilation of the best analyses and essays on key challenges facing the Church today, is published by the Church in the 21st Century Center at Boston College, in partnership with the publications from which the featured articles have been selected.

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THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY CENTER
BOSTON COLLEGE
110 COLLEGE ROAD, HEFFERNAN HOUSE
CHESTNUT HILL, MASSACHUSETTS 02467

bc.edu/c21



ON THE COVER

Fra Angelico's mid-15th century painting of St. Peter dictating the Gospel to St. Mark. This panel appears at the base of the Tabernacle of the Linaïoli in the museum of San Marco in Florence, Italy.

PHOTO CREDIT: Fra Angelico/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY



FROM THE C21 CENTER DIRECTOR



Dear Friend,

The Church in the 21st Century Center is happy to present “Handing on the Faith,” the first of four special *C21 Resources* issues to celebrate Boston College’s Sesquicentennial. BC proudly celebrates 150 years since a small Catholic college, originally founded to serve Boston’s Irish immigrants, has grown to be counted among the nation’s premier universities. The *C21* Sesquicentennial issues will be rolled out over the next year and a half.

The 2012–2013 academic year also marks 10 years since Boston College founded the *C21* Center in response to the clerical abuse crisis that came to light in 2002 in Boston and subsequently across the nation. A decade later, *C21* continues to work as a catalyst and resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church.

Each *C21 Resources* issue in the Sesquicentennial series will address the state of the question on a *C21* focal theme. We begin with “Handing on the Faith,” a critical issue for a Church envisioning its future in a world challenged by distraction and cynicism. Despite these challenges, people in the 21st century continue to search for a deeper connection with God and a meaningful experience of community. For this, *C21* offers a collection of essays to capture the many avenues by which the Church transmits the faith (from family traditions to formal Catholic education), ways through which the Holy Spirit continues to transform lives today.

For this issue, we have the distinct honor of working alongside our guest editor, Thomas H. Groome, an internationally renowned scholar of religious education who serves as the chair of the Department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. Parallel to this collection, *C21* will sponsor a series of related on-campus events (listed in “*C21* Update” in this magazine), which will be available for video webcast at bc.edu/c21. You can find further resources on this topic at bc.edu/c21faith.

The school year of 2012–2013 also coincides with Pope Benedict XVI’s declaration of the Year of Faith, which begins on October 12, 2012. Catholics across the world are encouraged to engage in study and reflection to deepen their knowledge of the faith. We offer this issue of *C21 Resources* as a contribution to Pope Benedict’s important invitation for renewal in the Catholic Church.

We thank you for your continued interest in *C21*. If you would like free copies of this magazine or a complimentary DVD of a *C21* event to share with a friend, a family member, fellow parishioners, or colleagues, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Most sincerely,

Erik P. Goldschmidt

Director

The Church in the 21st Century Center

C21 Resources

FALL 2012

SESQUICENTENNIAL ISSUE

HANDING ON THE FAITH

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

THOMAS H. GROOME was born in County Kildare, Ireland. Professor Groome holds the equivalent of an M.Div. from St. Patrick's Seminary in Carlow, Ireland, an MA from Fordham University, and a doctoral degree in religious education from Union Theological Seminary/Columbia University.

Professor Groome has served for 36 years as a faculty person in theology and religious education at Boston College's Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (IREPM). He has helped to establish IREPM as a world-renowned center for the study and advancement of educating in faith. He currently serves as chairperson of IREPM, known as DREPM, now a department within Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry. His most recent publication is *Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*, and he is also the primary editor of various religion textbook series, most recently the Credo series. This fall the book, *Catholic Spiritual Practices, A Treasury of Old and New* will be released by Paraclete Press, edited by professors Tom Groome and Colleen Griffith.





Handing on the Faith: More than Instruction

Thomas H. Groome

The mandate for Christians to hand on their faith to the rising generations originated on a hillside in Galilee some 2,000 years ago. That's where the Risen Christ assembled his little community and sent them to “make disciples of all nations” by teaching faith in him and in what he had taught. Note well that this commission was given to all there present; it's the responsibility of every disciple to share the faith. Jesus promised to be with us always in continuing his mission (see Matthew 28:16-20) and to send “the Spirit of truth” (John 16:13) to guide his community's evangelizing. Yet, it has never been easy and is likely more difficult than ever in our time.

Reasons for the heightened challenge are myriad; sociologically, the commentators gather them under the label of *secularization*. That means the conditions of contemporary Western culture no longer mediate or encourage faith of its people as in previous eras. In fact, our postmodern situation can be inimical to faith and offers what appears to be an attractive alternative, what Charles Taylor calls “exclusive humanism”—exclusive in that it makes no reference to God or the transcendent.

Add to the discouraging sociocultural conditions the sins and scandals that are now all the more evident within the Church itself. Meanwhile, we are beset by deepened divisions and apparent revisions. Just when we thought the renewal of Vatican II was firmly in place, powerful Church leaders are calling for “a reform of the reforms.” The fact that there are some 30 million Americans who identify themselves as “former Catholics” (Pew report, 2009), many having left because Catholicism was no longer meeting their spiritual needs, indicates that the challenges for handing on the faith are unprecedented.

On the other hand, even with Christian faith no longer likely to be imbibed from the surrounding culture, and the failings of the Church more evident than ever, perhaps ours is an ideal time for chosen faith, for faith embraced out of personal conviction, albeit against the tide. And we are surely still capable of creating environments—in home, parish, and community—that can nurture people in Christian identity, though such inculturation now requires more intentionality than in previous eras.

To stimulate imagination, let's review some of Jesus' own approach; beyond teaching him and what he taught, we can also learn from how he went about it. I follow this with a brief historical note; there is still wisdom to be found from the past 2,000 years for catechesis today. I then summarize the best thinking of the Church about how effectively to hand on the faith in our time. All this will explain our selection of essays for this half of *C21 Resources*.

To Teach as Jesus Did

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus launches his public ministry by calling people to respond to the advent of God's reign in him; this requires a total change of mind and heart (*metanoia*) by embracing God's good news (Mark 1:15-16). Becoming a disciple, then, must begin with a profound conversion of life, a fundamental turn to Jesus and to following *the way* that he modeled and made possible toward the reign of God. Indeed, as he made abundantly clear, the realization of God's reign—God's will of fullness of life for all being realized on earth as in heaven—was the defining purpose of Jesus' life and teaching. It should be ours as well.

Note, too, that everything Jesus taught called people to a faith that is deeply integrated with life, a faith that is lived. Nothing Jesus taught was just about faith in himself but also about what he means for us. So, to "I am the light of the world" he adds immediately "Whoever follows me will have the light of life" (John 8: 12). Even as he says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven," he adds that it is given "for the life of the world" (John 6: 51). Faith in Jesus calls disciples to a lived faith that is life giving for ourselves and for the world. Our efforts to hand it on should aspire to as much.

Note well that Jesus' call to discipleship was always by invitation: "Come, follow me" (e.g. Mk. 1: 16-7); he even respected the freedom of those who chose not to follow (see John 6: 66-7). We do well to do likewise. Then, we can detect in Jesus' public

ministry a pedagogy that constantly invited *from life to faith to (new) life in faith*. So often he would prompt people to stop and reflect upon their everyday lives (sorting fish, planting seeds, tidying the house), only to teach them of God's reign "with authority" (Mark 1: 22), and then invite them to decision to follow his *way*. His *life to faith to life* approach was amply evident in his use of parables and is epitomized in the encounter of the Risen Christ with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (check out Luke 24:13-35). Likewise, our catechesis must engage people's lives, only to share Christian faith in ways that address their real-life issues, and then gently invite them to "see for themselves" and personally embrace its truths and spiritual wisdom for life.



Brief Historical Note

The Didache, one of the Church's earliest catechetical documents, lays out the breaking point for disciples quite simply; there are "two ways," the way of life as taught by Jesus and the way of death as lived in sin. Christians must make a foundational choice for Jesus and his *way* of life. This initial conversion is the starting point of evangelization. The prior step to being catechized is to be evangelized—to embrace Jesus and his Gospel in one's heart. Then would-be disciples can be formed and informed in Christian identity by catechesis—if already converted at heart to Jesus and God's reign in him.

The conviction that Christian faith begins with such a fundamental option led Clement of Alexandria (150–215) to advise Christian educators that there are three sequential movements to their work. The first is to turn people's hearts toward Jesus, to *persuade* them to embrace him and his *way*; the second is to *form* them in Christian character, in its values and virtues; and the third moment is explicit *instruction* in the beliefs of Christian faith. So, the dynamic began with *transformation* (conversion), to be followed by *formation*, and only then by in-depth *information*.

This sequence was reflected in the ancient catechumenate, now restored as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). It began with the *quarentes* or "seekers"; these were people who had been aroused to initial faith in Jesus or at least felt a deep attraction to him and his *way*. Then they could enter into an intense period of Christian formation by the faith community and its sponsors; this could last as long as three years. Only toward the end of the formative process, climaxing during Holy Week, did the catechumens receive some intense instruction in Christian faith. Specifically they were "handed over the symbols" of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

We might well wonder, how did Christians encourage initial conversion, given that it did not typically originate from programs of formal instruction? First and foremost, it was stimulated by the witness of Christians who lived their faith—and often died for it. Lived faith is always the most effective means of evangelization—then and now. Such lived faith reflected both personal and social values, the witness of Christians living with joy and hope, and then with compassion and care, especially through the works of mercy for people in need. Note, too, that there is little evidence of specific instruction for children; they came along in the catechumenate with their parents and became transformed, formed, and informed as disciples alongside of their

family through the lived faith of a local Christian community.

Up until the Protestant Reformation, though Christianity established itself as the dominant faith of Europe, we find very little emphasis on didactic instruction—for anyone. Christian faith was realized as a way of life, deeply intertwined with the ordinary and everyday, lived in and imbibed from the surrounding culture. Oh, there were great monastic and later cathedral schools that gave instruction in Christian faith, but even there the emphasis was on embracing the spiritual wisdom of faith more than the doctrinal details. Such monastic catechesis, however, was available only to a small percentage of the population. For the great majority, handing on the faith was largely by osmosis from the culture, the parish, and the family. The only formal catechesis people received was to learn the Creeds, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; the former two were taught simply by reciting them at Mass.

We can say, then, that for the first 1,500 years or so, Christian faith was more caught than taught. And it was caught in the home, in the parish and village, through the witness of other Christians, from doing Christian things like feeding the poor, or practices like going to church, devotion to the saints, and a host of other spiritual practices that reflected and nurtured the faith's truths and values. In other words, it was more by experiences of faith than by instruction that it was handed on.

Come the Reformation era, however, people's precise doctrinal beliefs took on a whole new importance, even some political urgency. Did one believe in seven sacraments or two? This could decide what side to fight on when the wars broke out—as they did. Recognizing this, and faced with the challenge of sharing a totally revised understanding of Christian faith with a peasant people, Martin Luther published his *Small Catechism* in 1529. This easy to memorize question-and-answer review of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the

Lord's Prayers and the Sacraments, had instant success. It is understandable, then, that Catholics responded in kind.

The Council of Trent (1545–63) commissioned St. Charles Borromeo to write a comprehensive catechism for priests; it was published in 1666 as *The Roman Catechism*. The Pope ordered that it be crafted into a three-year cycle of sermons to be preached in every parish; from then on (until Vatican II), this text of instruction was the primary source for Sunday preaching—instead of the Bible. Then, for children the two most influential Catholic catechisms

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to emerge—in question-and-answer format of easy to memorize doctrinal summaries—were Peter Canisius' *Catholic Catechism* (1559), widely used in Northern Europe, and Robert Bellarmine's *Dottrina Christiana Breve* (1598), favored in southern Europe. Many of the catechisms that followed, including the great national catechisms mandated by Vatican I (e.g., the *Baltimore Catechism* of 1884), were adaptations or combinations from those of Canisius and Bellarmine. For the next 300 years or so, some question-answer catechism would dominate catechesis, with heavy emphasis on doctrinal instruction.

Though the catechism emerged as the primary symbol of catechesis, socialization in faith by the family and parish continued very strong. On the other hand, the catechism tended to change the primary locus and focus of catechesis—from the home and parish to a classroom, from formation to information. This

is not to imply that we don't need thoroughgoing education in Christian faith; the latter is all the more vital in our time if people are to embrace it by choice and conviction. This past does counsel, however, that handing on the faith cannot be achieved simply by instruction; experiences of lived faith that encourage initial conversion are at least as important, if not more so.

Direction for the Present and Future

The contemporary catechetical movement is usually dated from what is called the "Munich Method," which emerged around the beginning of the 20th century. This was the first notable attempt to draw upon the still-young science of pedagogy to enhance the Church's catechetical ministry. Initiated within and quickly spreading from the archdiocese of Munich, Germany, around 1900, it was a significant departure from question-and-answer memorization. Its pedagogical movements were preparation, presentation, explanation, association, and application. It actively engaged students in the teaching/learning dynamic and the very pedagogy encouraged the integration of faith with everyday life.

Throughout the 20th century, various catechetical "movements" emerged, most notably the *kerygmatic* and *experiential*—sometimes mistakenly pitted as alternatives, as if one emphasizes only content and the other only learning from experience. In the aftermath of Vatican II, there was lots of ferment, experimentations, and, one must admit, some confusion in catechetical education. The fresh air from the Council's open window was bound to prompt lots of alternative proposals to replace the catechism approach, still prevailing.

Now the wisdom from the past, and from the experimentation of the pre- and post-Vatican II eras, has been brought together in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (hereafter *GDC*). Issued on August 15, 1997, by the Congregation for the Clergy—the Vatican agency entrusted with



oversight of the Church's catechetical ministry—it represents what is now the official “mind of the Church” on how most effectively to hand on our faith. A very helpful document, the *GDC*: (a) highlights again the centrality of conversion to Jesus as the primary purpose of catechesis; (b) calls for handing on faith in ways to be lived in everyday life; (c) resituates its primary locus within the family, home, and parish; (d) affirms the need for sound education in faith by a pedagogy that encourages the integration of instruction and experience, akin to Jesus' pedagogy of *life to Faith to life*.

(a) *Conversion to Jesus*: The *GDC* situates catechesis within the overarching framework of evangelization, much as the Risen Christ did on that hillside in Galilee. Thus, “Catechesis, distinct from the primary proclamation of the Gospel, promotes and matures initial conversion, educates the convert in the faith, and incorporates him [or her] into Christian community” (#61). Then it repeatedly makes clear that

the central purpose of catechesis is conversion to Jesus and to his *way*. So, catechetical education must “put people in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ” (#80), and “apprentice” them to Jesus (an oft-repeated term), presenting “Christian faith as the following of his person,” (#41). Note well that such conversion is not a cozy “me and Jesus” buddy feeling but demands “full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps” (#53), albeit taking a lifetime (#56).

(b) *A Whole Faith*: The *GDC* proposes a holistic sense of Christian faith that should shape everything in the lives of disciples. So, Christian faith has “cognitive, experiential, [and] behavioral” aspects (#35); it is to permeate how we make meaning out of life, the quality of our relationships, and the ethic by which we live (#16). Summarizing, the *GDC* echoes the traditional tripod of Christian faith as *lex credendi*, *lex orandi*, and *lex vivendi*. For this reason, though knowledge of the faith is vitally important

(#85), “formation for the Christian life comprises but surpasses mere instruction” (#68).

(c) *Coalition of Family, Parish, School/Program*: The *GDC* places central emphasis on the role of *family*; in fact, “nothing replaces family catechesis” (#178). Yet, instead of putting a didactic role upon parents, the *GDC* emphasizes the Christian ethos of the home. So, family catechesis is “a Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more on-going than structured into periods” (#255). Elaborating around the image of “domestic church”—revived by Vatican II—the family catechizes effectively by reflecting within its life “the different aspects and functions of the life of the entire Church” (#225). In its own way, then, each family is to share its faith around the word of God, practice prayer and worship within the home, give living witness to Christian faith, and perform the works of compassion and justice.

Regarding the *parish*, the *GDC* emphasizes that catechesis must “incorporate people into Christian community, the church” (#65). Conversely, “catechesis is a responsibility of the entire Christian community” and “of every member of the community” (#220). By baptism, then, every Christian person and community has a crucial function in handing on the faith. The whole process must be communal; “the Christian community is the origin, locus and goal of catechesis” (#254). Everything about the life of each parish should be a source of catechesis for its members and for the community as a whole (#221).

(d) *Life to Faith to Life*: The *GDC* encourages catechists to imitate the pedagogy of God and of Jesus. This means using both “human events and words to communicate”—in other words, experiences and instruction (#38). It elaborates that this amounts to: (1) drawing upon people’s own lived experiences as a locus of God’s self-disclosure in their lives; (2) mediating into their lives the word of God through Scripture and Tradition; (3) encouraging them to integrate their lives and Faith into lived and living Christian faith. With this, the *GDC* says “both/and” to kerygmatic and experiential catechesis.

Pedagogically, then, “every dimension of the faith, like the faith itself as a whole, must be rooted in human experience” (#87). In fact, “experience is a necessary medium for exploring and assimilating the truths which constitute the objective content of Revelation” (#152). Catechetical education is most effective as it presents every aspect of the faith tradition “to refer clearly to the fundamental experiences of people’s lives” (#133). So, our catechesis must constantly integrate life and faith toward lived faith.

This brief review explains the rationale for the selection of essays here. While affirming the need for good instruction, they point to the variety of experiences and practices that encourage initial conversion and that dispose people to integrate life and faith as lived faith in the everyday of life.

THOMAS H. GROOME is the chair of the Department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College.

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Watch Tom Groome discuss his book, *Will There Be Faith?*: bc.edu/c21faith

A LITANY OF THE WAY

Prayer for the Journey

As Jesus sought the quiet of the desert

Teach us to pray.

As Jesus washed the feet of his disciples

Teach us to love.

As Jesus promised Paradise to the thief on the cross

Teach us to hope.

As Jesus called Peter to walk to him across the water

Teach us to believe.

As the child Jesus sat among the elders in the temple

Teach us to seek answers.

As Jesus in the garden opened his mind and heart to God’s will

Teach us to listen.

As Jesus reflected on the Law and the Prophets

Teach us to learn.

As Jesus used parables to reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom

Teach us to teach.





Jesus in the Midst

Kevin Dowd

At the age of four, having just returned home from the doctor's office, I deftly climbed onto the bathroom sink, opened the medicine cabinet, and absconded to my bedroom with a bottle of pills. Like many children, I loved playing roles, and today I was the doctor and my younger brother, Mike, the patient. Behind the closed doors of our bedroom, while my mother prepared dinner downstairs, Mike and I consumed the entire bottle of medicine. The haunting silence that ensued prompted my mother to investigate, and what she found was a two-year-old on the verge of death and a four-year-old not far behind. She and my dad rushed us to the hospital—only a couple of blocks away—where I was induced to vomit; but Mike was in much more serious trouble. Only years later did I learn that my mother was in tears as she asked the doctor, “Is my baby going to die?” In my toddler's mind, on the other hand, I found the entire affair pretty exciting. I still remember seeing Mike in a crib with all sorts of equipment and lights, and wondering why he got “the cool bed.” In the end, the doctors saved Mike's life. It was a defining event in the life of my family.

As the years went by, “The Time Kevin Poisoned Mike” became a regular story in the family's repertoire. It

might have been a story that shamed me—a tale about a mischievous child almost killing his baby brother. Instead, my parents told the story as the writers of Scripture told theirs: a compelling human drama that included a decisive role for God. From their perspective, the key was to be found in this critical fact: At the hospital that day was a visiting team of nationally acclaimed drug-overdose specialists giving a lecture. When my brother and I arrived, those specialists were whisked from the lecture hall to the emergency room, and their expertise is the unmistakable factor in Mike's full recovery. In my parents' telling of the story, this was no accident, no mere stroke of luck. It was a manifestation of God's ever-present and active love. What others might have seen as a fortunate coincidence, my parents unequivocally interpreted as the grace of God. (I still do.)

When our house burned down in 1986, however, leaving my parents and their eight young sons homeless at Christmastime, the argument for God's blessing seemed weak. By this time, I was in middle school and was beginning to think more critically about God. How would my parents explain this one? Where was God's grace now? Very simply, they told us not to worry, that God would provide.

I know they were telling themselves this, too—they were understandably very anxious and unsure of the future. Still, “hope that sees for itself is not hope” (Rom. 8:24), and the lesson they both lived and conveyed was to trust in God in all circumstances. That night, my Uncle Paul moved in with my grandparents so that we would have a place to stay—10 of us living in his two-bedroom apartment! Some of our teachers accused us of fabricating a terrible excuse for not having our homework, but eventually they all came around and helped us out. At church, people made donations to help get us back on our feet. Friends took turns bringing dinner to ease the burden on my folks. Christmas was the best ever! We had more gifts than I can even remember. Through all of it, God did provide. When I later learned the expression that we are the hands and feet of Christ on earth, I knew exactly what it meant.

These two stories embody the twin hermeneutics of my childhood. Through the example of my parents, I learned to “see God in all things” as the Jesuits say, and to trust God even when I fail to see or understand. Where we discerned God’s grace, the appropriate response was gratitude, and the best way to show gratitude was to tell the story. On the other hand, when bad things happened, my parents demonstrated (in their own humble way) the faith of Christ on the cross: God will provide, even when everything seems so unjust and senseless.

These many years later, my brothers and I have kept the faith, each in his own way, and not one of us perfectly. Faith is a gift—it is primarily God’s loving offer in God’s own time—and that invitation came to me through the witness of my parents and through the Christian community that surrounded my childhood, including grandparents and godparents, religious education teachers and youth ministers, parish priests and the parish community. Above all, though, my parents “made” me a Catholic by imbuing our daily lives with an awareness of God’s presence. In short, they did what Thomas Groome advises all Christians, as sharers in the evangelical mission of the Church, to do: they put our quotidian story in conversation with the Christian Story so that it was ordinary no more. Our family narrative became “scripture” of sorts—part of the continuing saga of God’s revelation of God’s own deep love for the world.

My mother has never read Johann Baptist Metz, but she understands better than anyone I know the “apocalyptic goad.” The stories that she shared with us were not all sunshine and cupcakes—she knew that being Catholic meant having responsibilities in a fallen world. Without ever becoming a Jonathan Edwards, she nonetheless

conveyed that we would be judged by whether we had served Jesus in the person of our neighbor in need. My dad, a police officer, told us he was “doing the work of Jesus” on his patrol each day, and his exciting stories of police work—rife with acts of caring and courageous service—convinced us it was true. All of this took place in a decidedly Catholic framework: We never missed Sunday Mass, and we were taught that the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist would “strengthen us in all things” (Phil. 4:13). We even tried to do some “Catholic” things at home, like praying the Rosary together daily or using an Advent candle. Most often, though, this never really worked out. We would get a day or two into it and something would—often to the kids’ delight!—keep us from persisting. The one practice, though, that was nonnegotiable was family dinner together; and that’s where the stories—and The Story—were most often told.

Handing on the faith is primarily an act of generosity in which we give access to the Story of the faith by taking the time to tell our own faith stories as well; and we give credence to the Faith by the credibility of our own, everyday witness as disciples. I have come to embrace the Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13ff.) as a paradigm of effective evangelization. The manner in which faith in the Risen Christ was spread back then—made possible always and only by the call of the Father and the gift of the Holy Spirit—is the same today. The disciples on that Emmaus road, having come to see the Risen Christ “in the breaking of the bread,” immediately sought out the other disciples and listened to their proclamation of the Story before

“recounting what had taken place [to them] on the way.” Significantly, at the very moment that they were sharing their experience, indeed, “While they were still speaking,” Jesus appeared “in their midst.” If we, too, have met the Risen One in the daily, ordinary journey of our lives, then our hearts should be “burning within us” to share this most precious of gifts. We should be eager to hand on the faith not only by telling the Story, but also—and very significantly—by telling our own stories of faith as well, and by opening a space for others to share theirs. When we do, Jesus stands in our midst, and the faith is surely handed on as new disciples experience the presence of the Lord.

KEVIN M. DOWD is a doctoral student in theology and education at Boston College.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 8 © CORBIS



Listen to Cardinal Sean O’Malley, OFM Cap. present “The Eucharist at the Center of Catholic Life”: bc.edu/c21faith

Pass It On: Renewing One's Own Faith Is the First Step to Evangelizing Others

Cardinal Donald Wuerl

In spite of the genuine and sometimes heroic efforts of parents and teachers in Catholic schools and parish religious education programs, sometimes the Gospel message simply is not heard the first time around. In today's culture, it cannot be assumed that baptized Catholics will embrace discipleship and become active followers of Christ. Many Catholics are affected by the secularism, materialism, and individualism of our society, as are many of their friends, families, and neighbors who do not profess the faith. It is difficult for the Church to be heard through the pervasive noise.

Many Catholics have embraced a postmodern mentality that rejects belief in a universal and objective truth, leading to a rise in relativism. Many mistrust institutions, including the Church, and do not turn to her for guidance. A self-referencing individualism evaluates in terms of what is best for the self rather than what is best for the common good. There may be an interest in spirituality, but it is often without humble submission to truth beyond the self. The sense of individuality is so strong that many have lost a desire for community and living in solidarity with others.

Clearly, many Catholics do not know their faith well, nor have they accepted the invitation from Christ to follow him as disciples. So what can be done? In a recent pastoral letter, "Disciples of the Lord: Sharing the Vision," I wrote that Christ still calls us to conversion and discipleship, "but, for many, the invitation has lost its appeal." It seems that "for some

who initially heard this incredible proclamation, the message has become stale. The vision has faded. The promises seem empty or unconnected to their lives."

A recent survey conducted by the Archdiocese of Washington concluded that nearly 50 percent of Catholics between the ages of 25 and 34 attend Mass no more than a few times a year, if at all. Nearly as many, however, consider prayer and spirituality to be very important in their lives. The hunger is there, but the message of the Gospel has been eclipsed.

At the other end of the spectrum, one sees great signs of vitality. In the past year, as I have met and talked with pastoral leaders across the archdiocese, I can see that the Church in Washington, D.C., is doing many things right and well, or at least it is making strides in a positive direction. There is room for improvement and growth, but the spark is there. Each January, for example, 20,000 young people from across the United States gather at the Verizon Center in Washington for a rally and Mass for Life. This year we added a second venue with space for an additional 10,000 young people to cheer, pray, and stand up for the culture of life. The free tickets for both locations—30,000 seats—were claimed within minutes, and requests continued to pour in. School enrollment has stabilized as communities become more engaged with their Catholic schools; a new archdiocesan seminary will open in the fall to accommodate an increased interest in vocations to the priesthood; and groups ranging from those who are

a part of the new movements to those with special needs are increasingly engaged with their Church. The archdiocese held its first White Mass recently to celebrate the giftedness to our Church and society of those who have special needs. At the same time, parishes have started to actively embrace evangelization efforts, including door-to-door invitations to Invite-A-Friend Sunday and visits by parishioners to those members who have stopped coming to Mass, to invite them back.

The transformation of society begins with conversion, not with another new program. The antidote to our spiritual malaise is for each of us to know and deepen our knowledge of the crucified and risen Jesus. For people to hear the Gospel, the tellers must be credible and alive in their experience of Christ.

This conversion essentially involves discernment. Each of us Catholics must stop and see where the Lord is working and where there is room for growth. Following this basic principle, and understanding that parish life is at the heart of the church experience, the Archdiocese of Washington is introducing a new tool to help parishes discern where they are most vital and where the Spirit is calling them to grow. The "Indicators of Vitality" make up a self-assessment tool that gives pastors and parish leaders a way to plan for the future by looking at the health and vitality of their parishes in five areas: worship, education, community life, service, and administration (which includes the leadership, stewardship,

management, and decision-making processes of the parish).

The process of parish self-assessment brings pastoral planning to a level where it is going to be lived. Parishes self-identify their vision and their needs. The staff of the archdiocese is available to help the parishes achieve their goals, not to impose a new program. This vision implicitly recognizes that the people and their pastors are the experts on their parish, and diocesan support must be oriented to supporting pastors, not the other way around.

This vision of evangelization recognizes that listening is inherent to preaching. When those who preach know how the world is listening, they can, in the words of Pope John Paul II, preach the unchanging truth with “new ardor, new methods and new expression.” That truth needs to be proclaimed in a way that the world can comprehend, whether from the pulpit, in conversation, or through contemporary music or social media.

Encounter with the Risen Christ

Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI teach that, especially

in this culture, the faith must still be taught in all its fullness, richness, and transforming power. Entry into this truth brings entry into the life and love of God.

If there is anything we Christians should know, it is that human beings yearn for life and love and will turn just about anywhere to find it. The Church ministers this life and love in the most beautiful and complete way. Many today are not open to the message the Church teaches because it is often presented in a way that does not penetrate the postmodern mentality. But there is and has always been power to transform lives in the love of God, the truth of Christ, and the gentle work of the Holy Spirit. This is the heart of our message, and it does not change.

An encounter with Christ makes all the difference, which we cannot forget. This is the ageless message of the saints, and it continues to inspire and challenge in our own day. In encountering Christ, we share in God’s life and love in a dynamic way and are enlivened by the Holy Spirit to share this message with others. Our primary encounters with Christ come in the Eucharist and the other

sacraments, especially the sacrament of reconciliation. We meet him, too, in reading Scripture, in our prayer and in the community of believers, including when we reach out to those around us, especially the poor and vulnerable, through works of charity and justice.

That is why, as we “repropose the Gospel” (Pope Benedict’s term) through the new evangelization, we are called to do even better what we already do. Good liturgy is important. Prayer is important. Reading Scripture is important. Our life in community is important, especially as manifested in our social ministries. As Pope John Paul taught, “Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves; they must proclaim him” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 49).

This is the heart and challenge of the new evangelization: reinvigorating our own faith so we then can invite others to rediscover Christ.

CARDINAL DONALD WUERL is the archbishop of Washington, D.C.

Previously published in the February 28, 2012, *America*.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 11 Photo by Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.



Eight Keys to Keeping Kids Catholic:

A Teacher and Catechist Shares Her Hard-earned Wisdom

Carol Cimino, SSJ

“I can’t understand it,” she wailed. “I sent her to Catholic school for 12 years and she doesn’t even go to church!” If I had a nickel for every time a parent said those words (substitute “religious education” for “Catholic school”), I would be gainfully unemployed. While some parents couldn’t care less or, worse, don’t even notice, most parents and even grandparents are appalled that their children, especially their 16- to 22-year-olds, seem to have forsaken their heritage, their Catholic faith.

While I have over 40 years of experience as a teacher and catechist, it’s what I have learned from young people that fortifies me to hand out some advice to teachers, catechists, and, yes, parents and grandparents. While nothing will guarantee that our kids will stay close to their Catholic faith, there are some great ways to cultivate their faith—and some important truths to keep in mind:

(1) Remember that questioning is normal. It’s time that we adults try to understand (and remember, perhaps), that questioning previously held beliefs is part of growing up.

(2) We all learn by experience. Kids label many experiences “awesome.” As parents and grandparents, we can build on some of these moments to urge our kids to pay attention to true awesomeness, to go deeper, to find a sense of the sacred in everyday life, whether it’s the seasons, a perfect forward pass, technology, a new baby brother, or whatever strikes them. Catholic spirituality thrives on awe and wonder, and everyday awe and wonder lead us almost naturally into Catholic sacramentality.

(3) Recognize that wariness of the Church is partially a response to how often our young people have been exposed to betrayal by their heroes. Given the frequent betrayals of people of seemingly good character they hear about in the media, it’s understandable that our children may not automatically trust in and respect the heroes—the saints and holy people—we place before them. The recent scandals in the Church have also made young people—and adults—look askance at clergy and others who work in Church ministries. No wonder they are suspicious when we tell them, “Just trust me; this is true.” We need to avoid saying, “Because the Church says so,” or “Because I say so,” and instead help our children understand why we believe what we do, and why we love our Church despite its imperfections.

(4) Recognize that parents are the most influential adults in a child’s life. The example that parents set is the

most potent tool we have to help keep God and religion in our children’s lives. I believe that discussions on matters of faith, the place of church, of worship and prayer, the place of God in the questions of morality, ethics, and relationships ought to be in the context of the family experience. I always felt closest to my own students when we shared our faith stories, those times when the only solace was knowing that God loves us, or that we are always given the gift of peace and hope by a God who desires only the best for us. No parent should want to give that experience up to a teacher; it is the privilege of parenthood. Parents can feel free to tell their own stories because they indicate for the child the importance of having a personal relationship with God. During hard times, a mother’s or father’s spoken trust in the providence of God goes a long way toward comforting the child and helping the child understand that to be an adult means keeping God visible and reachable.

(5) Don’t be afraid to ask catechists and teachers for tools to answer religious and spiritual questions. The relationship between parents and the parish religious education program or the Catholic school should be a partnership. Parents should feel free to tap into this resource when those “teachable moments” come along. Teachers are trained in the stages of religious development of children, and ought to help parents anticipate questions, concerns, and issues even before they are evident.

(6) Encourage grandparents’ role in the life of a young person. There is magic in the skipping of a generation, I am convinced. Grandparents have the perspective of having raised the parent of a teen and of knowing the angst that that parent both caused and experienced. For many youngsters, these are the people who may be more available and have more time to listen to the young person’s anxieties about God and life. Let’s encourage grandparents to be involved.

Grandparents have the gift of perspective when it comes to faith. The older person can contribute stories and experiences that they now see as builders of the wisdom of senior citizenship. While parents are often stressed by work and home obligations, grandparents have been there, done that.

(7) Nurture the understanding of what it means to belong to the Catholic Church among our young people, especially our teens. The National Study of Youth and Religion noted that religion and God are indeed important in the lives of youngsters, but that the central problem is



“whatever-ism” when religion and the Church leave them cold.

I can remember Easter Sunday in Rome about 20 years ago. I had a group of teens with me and we were attending Easter Mass in St. Peter’s Square. From behind me, I heard one of the teens whisper: “Sister, Sister!” This was repeated as Stephen made his way through the crowd to stand next to me. “What?” I asked. “The Mass,” he said. “It’s the same!” He had made the connection that, even here, on another continent, the Mass was the Mass, and the Church was the Church.

I’ve had the experience of attending LifeTeen Masses in Arizona, where the teens were all in T-shirts with “Catholic and Proud of It” on the front. I wasn’t all that thrilled with this seeming xenophobia, but I had to admit that this was preferable to gang colors by a long shot. It brought home to me that there is this eternal quest of the adolescent for relationship, belonging.

(8) Don’t panic if your teen seems uninterested in religion. We all need to get down to the work of animating

and marinating young people, of showing them, by example, that the Church is a home where they are always welcome, where they can work out their doubts and fears, where the message is always the message of Jesus, and where they may, one day, bring their own children. Even if they never reconnect with the Church of their childhood, we never know how they may be close to God in their own hearts. We can only keep the door open, keep praying, and put our children in God’s hands.

CAROL CIMINO, SSJ is codirector, Catholic School Leadership Institute, Manhattan College.

Previously published in *Catholic Digest* (2010) http://www.catholicdigest.com/articles/family/children_faith/2010/06-07/8-keys-to-keeping-kids-catholic

PHOTO CREDIT: page 13 Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications, Lee Pellegrini

 Watch Jerry York, BC hockey coach, discuss intersection of faith and life: bc.edu/c21faith



Both Caught *and* Taught: The Faith Education of a Catholic School

Brad Rothrock

From its earliest days, the Church has conducted schools as an aspect of its mission to continue God's saving work in the world. For the past 2,000 years, then, Catholic schools have educated from faith and for faith. In other words, they are inspired by and arise from the core convictions of Catholicism and are to educate people in Catholic identity. They continue to be most effective in this dual mission today.

The start of fourth-grade found me in a new school: Our Mother of Sorrows. This was by my own request; I simply felt drawn there to the amazement of my irreligious parents. The transition from a public to a private school was disorienting, to say the least. Upon reflection, this disorientation turned out to be a rather good thing. The strangeness I felt was a sign of a new identity about to be born; an identification of myself as a Catholic Christian.

Prior to attending Our Mother of Sorrows, the word *Catholic* meant Mass on Sundays, occasionally—and

little more. At my new school, on the other hand, the entire ethos was suffused with the Catholic faith. Like an immersion experience in a foreign country, the Catholic environment of Our Mother of Sorrows produced a fluency and familiarity with my faith that can only come from such vital contact. I imbibed my new Catholic identity there by osmosis; it was caught as much as taught.

Of course, religion class played a formative role. There I learned the intellectual background of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic faith. My engagement with the rich theological tradition of Catholic faith would

last a lifetime. However, my deep formation took place in the day-to-day happenings throughout the life and environment of the school.

First, there were the overtly religious elements such as daily prayer. We said the Angelus and the Morning Offering, and grace before lunch. We prayed before certain classes, and, a high point was our class liturgies and celebrations of the Eucharist as a school on special days. I remember the “class-Masses,” as they were called, as a particularly special and formative time. It reminded me a little of what it must have been like at the Last Supper with Jesus, as our small group would

gather around a makeshift altar, sitting on the floor, as one of the priests of the parish celebrated. There was a sense of camaraderie, a feeling of being part of a community that was not only intimately at hand, but that extended beyond our classroom to encompass Catholics everywhere.

Along the same lines, we were taken to church on the first Friday of every month for benediction. I recall several sleepy spring afternoons trying to keep my eyes open in the warm church. And yet, I remember the sense of awe and reverence that experience instilled, with our teacher assuring us that we were truly in the presence of Jesus. We walked the Stations of the Cross during Lent, went to reconciliation, had our throats blessed on the feast of St. Blaise, and honored Mary with special rituals.

I credit these practices with infusing in me a sense of the poetry and mystery that make up the heart of the Catholic faith. Candles wrapped in ribbon, scores of altar girls and boys vested and following the large cross used for

the Stations, the golden monstrance shining in the midst of the candelabras, incense floating in the hazy colored light pouring in through the stained-glass windows; all of these signs, symbols, and smells helped me to see that there was “more” to the world.

Through that Catholic school ethos, I embraced a sacramental view of life. For in a way similar to the signs and symbols mentioned above, I came to recognize that my friends, family, the poor, nature, and indeed all of life also mediate God’s presence and grace. The explicit sacramental religious practices would have eventually succumbed to a bland piety if we hadn’t also been introduced to the less explicitly religious practices of social justice, themselves every bit as sacramental as benediction.

Our Catholic school reminded my classmates and me of our responsibilities to the poor and marginalized. We kept rice bowls during Lent, held food drives, and ran an annual carnival to raise funds for missionaries. Beginning in sixth grade, we learned

about Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, and took periodic trips to the Catholic Worker House. I remember our joy in helping to provide a meal for the lines of homeless persons, working-class families, and single mothers and their children. This taste of social justice work, this glimpse of a life lived in voluntary poverty and service to the poor, still beckons me today. These faith-filled practices of feeding the hungry and caring for the poor rounded out for me the pervasive sense of what it means to be Catholic.

It is the Catholic school that formed my identity in faith and set me on the path of becoming a disciple of Jesus. More than anything else, my Catholic grade school led me to embrace my present vocation—a Catholic religious educator—and for that I am eternally grateful.

BRAD ROTHROCK is in his third year of study for a doctoral in theology and education at Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 14 Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing and Communications, Lee Pellegrini

CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS BEAR WITNESS TO CHRIST

Central to a Catholic education is the Catholic school teacher. Since the time Christ said to Simon, “Thou art Peter,” they have been called by many titles: apostle, disciple, follower, Father, Sister, Brother, teacher. All, regardless of their outward presence, witness to their inner faithfulness, to their commitment to spreading God’s Good News. They have dared to touch the hem of the garment of the Master Teacher and follow Him on a journey on the road less traveled. God called them; He qualified them, to do His work. And they, and their families, regardless of the sacrifices, have said “yes.” They weather the winds of change and the ridicule of a secular world. They hold fast to the mission. They are “heirs to the world through the righteousness of faith ... who against hope, believed in hope” (Romans 4:13, 18). It is the Catholic school teacher who creates the environment, not only for instruction in the right information, but also for formation and spiritual grounding. It is our heritage, and integral to a holistic education, to encourage the pursuit of wisdom, justice, and truth.

Catholic schools and colleges educate leaders, good citizens, and moral decision makers, not just for society, but also for the Catholic Church. Catholic schools in this country were

founded to educate not only Catholics, but also all people; to lift people out of poverty, and to address the needs of immigrant populations. As it has so often been said, we educate the students in our institutions, not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic. Education is a vital mission of our Church. A sure sign of the Catholic identity of the institution is that it witnesses to that educational mission, regardless of the faith tradition of the students, or others involved in the school, by authentically teaching, and witnessing, the Catholic faith to all.

A Catholic school bears the presence of Jesus. It is a place to work miracles, to form a right conscience, to find your voice, to speak to the crowds, to lift people up educationally, socially, economically, and spiritually. It is a place to build a faith community that recognizes the value of all life, challenges what demeans that value, and works to right injustice. Catholic schools continue to carry out the Church’s mission of evangelization and education, for the greater honor and glory of God.

— Dr. Mary C. McDonald, former Superintendent of Schools in Memphis and Chief Executive of MCD Partners



Chris McGrath/Getty Images News

Benedict XVI: Address to Bishops of the United States

(Ad Limina Visit: May 2012)

The essential task of authentic education at every level is not simply that of passing on knowledge, essential as this is, but also of shaping hearts. There is a constant need to balance intellectual rigor in communicating effectively, attractively and integrally, the richness of the Church's faith with forming the young in the love of God, the praxis of the Christian moral and sacramental life and, not least, the cultivation of personal and liturgical prayer.

It follows that the question of Catholic identity, not least at the university level, entails much more than the teaching of religion or the mere presence of a chaplaincy on campus. All too often, it seems, Catholic schools and colleges have failed to challenge students to reappropriate their faith as part of the exciting intellectual discoveries which mark the experience of higher education. The fact that so many new students find themselves dissociated from the family, school, and community support systems that previously facilitated the transmission of the faith should continually spur Catholic institutions of learning to create new and effective networks of support. In every aspect of their education, students need to be encouraged to articulate a vision of the harmony of faith and reason capable of guiding a lifelong

pursuit of knowledge and virtue. As ever, an essential role in this process is played by teachers who inspire others by their evident love of Christ, their witness of sound devotion, and their commitment to that *sapientia Christiana* which integrates faith and life, intellectual passion and reverence for the splendor of truth both human and divine.

In effect, faith by its very nature demands a constant and all-embracing conversion to the fullness of truth revealed in Christ. He is the creative Logos, in whom all things were made and in whom all reality "holds together" (Col 1:17); he is the new Adam who reveals the ultimate truth about man and the world in which we live. In a period of great cultural change and societal displacement not unlike our own, Augustine pointed to this intrinsic connection between faith and the human intellectual enterprise by appealing to Plato, who held, he says, that "to love wisdom is to love God" (cf. *De Civitate Dei*, VIII, 8). The Christian commitment to learning, which gave birth to the medieval universities, was based upon this conviction that the one God, as the source of all truth and goodness, is likewise the source of the intellect's passionate desire to know and the will's yearning for fulfillment in love.

Finding a Home in the Church

Amelia Blanton

When I was 12 years old, my mother and I had a conversation about where we felt the most comfortable. I looked at my mother and in the most matter-of-fact way told her that I felt the most comfortable in church, an odd assertion for a child of that age. As I reflect on this moment 10 years later, I am drawn to my memories of St. Elizabeth's Catholic University Parish, located in Lubbock, Texas, my home parish for all of my childhood and young adult faith formation.

St. Elizabeth's helped plant deep roots in my faith by integrating me into the parish community. My parish priest and many other adults knew my name and encouraged me to be involved at a young age. One such involvement was altar serving, where I developed lifelong friendships with not only my fellow servers, but also the adults who directed us. As I served and stood closer to the altar than anyone else in the congregation, I felt an intense connection with my parish and with God, a feeling I have never been able to replicate.

Within my religious education classes, I learned not only about the Catholic faith and how it felt to be included in a community, but also what it meant to include others. Through my involvement with youth groups, I found inclusion among my peers and leaders and the parish as a whole as they supported our trips, service work, and retreats. By planting powerful seeds of inclusion and belonging, my parish gave me roots in my faith that I continue to rely on.

As a young teenager, I assisted with Vacation Bible School by preparing snacks, assisting individual children, and aiding teachers in the classroom. As I grew older, I served as a leader and mentor for the middle school

youth group and my high school group. On multiple occasions my youth minister, Veronica, asked me to make announcements in front of the congregation, a job that was normally hers. Standing in front of the congregation, I recognized the immense trust that she had in me.

During my senior year in high school, Veronica moved away with her family. I was invited to be a part of the search committee for the next youth minister. All at the table took my concerns, comments, and suggestions seriously. Again, I felt a sense of trust

As a young person, I found my parish of St. Elizabeth's to be a locus of God's self-disclosure. It was a place where I was encouraged to be an integral part of the community, where I was trusted to be a full member of the parish regardless of my youth. It was a place where the roots of a mature faith first sprouted, were nourished, and began to bloom. Most importantly, it was a place where I became aware of how and why I should be a living, active member of God's people and began to understand my place within the larger community of disciples of



from the adult members of my parish.

Being included, trusted, and respected by my parish priest and other adults reinforced my conviction that this parish was one I could call my own. I felt I was a true part of the community, not simply a child of my parents who belonged to the church, but a full-fledged member of the parish in my own right. I developed a sense of maturity and responsibility about my role as a parishioner and as an informed, faithful Catholic.

Jesus Christ. For children to become the living, active members of the Body of Christ, their parishes must provide them with inclusion and welcome, trust and respect, and ways to become mature and responsible in their faith.

AMELIA BLANTON is a graduate student in pastoral ministry at the Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 17 Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications, Caitlin Cunningham

C21 UPDATE

FALL 2012

HANDING ON THE FAITH

SEPTEMBER

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

LECTURE

Women and Interreligious Dialogue **PRESENTER:** Rosemary Radford Ruether, Carpenter Emerita Professor of Feminist Theology, Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union

LOCATION/TIME: Corcoran Commons, Heights Room, 5:00 p.m.

SPONSORS: BC Theology Department, STM, and C21 Center

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

INTERVIEW

Handing on the Faith in the 21st Century **PRESENTERS:** Thomas Groome, professor, STM interviewed by Fr. Robert P. Reed, president, CatholicTV **LOCATION/TIME:** Gasson Hall, Room 100, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center and CatholicTV

OCTOBER

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2012

EPISCOPAL VISITOR LECTURE

An Archbishop's Perspective on Handing on the Faith **PRESENTER:** Most Rev. Harry J. Flynn, D.D., Archbishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis **LOCATION/TIME:** Gasson Hall, Room 100, 4:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center and STM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2012

FILM & DISCUSSION

Women Religious Handing on the Faith in America Viewing of the documentary *Women & Spirit* followed by a discussion with a panel of women religious **LOCATION/TIME:** Yawkey Center, Murray Function Room, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSOR:** C21 Center

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2012

WORKSHOP

Tools of the Time: Tech-Savvy Teaching and Pastoral Ministry **PRESENTER:** Tim Welch, consultant for educational technology, Catholic Education Ministries, Diocese of Saint Cloud **LOCATION/TIME:** Yawkey Center, Murray Function Room, 3:00–5:00 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center, Roche Center for Catholic Education, and STM's C21 Online

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2012

BOOK LAUNCH & LECTURE

Catholic Spiritual Practices: A Treasury of Old and New **PRESENTERS:** Colleen Griffith and Thomas Groome, professors, STM **LOCATION/TIME:** Gasson Hall, Room 100, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center, Paraclete Press, and STM

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2012

LECTURE

Agape Latte Extra featuring Matt Weber **PRESENTERS:** Matt Weber, BC alumnus, author of *Fearing the Stigmata*, and producer, CatholicTV **LOCATION/TIME:** Hillside Café, 8:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center and Campus Ministry

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2012

LECTURE

The Power of Boundless Compassion: An Evening with Fr. Greg Boyle **PRESENTER:** Fr. Gregory Boyle, S.J., founder and executive director, Homeboy Industries, and author of *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* **LOCATION/TIME:** Robsham Theatre, 7:00 p.m. **SPONSORS:** STM and C21 Center

NOVEMBER

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2012

LECTURE

Agape Latte Grande: Relationships, Moving Beyond the Hookup Culture **PRESENTERS:** Kerry Cronin, associate director, Lonergan Center and Danny Zepp, assistant director, First Year Experience **LOCATION/TIME:** Cadigan Alumni Center Atrium, Brighton Campus, 6:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center and BC Alumni Association

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2012

WORKSHOP

New Evangelization for Today's Parish **PRESENTERS:** Fr. David B. Couturier, O.F.M. Cap., director, Catholic Consultations International and professor, St. Bonaventure University and Pontifical Antonianum University; and Jane E. Regan, director, continuing education and associate professor, STM **LOCATION/TIME:** Corcoran Commons, Heights Room, 1:00–4:00 p.m. **SPONSORS:** STM and C21 Center

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2012

PANEL DISCUSSION

Encountering Christ Through Service **MODERATOR:** Dan Ponsetto, director, Volunteer and Service Learning Center **LOCATION/TIME:** Gasson Hall, Room 100, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center, BC Volunteer and Service Learning Center, and Campus Ministry

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2012

WORKSHOP

Effective Retreats: Getting the Most out of a Transformative Experience **MODERATOR:** Burt Howell, director, Intersections **PANEL:** Leaders of Catholic high school, university, and parish retreat programs **LOCATION/TIME:** Corcoran Commons, Heights Room, 5:30 p.m. **SPONSORS:** C21 Center, Roche Center for Catholic Education, and Campus Ministry

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2012

RETREAT

Day of Renewal for Women Religious in Hispanic Ministry (in Spanish) *Día de crecimiento para religiosas trabajando en el ministerio hispano (en español)* **LOCATION/TIME:** 2101 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton Campus **SPONSORS:** STM and C21 Center

ABBREVIATIONS

STM: BC School of Theology and Ministry
C21 Center: The Church in the 21st Century Center

Webcast videos will be available within two weeks following each event on bc.edu/c21



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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

INAUGURAL EVENT

Liturgy at Fenway Park, 4:00 p.m. Receptions at park to follow **COSPONSOR:** Boston College High School

RAIN DATE: Sunday, September 16, 2012

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2012

Academic Symposium I: Public Education (K–12) and the Future of Democracy

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2012

Scholarship and the Academy

Sesquicentennial Speaker Series and Awarding of Sesquicentennial Medal

SPEAKER/MEDALIST: Drew Faust, president, Harvard University

**THURSDAY AND FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER 8–9, 2012**

Academic Symposium II: Religion and the Liberal Aims of Higher Education

For more information or to register for events, please visit: bc.edu/150

INFORMATION FOR EVENTS:

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4 U Worship Team is a Christian ministry team that grew out of a music ministry that brought original and contemporary Christian music to the Catholic Church in Hopedale and Milford, Massachusetts. In its past 10 years of service to the Catholic Church, the group has grown to be a global mission team and missionary work bringing music, worship, and service to many Christian faith-based communities.

Catholic Digest connects with readers through personal stories of triumphs and struggles, joys and challenges, and also the lighter side of Catholic living. We are a source of support and encouragement for those who love their faith, those who struggle with their faith, and those who long to learn more about the richness of Catholic tradition.

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Raised on Faith, but...

Valerie Schultz

What of parents who strive mightily to share their faith with their children but seem to “fail” nonetheless? This brings us face to face with the mystery of faith and of God’s ways. It also reminds us, as Jesus did, that “in my Father’s house there are many dwelling places” (John 14: 2). Many will take another path home to God; yet, the values they learned in their Catholic family will stand them in good stead along the way.

Catholic parents may well imagine that raising the child Jesus was a picnic compared to parenting today’s children. How hard can it be to turn an infant who is fully divine into a decent adult? Yet Jesus was also fully human and so, one can assume, a challenge and a riddle to his mother and foster father. Like modern mothers and fathers, Jesus’ parents were given the task of modeling compassion and wisdom—the prerequisites of social justice—as they brought their child up in their Jewish faith.

As Catholics raising our children at the end of the last century, my husband and I believed that teaching them the Catholic concept of social justice was as important as embodying a love for the Eucharist and a devotion to it. We tried to cultivate in their fertile hearts the church’s core principles of justice: to work for the common good, to insist that political authorities behave justly, to uphold human dignity and human solidarity and to exhibit a preferential option for the poor. To that end, we took active roles in the parish religious education program and made choices in our family’s lifestyle that honored those beliefs.

But when our children begin to flex their minds and pose theological and existential questions, the black and white of rules and dogma swirled into the nuanced gray of spirituality and faith. While my husband and I encouraged our daughters to be independent thinkers and ask

questions, we, like other honest parents, did not have every answer. Who has not doubted his or her own wisdom when responding to a young and developing conscience? What sinful Catholic parent has not wanted to tell the children to “do as I say, not as I do”? The complexities of parenting grow alongside the miraculous growth of the skeletons, brains, and muscles of our children. Theological parenting, like following any sacred call, is enlivening, humbling, confusing, and best done with the most selfless love parents can muster.

*My adult children
are kind, smart, and
justice-oriented.
But they are not
practicing Catholics.*

Good, But Not Christian

I was curious about the experiences of other Catholic parents who had endeavored to raise their children—now adults—to embrace the teachings of social justice. As e-mail replies arrived, I discovered an unexpected common thread running through their responses. As one succinctly put it: “I believe I failed at raising an adult Catholic.”

While others did not phrase that feeling so baldly, the sentiment was

the same. Coming from the loving and grace-filled parents of some pretty great children, I found this conclusion dismaying, even shocking. Yet it exactly expressed my own deep-down self-evaluation as a Catholic parent. Somewhere along the way, these parents and I feel that we must have gone wrong, because although our children are good people, many of them do not go to church regularly. We feel we have fallen down on the job of raising the next generation of Catholics. I include myself among the Catholic parenting failures, because of my four daughters one goes to church sporadically, one is thinking about returning to practicing the faith, and two are emphatically not Catholic.

And yet all the parents in my decidedly nonscientific survey raised children who are kind, compassionate, generous, and mindful of others and who exhibit a strong sense of justice. “He is not overly religious,” one friend wrote of his son, “but does seemingly have a sound set of moral principles. Of course, he makes his mistakes, just like I do, but overall he is a good son.”

Despite good intentions, success in their endeavors to raise children steeped in the Catholic faith can elude many parents. “He questioned the existence of God from fourth grade on,” wrote a friend about her son, who is now in college. A single mom, she was active with him in the parish, in the choir, and in ministry to the homeless in Los Angeles. “He fought going to church and being confirmed, and

the pastor told me not to force him, which I was shocked to hear.... I know I rebelled in high school and even somewhat in college, so I don't know if he'll come around as I came around. I think he's a good person, caring and loving, so maybe church attendance is not the right measure. Who knows?"

From the East Coast came the thoughts of a friend in New York. He and his wife, long active in the Church, "believe strongly in the seamless garment." They have raised a doctor, a teacher, and a lawyer, all of whose work serves underprivileged populations. "Our children are very well adjusted, emotionally mature, and have a depth of care and spiritual presence to them," he wrote. Nevertheless, they too have drifted. "As they grew into their college years, the church simply did not respond to what they were looking for.... [It offered] nothing about the lives they were leading." Of his daughter, "who is a smart and capable and competent and professional woman...the church simply insults her for being a woman...a woman who is a leader in every right except in her faith community." He ended by saying: "The sexual abuse scandal has probably been the nail in the coffin."

An Unaffiliated Generation?

Last Christmas season, I found myself driving with several of the young adults about whom their parents worry. Tentatively explaining my journalistic interest, I asked for their thoughts about their own Catholicism and their understanding of social justice. They talked fondly about their earlier years, about serving meals at a soup kitchen, helping at a thrift store, walking in peace marches, visiting seniors in nursing homes. "We may not go to church, but we do some of the things our parents taught us," said one. "Even something silly, like donating the hotel soaps and shampoos to the homeless shelter. My mom always did that."

"I tried going to my boyfriend's Christian church," said another. "It was lame. They talked down about other

people, especially gays. That's when I knew I was Catholic or nothing. So I guess right now I'm nothing."

I just listened. I tried to imitate the mother of God: "His mother treasured all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:51). But my heart was heavy.

"I don't think we have let the Church down," added a young adult, addressing my unspoken question. "I think the Church has let us down." A busload of issues then stopped at my door: a Church that too often seems to care more about a person's sexual orientation than whether people are being bullied to death in school, a Church that seems to care more about the unborn child than about the one who is abused or hungry or in his seventh foster home placement in two years, a Church that seems to care more about the trappings of liturgy than the destruction of God's green earth, a Church that seems to care more about the gender of a priest than about a homily that changes hearts, a Church that seems to care more about protecting its clergy from lawsuits than protecting its young from predators, above all a Church that too often demands blind devotion but does not itself consistently walk the talk of the Eucharist.

As I listened, it occurred to me that by educating our children so well in social justice, we may have

unwittingly made it infinitely more difficult for them to go along with a Church they see as hypocritical or as concerned with image over substance. The more passionate our children's belief in social justice, the less tolerant they are of institutional posturing and inaction. Their lived experiences in their neighborhood parishes do not easily match up with the social teachings of Jesus.

I thought of Mary and Joseph, finding their young son in the temple, far from where he was supposed to be. Mary says: "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety" (Lk 2:48). Certainly, parents do not always understand or agree with the paths their children take. In intimate acquaintance with Mary and Joseph's "great anxiety" over a lost child, today's parents may not always trust that they can keep their children connected to the Church. As a friend gently reminded me, "We need to remember and trust that God is working in their lives, and though they seem to have abandoned him, he does not abandon them."

VALERIE SCHULTZ, of Tehachapi, California, is an occasional contributor to *America*.

Article previously published in *America*, October 17, 2011.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 21 Photo courtesy of BC Campus Ministry



Teen Retreats: A Path through the Wilderness

Julie A. Collins

The intense God-experience of a retreat may be among the most effective ways of “passing on the faith.” Seek one out for yourself regularly and encourage your children to do the same. You’ll be amazed at the miracles that happen there.

There’s a poignant story told of orphans in World War II “sleeping with bread.” Although safe within a refugee center, these children had known so much loss and deprivation that they were too terrified to sleep. How could they believe that they were safe? The solution was stunningly basic: At bedtime each child was given a piece of bread to hold. Like magic, sleep enveloped them. Nourishment would be theirs in the morning. Perhaps life might again be trusted.

Comparing the life of 21st-century adolescents with the plight of war orphans may sound farfetched, but given the spiritual landscape that surrounds contemporary teens I think it is apt. I’m also convinced that a well-designed retreat can be like “sleeping with bread” for a teenager. A good retreat can still their turmoil and offer a safe, Sabbath time where young people can listen to their own hearts, uncover the presence of God in their lives, and literally discover who they are. Retreats are also places where real friendship and Christian love can be modeled and practiced. Finally, a retreat can allow teenagers to meet the God who loved them into life and will never leave them. These three gifts—friendship with one’s self, with others, and with God—can give teens a confidence in the future that is priceless. Retreatants will not return home with a piece of bread but they will reenter their daily lives with a

similar talisman: the conviction that love is not an illusion; in fact, God loves them unconditionally and they *can* respond in kind.

All of this slowly became clear to me when I began asking young alumni about their 11th grade Kairos retreat experience. One young man described his path to self-knowledge this way:

“Before Kairos I was as deep as a puddle on a hot day. It wasn’t like I was

shallow. I was just...there was nothing that I really loved in my life. And there was nothing I really hated either. I was just rolling with the current. I don’t know. There was just a void that Kairos kind of filled. Not that it put something there, but just that it showed me where to look. And instead of seeing the empty spaces I found out who I was.”

“...I found out who I was.” This thirst for self-knowledge has been the perennial focus of youth but in the 21st century their quest is more complicated. Most of us can remember busy and even harried teen years, but for this generation the speed of life has increased exponentially. Their self-



knowledge can be minimal because there is no space, no silence, no focus. Young people multitask to a staggering degree, and peer relationships demand constant response, constant reaction. A Pew survey published in March said that texting is “the dominant daily mode of communication between teens and those with whom they communicate.” The Pew poll reports that the average teen texts 60 times a day.

Texting in itself is not, of course, the core of this problem but this data explain why most teens see their cell phones as extensions of their bodies. This could be said for adults, too, but if you were born prior to 1980 you did not grow up that way. In contrast, our teens and “tweens” are engulfed by technology and for them there is no safe place. Unlike those of us who grew up in homes with one television (only four channels!) and one landline phone, today’s adolescents can find no “kid-free zone.” Unless their cell phones are peeled out of their hands (cruel and unusual punishment) the clamor of their peers can reach them 24-7.

I am not a Luddite decrying the evils of cyberspace. Technology by itself is ethically neutral. But its excessive use can make cherishing the present moment nearly impossible—especially for people too young to see that data are valuable but not synonymous with truth. Surrounded by forms of communication that demand an instant response, young people are distracted, scattered, and easily bullied. Despite this stress, there is no easy way for teenagers to unplug because without a technological connection, they fear their peers will abandon them. Secretly—or perhaps not so secretly—many teens feel themselves to be eminently forgettable. Young adults are left, then, unsure of their worth and painfully unaware of who they are.

A good retreat experience can help an adolescent do what St. Ignatius Loyola urges in his Spiritual Exercises: work against this desolation. Within the safety of a retreat teens can name

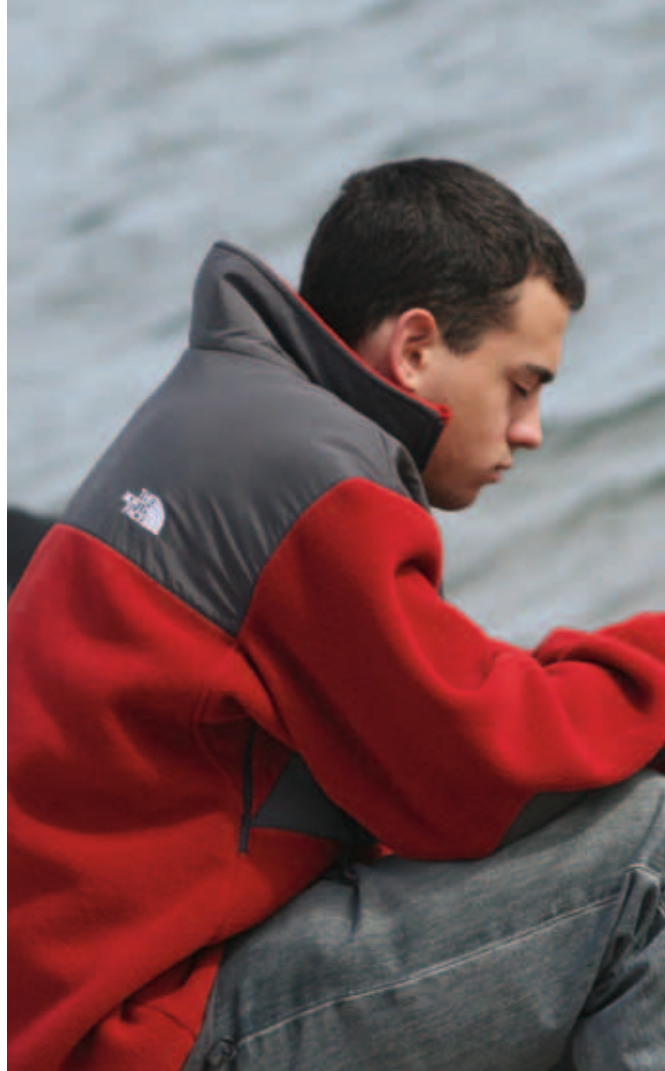
their fears and bring these terrors—real or imagined—to God. A retreat can help teenagers find the courage to listen to their own hearts. Another Georgetown Prep alumnus described the process this way:

“From a kid’s standpoint it is almost like the big thing about Kairos is a kind of bonding. [During the retreat] I kind of brought all my problems out. I found that people had love in their hearts for me. [People] who I had maybe said ‘hi’ to at the very most before, you know, and they took time to care for me and listen to me... it was amazing and I knew there had to be something else there...we were spending time together and we were talking about relationships, but it’s like, God is here. And that’s kind of like where it started being clear to me that he was present in every aspect of my life.

“This conviction that God is ‘present in every aspect of my life’ is possible when one ‘fasts’ from technology but more substantially, it grows as one develops the capacity to listen. Love, after all means ‘paying attention.’ A retreat can nurture this skill and relationships can change.” Another Prep alumnus said this:

“I remember when I came home from Kairos, it was little things. It was almost like God was saying, ‘It’s OK. Be your own person. You’re basically a grown-up now.’ Whenever I’d come home and talk to my parents or my brother, I’d never really fight with them that much. It was almost like seeing them as equals. I understand where they’re coming from more. I think they understand where I am coming from more because, you know, I don’t yell any more. Basically, I’ll sit down and talk to them.”

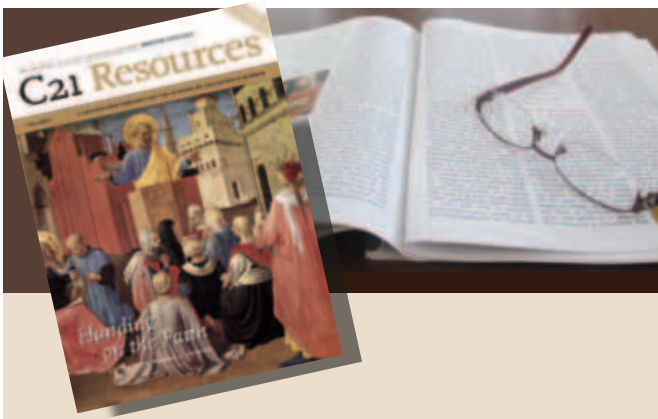
“...I sit down and talk to them.” It



may seem minimal, but if a retreat can open up a family’s communication, that’s surely a priceless grace. And if that willingness to talk is founded in the deep conviction that God wants a teen to grow up and “be your own person” then, miraculously, the three loves—love of self, of others, and of God—have fruitfully intertwined. Like the orphan “sleeping with bread” this teen might dare to believe that life can be trusted and love—*real* love—is not an illusion. In fact, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). A retreat might even let them step into silence and exclaim with the psalmist: “...you formed my inmost being; ... wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works!” (Ps. 139).

JULIE A. COLLINS is a teacher of theology at Georgetown Prep, and one of the original architects of the Kairos retreat program.

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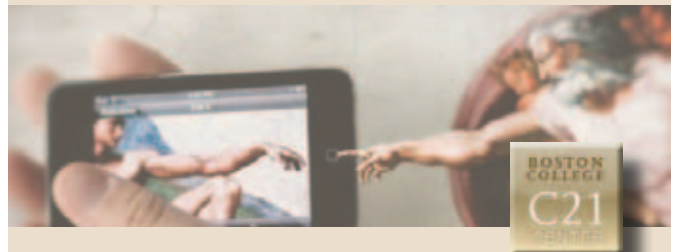
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Service Immersion: Diving Into Deeper Faith

Mike Quinn

Jesus himself said that by serving others in need, we most readily show our love for God. In fact, how well we reach out to the poor—of whatever kind of poverty—is the defining criterion by which we will be judged. No wonder, then, that a service immersion trip is a privileged place of God’s self-disclosure and a powerful medium for “handing on the faith.”

I could not have asked for a better beginning to my faith journey. My parents, parish priests and nuns, and teachers firmly formed me in the Catholic faith, making sure I went to Mass, attended Catholic school, received the sacraments, read Scripture, and learned Catholic tradition and teaching. They also provided me with the essential example of lived witness to their own faith, guiding me in both word and deed. Indeed, I owe these primary teachers much thanks for showing me the way and starting me off on the right foot. Nonetheless, it was not until I practiced what they preached through involvement in service immersion programs during young adulthood that I actually took the next step forward.

As an undergraduate at Boston College, I was blessed with the opportunity to go on spring-break service trips through Appalachia Volunteers and make weekly visits to a homeless shelter through 4-Boston. After graduation, I entered the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC), in which I lived in community with four other volunteers and served at a homeless shelter in Missoula, Montana. These service immersion experiences flooded my life with new meaning, awakening my Christian faith and quickening the growth of seeds planted by my parents, teachers, and other faith educators.

In reflecting upon the impact service immersion has had on my faith life, I feel its power most strongly in the experience of solidarity, of a heartfelt *being with* others and “walking in their shoes.” Appalachia Volunteers, 4-Boston, and the JVC forced me to go beyond myself, leave behind the comfortable and familiar, and risk relationship with people whose struggles and suffering challenged my view of myself, others, the world, and God. The “before” and “after” picture is striking: The naïve, limited, “safe” worldview of my privileged upbringing was quickly shaken and shattered by the experience of the suffering, poverty, and pain of others. What emerged was an enduring awareness of injustice in the world, empathy and companionship with

its victims, and responsibility to help make things right in whatever way I could.

In short, the experience of solidarity with the poor and suffering in service immersion programs called me to revision of thought, conversion of heart, and transformation of life. At the risk of cliché, I firmly believe that the people with whom I walked did far more for me than I ever could for them. I therefore gratefully recall the good people I met in the Appalachian communities of Toccoa, Georgia, and Cape Charles, Virginia, as well as the shelter guests at St. Francis House in Boston and the Poverello Center in Missoula. They enabled me to encounter the Risen Christ, as he promised, most powerfully in the poor and needy, and their faces continue to appear in the mirror by which I measure my choices, actions, and relationships.

Ultimately, these experiences of service immersion and accompaniment showed me the “Way” of Christ and made my faith real through living it. They precipitated a profound change of heart, a “falling in love,” to paraphrase Pedro Arrupe, S.J., that has “decided everything”—the truths I accept, the beliefs I hold dear, the work I have chosen, and, finally, my recent return to Boston College, where I continue working toward a master’s degree in pastoral ministry with a concentration in spirituality and justice. While my pilgrim journey is far from over, I would never have left the front door without the opportunity to move forward in faith through service immersion. May these service programs continue to flourish and nourish growth in faith, inspiring “men and women for others” to go forth and serve a world that needs them.

MIKE QUINN is a graduate student at Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry.



Watch Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ discuss the power of prison ministry:
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My Place at the Table

Allison Cornelisse

Likely the most effective catechetical renewal from Vatican II has been the revival of the ancient catechumenate known as the rite of Christian initiation of adults (RCIA). This ancient process of community sponsorships in faith formation has much needed wisdom for our own time.

Is it possible to consider joining the Catholic Church without having any questions, any fears, or any doubts? It wasn't possible for me. Thirteen years ago, I stood at a crossroads on my Christian journey. I had been married for two years and, upon discovering that we were expecting our first baby, my husband turned to me and said, "I think our family needs to be Catholic." This came as a rather shocking surprise, as his Catholic faith had been sitting in the back seat of our married faith life. We were married in my Protestant hometown parish and were regular members of our local Protestant church. I was as committed as I could be to my Protestant faith yet I, admittedly, felt a compelling attraction to the Catholic Church. I was attracted to the sensory nature of Catholic faith, the opportunity to kneel in church to pray, the smells of incense, the anointing with rich-smelling oils, the mystery of those beads and the physical sign of the cross that is made over the head and heart. Yet the most significant draw to Catholic faith for me

was also the one that kept me from its pews: the centrality of the Eucharist.

From the moment I first experienced the Eucharist as a young girl, this holy meal was a lifeline for my faith. The Eucharistic celebration was an opportunity for me to bond with Jesus and the Body of Christ in community in a way that was not possible otherwise. I was drawn to the Catholic practice of celebrating the Eucharist every day but confused by my exclusion from a practice that grew out of Jesus' inclusive table-fellowship.

It was late that summer when we found the Catholic parish that welcomed us with open arms. I sat down in the pew, swelled with gratitude to God for the glorious life in my belly and sank to my knees with prayers of thanksgiving. The faint smell of incense rested in my nose and the beautiful music of the liturgy was like a spiritual leavening that lifted me closer to God than I had ever felt. We collected some information about the rite of Christian initiation for

adults (RCIA) and made an appointment to meet Sr. Marie, the pastoral associate who would lead the RCIA program.

A few weeks later, my husband, who was my sponsor, and I joined six other RCIA candidates with their sponsors for our first meeting. In a welcoming, candlelit environment, we prayed together and shared stories of our faith lives and spiritual journeys up to that point. We were given an open forum to ask questions and share our concerns or fears. This process took weeks and Sr. Marie didn't rush a single moment of it. Her responses were thoughtful, honest, and based on a faith that she witnessed with conviction and love. I left our RCIA meetings, week after week, inspired and enlightened.

We were encouraged to attend Mass weekly and there was reserved seating for us at the front of the church. After the Gospel reading and the homily, we were called forward for the "rite of dismissal," which involved a blessing and a musical procession out of the church. The idea was that we would continue to be nourished by our conversation and faith sharing around the Word in a room below the church as the rest of the community celebrated the Eucharist. While I was indeed nourished by this conversation, my sense of exclusion from the table was palpable.

As the weeks passed, our RCIA meetings became more structured. We learned about grace and the seven sacraments, we talked about prayer, and we learned about the rich liturgical traditions of Catholicism. At home, my husband and I shared inspiring conversations about faith and God and the deeper meanings of life, which strengthened our relationship. As my sponsor, he often said that he was getting as much out of the process as I was. My faith life and relationship with my husband had been enriched in ways I never thought possible, but the nagging sense of exclusion from the Eucharistic table continued to bother me deeply.

One Sunday in late winter, I was kneeling at Mass with my enlarged belly pressed against the back of the pew in front of me. I prayed to God for help. The pressure of clinching the deal of becoming a Catholic family before the birth of our baby while trying to discern how to accept the closed nature of the Eucharistic table in the Catholic Church was too much. I had this horrible sense that I was being asked to renounce my Protestant faith, which was the entirety of my spiritual foundation. That afternoon, I went home and sorrowfully excused myself from the program.

A funny thing happened, though. I couldn't stop going to Mass. I needed to be there to hear the music, to experience the Word, to be in the community. The Eucharist became a time for me to pray and to watch the procession of people approach the table. People who were young and old, rich and poor both spiritually and financially, healthy and ailing all came together and I found my heart opening to this moment of communion. An important part of my RCIA catechesis was the freedom to take in all I had learned and to absorb the parts of Catholicism that nourished my own faith.

The spring and summer passed and our new baby boy was welcomed into the community. The pain of exclusion from the Eucharistic table was heightened for me when my mother and father joined our family for Mass one Sunday. Both of them are devout Protestants and I wanted them to feel fully welcome in the community of faith that had become so important to us. It was so painful for me to have to witness their exclusion from the Eucharistic table. This experience caused me to stop once again and reconsider my commitment to the Catholic faith.

In the early weeks of fall, the priest welcomed the three of us to the rectory for a visit. Despite (or maybe because of) my conflicted approach to Catholicism, we had become close with him. It was during our evening discussion that Fr. Walter gave me two ideas to consider, which led to my reenrollment in RCIA. He told me that by joining the Catholic Church, I wasn't being asked to renounce my Protestant faith but to bring with me to the Catholic Church all that I found nourishing. He also assured me that I wasn't alone in my concerns about some of the practices in the Church; even lifetime Catholics have them. The Catholic Church is a human institution as well as a divine one, which means that it can be reformed and changed as it has been for the past 2,000 years. His last words to me that evening were, "Do what is right for you, in your life, right now."

I realized that the Catholic Church was giving me much more than it was taking away and I reenrolled in RCIA. (Isn't repetition the mother of education?) I was inspired by a whole new group's questions and faith stories, and I learned alongside them while I waited patiently for the Easter Vigil. The wait was well worth it. The Easter Vigil proved to be a climactic moment on my faith journey as I was anointed with the rich-smelling oil of chrism and came into full Eucharistic communion with the Catholic Church.

I have embraced my Catholic faith in deep and heartfelt ways, but I continue to hope and pray for a more inclusive Eucharist. I hope for a day when all Christians of good will and shared faith are welcomed into the presence of the Risen Christ with this life-giving sacrament.

ALLISON CORNELISSE is married with two children. She is a master's degree candidate at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry and is working on a book about the Eucharist.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 26 Photo courtesy of BC Office of Marketing Communications, Caitlin Cunningham



Listen to Fr. Michael Himes reflect on the sacramental worldview:
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Growing in Faith Along the Way: Pilgrimage as Education in Faith

Patrick Manning

When we take a pilgrimage to a sacred place or event, we literally put our bodies on the line in expressing our faith. Apparently, our corporal (not corporate) investment is returned a hundredfold.

It is 1:00 a.m. in the Spanish city of Sarria, and everyone from the youngest child to the most senior citizen is out in the streets celebrating. The city is a whirl of lights and sounds. On one main strip, a band fills the night air with music, the crowd below twisting and stomping in rhythm. Amusement park rides spin, jostle, and rush riders to squeals of delight. Fireworks erupt high above, illuminating the faces of the surging crowd below. If you would be surprised to learn that this scene occurred in the middle of a pilgrimage, well, so was I.

The pilgrimage that led me through the exultant throng of Sarria that night is known as El Camino de Santiago de Compostela, a centuries-old trail stretching 500 miles across Spain to the final resting place of St. James the Apostle. Though the history of El Camino stretches back some 1,200 years, it is only one instance in a long tradition of pilgrimage. Soon after the death of Christ, Christians began traveling from their homes to visit the places where their Lord had walked, taught, died, and risen. Even before that, Jesus himself made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem each year with his family for the festivals of Pesah, Shuvuot, and Sukkot (see Lk 2:41), as many Jews had done since the time of Solomon. Today this tradition is as vibrant as ever with millions of people undertaking pilgrimage every year to old sites like Jerusalem and Santiago as well as new events like World Youth Day (WYD). In fact, over five million

people attended the 1995 WYD in Manila, the Philippines, making it one of the largest crowds ever assembled.

But what is it about the pilgrimage experience that has continued to attract so many people for so many years? This would seem a question worth asking for the Catholic Church, whose disaffected members now constitute the second largest religious demographic in the United States. My own experiences of pilgrimage have led me to this conclusion: All people yearn for contact with the living God, and we are most likely to experience God as a living reality when we encounter God in the midst of real life.

Ironically, many of us practice our religion in a way that betrays a separation between our faith and what we consider real life: Sunday is the day we worship God. CCD is where we send our children to learn about the faith. The rest of the week and of the world, the realm of the practical and everyday, is real life. This separation is ironic because we Christians hold as one of our central beliefs that God “made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14) and for 30 years did all the things we do in real life. It is not only an irony, however, but also a threat to the viability of our faith. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council insightfully declared, “This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (GS, no. 43).

Pilgrimage bridges this split. It blurs the line between the spiritual

and the secular and invites pilgrims to sublimate their daily activities for a holy purpose. Setting out on the Camino, I did not expect to find myself amidst carnival rides and fireworks. Nor did I anticipate sitting at bars talking to locals or throwing a Frisbee beside a pool. We tend to think of these as secular activities that we keep neatly compartmentalized apart from religious activities like attending Mass and undertaking a pilgrimage. Yet on my pilgrimage I found myself doing just these sorts of activities—in addition to attending daily Mass, praying before the remains of one of Jesus’ apostles, and engaging in soul-stirring conversations with other pilgrims.

I will never forget the people who walked the trail with me or the wisdom they shared. There was Daniel, a Spanish retiree now living in Canada, who modeled for me how to bring people together. There was Marc, a civil servant from Belgium, who shared whatever he had with whomever happened to be in his company. There was Mikél, a firefighter and recreational supermarathon runner from the Canary Islands, who taught me what it means to be a peacemaker in the face of conflict. All of the above are truisms of the Christian faith, lessons impressed upon me by catechists since my youth, but they sank in more readily there on the trail to Santiago because I learned them by living them with others. Insights into the spiritual life arose in conversation alongside practical wisdom about how to treat



blisters and where to find the best coffee. When pilgrims offered words of wisdom about faith matters, it was not as if they were pulling something down from dusty shelves to be examined for a time and then put away again. Their faith was living and vibrant, evident in the words they spoke and the actions they performed along the way.

I was surprised that my pilgrimage should lead me through a ruckus, city-wide fiesta, but I shouldn't have been. Likewise, we shouldn't be surprised when faith breaks into our daily lives. If we are lucky, each of us might be able to call to mind someone—a parent, a teacher, a friend—who shared the faith with us in this way. They did not ask us to check our lives at the door or speak of the faith as something separate from the world of everyday living. Rather, they spoke a lived wisdom, one that shone forth in that person's every smile and kind gesture, one that

we began to believe might take hold of our own life and transform it into something far greater. This sharing in and transmission of a Christoform way of life is what it means to hand on the faith in its fullness.

What makes for a real pilgrimage? What makes for a real education in faith? The answer to these two questions is essentially the same. Neither means leaving life behind in pursuit of God. Quite to the contrary, our Christian faith tells us that God has come and continues to come to us precisely in the world of our daily lives. Consequently, handing on the faith, like undertaking a pilgrimage, necessarily involves integrating faith and life. Only such an integrated life can be truly reckoned “life to the full.” Only then can we rightly call ourselves disciples of the One who is Life himself.

PATRICK MANNING is a second year doctoral student in theology and education at Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry.

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Instilling Faith: The Power of Religious Symbols

Nancy Pineda-Madrid



From my earliest childhood memories, I recall my parents and our parish creating a world that deeply fed my active imagination as well as my religious inclination. I was born and spent my early childhood years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and my later childhood and adolescent years in El Paso, Texas. Theological dramas, devotional reminders, and ritual practices all contributed to my formation as a Mexican-American Catholic. Indeed, they may have outweighed my formal instruction in the faith. These practices introduced me to God's active presence in my life and to the many ways in which God's Spirit unceasingly feeds my soul.

Theological Dramas

Each year our parish marked the Advent season with the reenactment of two dramas, one in celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the other entitled *La Pastorela* or *Los Pastores* (a shepherd's play). Both took place in our parish church, contributing color, music, story, and symbolism to our faith journey. The Eucharistic liturgy on December 12,

Guadalupe's feast day, typically began with a procession led by colorfully dressed Native Americans dancers performing the traditional *Matachines* dance, a sacred dance. In their performance, they used religious symbolism to depict the struggle of good versus evil with good ultimately prevailing. The liturgy of the word included a dramatic presentation of Guadalupe's appearance to Juan Diego. For the offertory, I along with other children present would process up the center aisle to offer roses, red or pink, to Guadalupe. We did so while the choir sang "*Las Mañanitas*," a traditional song that speaks of daybreak, of awakening, of the day of our birth. This song carries clear allusions to baptism. Family and friends traditionally sing this song at dawn to a loved one on their birthday. It is also sung to mothers on Mother's Day and sung to Guadalupe to honor her.

Parishioners performed *La Pastorela* in our church sometime after Guadalupe's feast day and before Christmas. It dramatizes the story of shepherds being enticed by both good, in the form of the Archangel Michael, and by evil, in the form of the devil, Lucifer. The shepherds struggle

with whether or not they will acknowledge the baby Jesus and receive him as the Christ into their hearts. All the performers were parishioners from a local parish whose ministry it was to travel to different parish communities, like ours, and to share this theological drama.

While Guadalupe and *La Pastorela* were performed in the context of our parish, during Advent my mother organized an enactment of *Las Posadas* in our neighborhood. For *Las Posadas* we sang a song by the same name and walked through our neighborhood knocking on the doors of a couple of our neighbors' homes. We asked for lodging, reenacting Mary and Joseph's journey as they searched for a place to stay in Bethlehem when Mary was about to give birth to Jesus. In the first two homes we are turned away and in the third home we are invited in to share a meal and to celebrate Jesus' birth and his place in our lives. In addition to these dramas, many parish communities in the Southwest perform the passion of Jesus Christ during Holy Week. Many times I have taken part in this theological drama as well.

During my early years and up to the present time these dramas stirred my imagination such that the Christian stories became real and my faith meaningful. In a profound way, all of us present at one of these dramas participated in the drama (we were not merely spectators). The dramas invited us children and adults to identify our lives with the lives of the characters and to experience our own uniqueness and giftedness as existing fundamentally in relation to God. This dynamic comes about, first of all, because all present were asked to invest themselves, cognitively, emotionally, physically, imaginatively, and even kinesthetically in the Christian story. These Christian stories became my story in a highly personal way. As a child and now as an adult these dramas invited me to become sensitized to time and space in a fashion different from my ordinary awareness. Through them I became aware of the sacred dimension of time and aware that the drama of my life at its depths is a sacred drama.

Devotional Reminders

My childhood home and neighborhood had many visual reminders of my faith that steadily and quietly had an impact. For example, my mother devoted one wall in our home to various visual interpretations of Guadalupe, and in local businesses store owners prominently displayed Guadalupe's image or one of Jesus. Community member often painted representations of Guadalupe and/or Jesus in murals on the outside walls of businesses in various neighborhoods in our city. We always had a nativity set on display in our home during the Advent and Christmas seasons and these served to reinforce the sacred drama as integral to our lives.

In our home my parents created a home altar with our family Bible laid open, along with candles, prayer cards, and pictures of loved ones who had already gone home to God. To see sacred images of saints, images of deceased

family members, along with the Word of God provided an ongoing visual connection between our lives and those of the saints. Our home altar served as a constant reminder that we too are called to a life of holiness.

My father had the habit of blessing himself with the sign of the cross when we traveled and passed by a Catholic church or a cross memorial by the side of the road. He did not explain it but simply did it. His gesture provided me with a visual reminder of God's constant presence and our dependency on God for all that we have.

Ritual Practices

My family practiced a number of rituals by which I deeply absorbed my Catholic faith. Throughout their lives my grandparents always said a prayer over each one of us and blessed us when we left them after a visit. My grandparents' blessing was particularly poignant when we knew we would not see them again for a long time—for example, the blessing they gave me when I left home for college. The blessing would end with the sign of the cross. My parents have continued this tradition with my generation, with their grandchildren, and now with great-grandchildren.

Even the food we ate linked our religious discipline with our ethnic background. Every Friday during Lent we ate cheese enchiladas stacked like pancakes with a fried egg on top, as is the custom in the state of New Mexico. As I grew older my enchiladas had more chili on them, a sign of my growing to maturity and being able to handle hotter chili. To this day I associate enchiladas with Lenten practice.

Good Friday in El Paso meant a hike led by our pastor two and one-half miles up the somewhat steep Cristo Rey (Christ the King) mountain. Fourteen stations of the cross marked the intervals of our journey. We stopped and prayed at each. As a result of this practice I internalized more deeply the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. I had time along the way to reflect on the passion and what it meant for me.

* * *

These three arenas of religious experiences unleashed my imagination, my feelings, and my sense of wonder. They formed my identity as a Catholic Christian. They taught me that my faith involved my whole self—my intellect, my body, my emotions, my relationships, my actions, and my spirit. Moreover, I began to see the ways God's spirit calls me and all of us to transform the world so that it is more in line with what God wills. To experience the Catholic Christian drama as the depth dimension of human experience instilled in me a faith with tenacious roots and an ability to see God's hand in all of life.

NANCY PINEDA-MADRID is an associate professor in theology and Latino/a studie, in Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry.

PHOTO CREDIT: page 30 Paty Miles, Mexican Christmas Traditions—*Las Posadas* and *La Pastorelas* in Barra de Navidad - Barrio 2011



How One Jewish Family Hands on Its Faith

Rabbi Ruth Langer

Christians have so much to learn from our Jewish brothers and sisters about handing on the faith through the rituals and practices of family life. In this regard, we may have left too much behind when we parted ways with our parent community of faith—the Jews.

I grew up in a nuclear family that strongly identified with Reform Judaism but that was, in day-to-day life, very secular and mostly committed to the life of the mind in a secular sense, to the arts and to liberal politics. This description, though, did not extend to my maternal grandfather, who was an extraordinarily dedicated Reform Jew. He attended every service, and

when I was a child, was in the midst of 19 consecutive years as president of our Temple. This was followed by years on the ritual committee until he physically could not attend the meetings anymore. This he combined with a life-long involvement with the national institutions of the Reform movement; in his eighties as an honorary trustee he still religiously

attended meetings of the board of governors of Hebrew Union College when I was a student there. Family Jewish life circled around him, with holiday meals at my grandparents' house with extended family. I received a typical religious education for this community of a few hours of classes on Sunday mornings during the school year. This was, for me, a source of

utter frustration, with incompetent teachers, minimal content, and little reinforcement at home.

This frustration blossomed into full-fledged rebellion in college, a rebellion that was really an emerging independent passion. I majored in Jewish studies, learned Hebrew, and led the Jewish student community for three years. I began to insist on going to Sabbath services when I came home. This led to five years of rabbinic school, which my parents were gracious enough to fund in spite of their bemusement. At least my career path was intellectually honest. The day after ordination, I married a man from a traditionally observant family, and all of a sudden, my parents had to deal with a daughter who would not eat whatever they served (a significant contradiction of my mother's values) nor travel on the Sabbath—we keep kosher and observe the Sabbath strictly in our home today. Because my husband worked in Cincinnati, instead of interviewing for a congregational position after ordination, I began my doctoral studies immediately. “Rabbi,” after all, means “teacher” first and foremost, and this would be the expression of my rabbinate.

Our challenge as young parents was to determine how we would try to shape our children's Judaism. We wanted them to have wonderful relationships not only with their paternal grandparents, whose Jewish choices we had made our own, but also with their maternal grandparents and extended family, whose values were (and are) quite different. We felt compelled to find a way to nurture this relationship as a fulfillment of the commandment “to honor your father and mother,” but also as a statement of the value of *klal yisrael* (the fundamental unity of the entire Jewish people, whatever their differences). We also wanted our children to have as sophisticated a Jewish education as possible while still equipping them to participate in the greater world. As two professors of Jewish studies, we did this while offering to our children

a home in which Judaism, ritually and intellectually, is at the center of almost everything we do.

We tried to find a balance between these various demands, equipping the children to make their own decisions as adults. From kindergarten on, we sent them to an Orthodox Jewish school, one which devotes 50 percent of its curricular time to Jewish subjects and the other half to secular subjects. We chose this school simply because it offered the strongest Jewish education of those available at the time while still preparing its students for university and life in the greater world. In this way, they early learned Jewish values, Hebrew, and to read the library of Jewish texts. This was cemented and deepened for both by a gap year after high school spent in Israel, immersed in the world of a yeshiva, spending many hours of the day learning Talmud and other texts of traditional Jewish learning.

On all Sabbaths and other holy days, from a young age, they participated in both home rituals and came with us to synagogue. In synagogue, we provided them with special quiet toys until they reached the age when they could participate in the prayers. For several years, Barbies and beanie babies decorated empty seats! At home, the children learned young to anticipate and participate in the rituals, dancing during table songs they could not yet sing, eyes shining bright at the magic of the multiwicked candle used to usher out the Sabbath. Evenings and afternoons were times for family board games, when the television and computers were turned off. Our Passover seder has also changed over the years as the children have grown and their participation has become more sophisticated, but from very young ages, both refused to go to bed before it concluded in the wee hours.

The other side of the Jewish balance was perhaps more complex to achieve, as the Orthodox Jewish community easily trends to insularity. One major decision was to send the children to a nondenominational yet still Jewishly

observant summer camp. This allowed the children to create deep friendships with peers from other parts of the Jewish world and to learn how to explain their own practices to them. Their last summer as campers was spent touring Israel together, and there the entire group needed to negotiate a religious *modus vivendi* that would allow them to remain a cohesive whole.

College opened up entirely new vistas, both intellectually and socially. Both children attended colleges with observant Jewish communities large enough that their own needs would be met, but small enough that the communities required constant thoughtful nurturing. This has propelled both into leadership roles. However, both are confident enough in their Jewishness to make friends outside of the Jewish community as well. Our daughter, particularly, has thrown herself into university-wide social justice projects, Jewish-Muslim, and Jewish-Christian dialogue groups. Neither majored in Jewish studies, although both have taken some courses.

Of course, the verdict is not yet fully delivered, but at the moment it looks promising. At 24 and working as a computer software engineer and 20, still an undergraduate, both have made personal commitments to their Judaism, both in their decisions to participate actively in religious communities, to continue to observe the Sabbath and holy days, and to eat kosher food. For my daughter, this extends into regular and extensive commitments to study Jewish texts above and beyond her academic work. It looks like they have both become the kinds of Jews we had hoped they would be: learned, spiritually engaged, yet part of the wider world as well.

RABBI RUTH LANGER is a professor of Jewish studies in the theology department of Boston College.

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The Window Effect: Music Ministry in Evangelization and Catechesis

Cheryl Finn

My husband Chals and I had a miscarriage between our third and fourth children. I remember little about the actual day, but I can remember clearly the choir singing David Haas's song "You Are Mine" that Sunday at communion. I sobbed through most of the song, hearing God's words of loving kindness: "I will come to you...I claim you as my choice...Do not be afraid, I am with you." We sing and play instruments primarily to worship God, and, to our great surprise and delight, we find that God is singing for us as well.

Stroll with me for a moment to the days just slightly after Vatican II. When I think back to those years, I remember the songs from the Novena to St. Francis ("Oh, Father St. Francis, we kneel at thy feet, while blessings and favors we beg and entreat..."), "Lift High the Cross," and "For All the Saints." Now a bit further along the timeline: "They'll Know We Are Christians," "Here We Are," and "The Misa Bosa Nova." Do you remember these? Then came: "Hosea," "Here I Am, Lord," and "Eagles' Wings."

What songs helped shape your faith and helped you to hand it on to your children? Maybe they were classics like "O Salutaris Hostia" or the Lenten "Were You There?" Perhaps they were standards like "Amazing Grace," "The Peace Prayer of St. Francis," or "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today!"

There are memories and feelings associated with each of these songs—a time, a season, an age, a place, an event. I saw you walking back with me, smiling, humming a few bars... or holding back a tear. Music and memory go hand in hand. You may not remember much about your senior prom dinner, but I'll bet you can remember the theme song. You may not remember what your flowers looked like from your wedding, but I'm sure you remember the song you first danced to. Not only do you remember the music, but you remember the feelings associated with it and the community that gathered around it. Words set to music are simply more memorable than words alone for most of us much of the time. This is the faith education power of what we sing.

I've had the wonderful privilege of traveling for both ministry and pleasure. Whether on the continent of Africa, in nations of the Caribbean, in Europe, or in Central and North America, I've seen that music is part of the human experience universally. In both first world cities and third world villages, music and song are part of what it means to be human. Words typically evoke thoughts, but music immediately evokes *feelings* and makes us part of something larger than ourselves. Music, in this way, not only allows us to share the faith, but allows us to pass faith along—like fire spreading in the brush—in ways that words alone could never do.

Recognizing music ministry as an essential component of evangelization and catechesis is simply to understand the human condition. We aim to educate the whole person and to form the whole community as disciples of the Lord Jesus, who was not only fully divine but fully human. Since "he was like us in all things but sin" (cf. Heb. 4:15), Jesus, we can be sure, must have enjoyed music and been shaped by

its formative influence. Thus, on the night before he died, after sharing the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus sang with them a hymn before going to the Mount of Olives (Matt 26:30).

From the music minister's viewpoint, music in worship is primarily about offering the gifts that have been given back to the giver. As St. Augustine wisely noted, "When we sing, we pray twice." However, by God's grace, there is more. Leading song allows us to be transparent in prayer so that others can "see right through us" to the God to whom we offer our praise. I call this the "window effect." We become a clear window that permits others to "see" into the heart of God. That transparency, so humbling, so incredibly revealing, cannot help but draw in the listener into its expression of faith. There is a difficulty though. This effect can happen only if music ministers fulfill their calling by witnessing to their faith through music. They must pray and lead others in prayer, and not simply perform. It is "singing with" people and enabling them to sing their faith that supports the faith formation of individuals and communities.

At times it can be easy to confuse our role as music ministers. There have been times when I've felt like a Catholic juke box. Put in your token, and out spits an entrance song, a psalm, an alleluia, etc. I can play "Here I Am, Lord," "Eagles' Wings," or "How Great Thou Art" without breaking a sweat. But those aren't the times that speak to my heart—and I would wager that they speak to few other hearts either. Alternatively, there are times we want people to experience the deeper presence of the Lord so very much that we overdo it. For example, we want the young people from the confirmation class who sit cross-armed, eye-rolling, gum-chewing, or texting between their knees so that no one notices to experience music as prayer. But if it is not well received, we may begin to try to entertain them, to get them to hit the "Like" button as Facebook would have us do. Instead, we should sing

from the heart, genuinely, which is sure to nurture their faith.

Looking deeper, we find that our faith has to be shared, not shoved. It takes shoulder-to-shoulder time with these young adults to build relationships. Once that happens, they begin to see that who we are in the sanctuary is who we are on the street. They recognize the integrity of our songful prayer and begin to see past us, in joint attention with us on the Lord whom we worship. Until the relationship with the Lord exists, forcing worship on those in faith formation is similar to the concept of "forced fun"—sort of an oxymoron. Until the person recognizes to whom they are praying, there will never be a point. But communities of integrity, rooted in caring relationships, manifest the Lord's presence by making each of us a window onto the divine. Song can become God's graced vehicle of encounter. Faith sung well nurtures the faith of the whole community.

Some of the most prayerful musical moments I have experienced have been spent among young adults with arms upraised, eyes closed, and in complete abandonment to the worship of Jesus. Having joined in the prayer, the youths, too, become windows for their families and friends. Song, then, is one way in which we do as the Lord taught: "Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:16). Worship, evangelization, and catechesis, it turns out, are all dimensions and possibilities of music ministry. No wonder there is a book of songs in the Bible in which God invites us to sing as well: "Sing to the Lord a new song... announce his salvation day after day" (Ps. 96:1-2). If I am to continue announcing God's salvation and thus, handing on the faith, then, in the words of a popular spiritual, how can I keep from singing?

CHERYL FINN worked in music ministry for over 40 years and currently directs the internationally oriented "4U Worship Team."

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Touchstones for Preaching

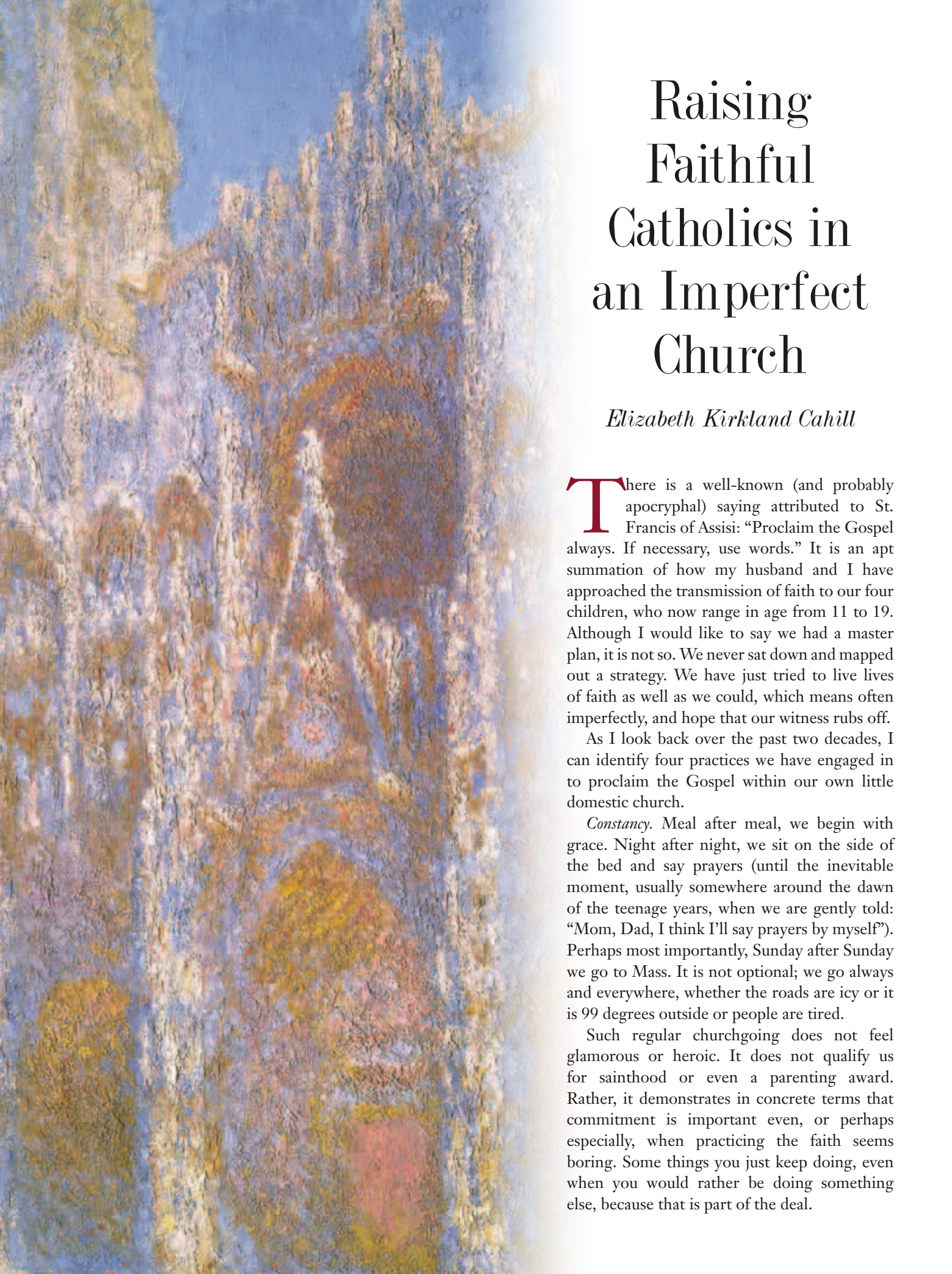
A free online video resource designed to help ordained and lay preachers craft engaging homilies and preach effectively. The Touchstones review shaping a homily and cultivating habits needed to compose weekly homilies, as well as preaching on special occasions (e.g., weddings and funerals), to special audiences (e.g., children), and on special topics (e.g., justice).

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Raising Faithful Catholics in an Imperfect Church

Elizabeth Kirkland Cahill

There is a well-known (and probably apocryphal) saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “Proclaim the Gospel always. If necessary, use words.” It is an apt summation of how my husband and I have approached the transmission of faith to our four children, who now range in age from 11 to 19. Although I would like to say we had a master plan, it is not so. We never sat down and mapped out a strategy. We have just tried to live lives of faith as well as we could, which means often imperfectly, and hope that our witness rubs off.

As I look back over the past two decades, I can identify four practices we have engaged in to proclaim the Gospel within our own little domestic church.

Constancy. Meal after meal, we begin with grace. Night after night, we sit on the side of the bed and say prayers (until the inevitable moment, usually somewhere around the dawn of the teenage years, when we are gently told: “Mom, Dad, I think I’ll say prayers by myself”). Perhaps most importantly, Sunday after Sunday we go to Mass. It is not optional; we go always and everywhere, whether the roads are icy or it is 99 degrees outside or people are tired.

Such regular churchgoing does not feel glamorous or heroic. It does not qualify us for sainthood or even a parenting award. Rather, it demonstrates in concrete terms that commitment is important even, or perhaps especially, when practicing the faith seems boring. Some things you just keep doing, even when you would rather be doing something else, because that is part of the deal.

Involvement. This entails deepening the commitment and investing time and energy. In our current parish, I have given a series of talks on Scripture and with my husband have lent support to both the music program and various building projects.

Perhaps most important, for several years (until we moved away) I took communion each Sunday to a group of older Catholics in a nearby assisted-living facility. My children almost always accompanied me. They prayed with us, stood by quietly while I distributed communion, then handed out bulletins and chatted with the small, predominantly female congregation. We visited the rooms of those who could not make it downstairs for the group communion service. The kids said hello to Camilla, who wept easily and often; happily visited Frances, who was liberal with the candy; and enjoyed seeing kind Mildred, who loved to read. They saw tired, old eyes light up when they entered the room on a Sunday morning. And they witnessed the profound gratitude of these older Catholics both for the human connection with us and for the gift of Christ in communion.

Intellectual engagement. Although embarrassing to admit, as a one-time Episcopalian who converted to Catholicism in her mid-thirties, I was once something of an intellectual-religious snob, assuming that Catholics did not think for themselves but just mindlessly obeyed whatever Rome said. Then I became friends with a few Jesuits and quickly learned otherwise.

Since that time, and throughout my continuing spiritual journey, I have been irresistibly drawn toward engagement with ecclesiological, theological, and spiritual questions. My kids watched me pursue deeper understanding of these during the four years I recently spent earning a master's degree at the Yale Divinity School. They know that I think hard about issues of Church and faith. They expect that I will query them over Sunday lunch about the Gospel reading or mention a prayer that especially struck me. And

while they may roll their eyes when I launch another screed about the role of the laity, I hope they are getting the subliminal message that such questions matter.

Honesty. As a corollary to intellectual engagement, I share my views on matters ranging from liturgy to the role of women. I have been known to explain, expand upon, or take issue with statements made in a homily. Although I try to offer a balanced view, I will also be forthright about how important I think it is for priests and bishops, as well as the rest of us, to follow the Gospel.

I love the Catholic faith. When I was confirmed as a Catholic, I felt I was joining in on a great starry conversation that started in the early Church and has been carried on by the likes of Augustine, Teresa of Ávila, and Thomas Merton. But I do not always love the actions of the institutional Church. I do not pretend to my kids that I agree with the Church's continued opposition to women's ordination or that I am not angry about the continued obfuscation surrounding the sexual abuse scandal. I want them to engage with these issues, not just shrug their shoulders and drift away.

My Children's Church

So far, my children have not only toed the line but appear to be Christ's own. My two older children have kept up regular Mass attendance even while going to an Episcopal boarding school. The younger two have faithfully gone to Mass with us, received the age-appropriate sacraments, and tucked in their shirts.

But my oldest child is off to college this fall, and I am newly aware of the contingency built into the raising of children. Like all parents, I do not know which of my efforts will actually pay off, how many of my lessons will stick, whether my kids will resent me for the tucked-in shirts, or thank me for instilling habits of faithfulness. How can we predict which aspects of their upbringing our children will remember, which they will jettison?

I suspect that more than one of them will end up at some point in a spiritual wilderness as they go through the process of making their faith their own. I pray that they will find their way back. After all, I did my time in the desert in my early twenties, and it ultimately led me to Catholicism. So I can be patient if they wander.

My concern as the century wears on is that the Church may be losing its identity as the promised land. Its own lack of internal justice (regarding the treatment of women, among other things), its disproportionate focus on what a late friend of mine called "pelvic orthodoxy," and the encroaching clericalism that can strain relationships between pulpit and pew are among the factors that may render the Church either irrelevant or repellent to my children's generation. Is the great beacon still going to be shining if my kids need to be led back home from the wilderness? I hope so, I pray so. I will do what I can to help.

I remember talking to an Episcopal priest who was a friend and mentor to me during my desert period, afflicted with true spiritual anomie. I finally mustered up the courage to confess to him that I was not sure God existed. This wise fellow replied with a smile, "That's OK; he doesn't mind." With this gentle reply he conveyed to me that doubt was permissible while also reassuring me that it lacked any actual external destructive power. My struggling faith did not mean that God was dead. I think about that comment now as I watch what is happening in the Church and try to imagine what the Church of my children's future will look like. I trust that the Holy Spirit, operating at a level far above my own worries, is at work in ways that transcend human thought.

ELIZABETH KIRKLAND CAHILL is coauthor of *Shakespeare Alive!* and a 2010 graduate of the Yale Divinity School.

Previously published in the February 27, 2012, *America*.

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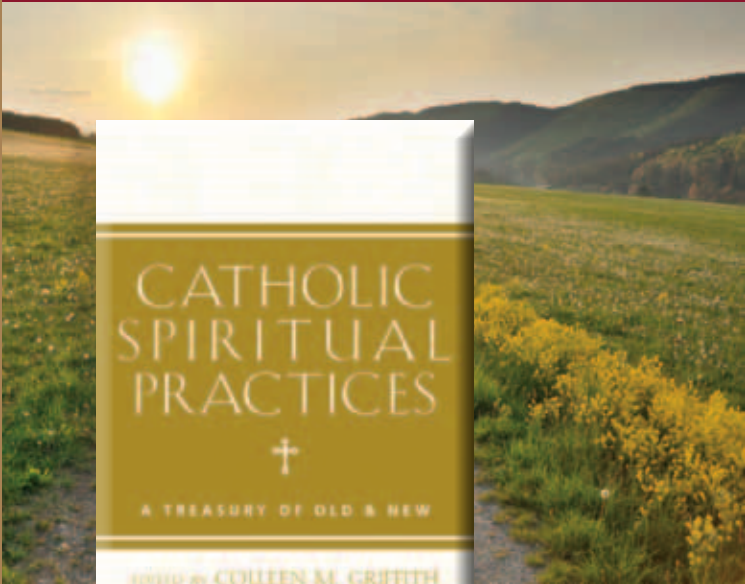


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