

The Franciscan Catechist

Keeping the Mind and Heart
Connected



Ron Pihokker, sfo

To begin...

- Why did you choose this workshop?
- What do you hope to learn?
- Do you have a “burning question” to which you need an answer before we conclude this session?

What is Evangelization?

- EV--ANGELIZ--ATION

EV = good

ANGELIZ = messenger

ATION = action

- a process leading to conversion:

“the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near: repent, and believe in the Good News” (Mark 1:15).

- Pope Paul VI:

“the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people...” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 18)

National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization-- NCCB

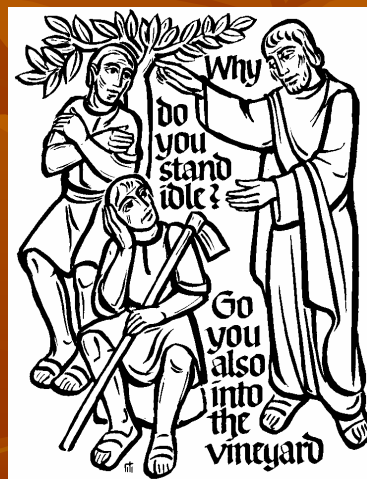
“...evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself ...”

**The “Magna Carta” of
Evangelization**
Evangelii Nuntiandi
On Evangelization in the Modern
World
Pope Paul VI
December 8, 1975

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: “Now I am making the whole of creation new.”

What Jesus says to us about Evangelization

[Mat 28:19] Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."



Three-fold Commission

- make disciples
- baptize them
- teach them

The Witness of Life

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”
(Evangeliū Nuntiandi, 41.)

General Church Documents relative to Catechesis

- Dei Verbum, Ad Gentes, Christus Dominus, Gravisimum Educationis, Apostolicam Actuositatem
- Canon Law
- Catechesi Tradendae, Redemptoris Missio
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- General Directory for Catechesis
- National Directory for Catechesis

Catechesis

- An essential “moment” in the process of evangelization
 - “Catechesis is one of these moments—a very remarkable one—” in which conversion to Jesus is formalized and provides the basis for adhering to him.
 - An apprenticeship in the whole of Christian life—to discipleship
 - Continuing catechesis—to accompany the individual on the journey to holiness and to mature the whole Christian community in love of God, the community and openness to mission.

Three aspects of human growth



Is Christianity primarily

⌘ a body of knowledge?

⌘ or a way of life?

Catechumenate Inspiration for all Catechesis

- Responsibility of the entire community
- Centered on the paschal mystery of Christ's death & resurrection
- Connected to rites, symbols, the Word of God and the liturgy

General Directory for Catechesis § 91

We face three situations

- Those who have never heard of Christ:
Mission "*ad gentes*" (to the peoples)
- The faithful in well established Christian communities
- "Entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith" requiring a "new evangelization"

General Directory for Catechesis § 58-59

The Six Tasks of Catechesis

- Promoting Knowledge of the Faith
- Liturgical Education
- Moral Formation
- Teaching to Pray
- Education for Community Life
- Missionary Initiation

The Six Tasks of Catechesis

The bishops state that “all efforts in evangelization and catechesis should incorporate these tasks”(NDC no. 20) In this way, we pay attention to several different dimensions of faith, with the *ultimate goal of forming disciples of Jesus.* (emphasis added)

Spirituality of Catechetical Ministry

- The importance of formation:
 - “All of these tasks (of catechesis) are born of the conviction that the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel....the adequate formation of catechists cannot be overlooked...” GDC 234
 - The purpose of formation—to make the catechist capable of communicating: “The summit and center of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message.” GCD (1971) 111.
 - Christocentric—emphasizing communion with Jesus Christ—touching directly upon the identity of the catechist

Francis of Assisi as catechist

- Didn't Francis shun knowledge?
- Didn't he consider himself ignorant and unlettered?
- What about the early Franciscans? St. Clare? St. Anthony? St. Bonaventure?
- John Duns Scotus, Alexander of Hales, Roger Bacon?



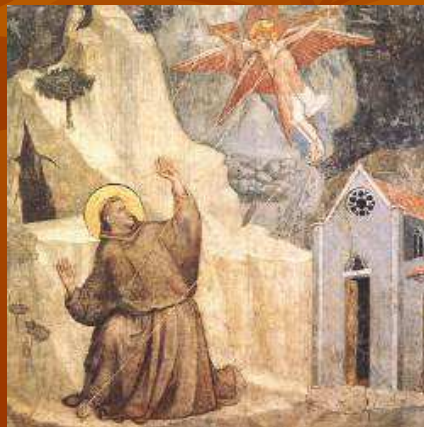
The Trap!

- Disconnecting the Mind from the Heart!



Christian Vision of Faith Study as a means of Spiritual Growth

- A knowledge-hungry mind
--Passionate for TRUTH
- Not curiositas but studiositas—to know and be known
- A Spirit-thirsty heart
 - A devotion to learning out of love for God, our calling, the community, and love for what is known.



The Franciscan Catechist

- Those who minister the Word of God must:
 - First secretly draw in by prayer
 - What he later pours out in sacred preaching/teaching



The Franciscan Catechist



- Life-giving and profound words
- Parables-stories of power
- Rich tradition
- Stories contain dynamic life energy

What's your excuse? What's your story?



We all get heavier as we get older because there's a lot more information in our heads. So I'm not fat, I'm just really intelligent and my head couldn't hold any more so it started filling up the rest of me!

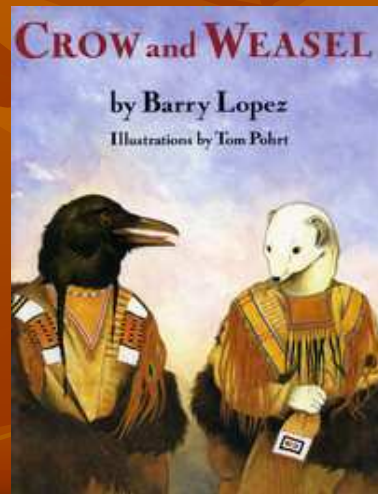
That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

*Brother Roger of Taizé in **Brother Roger of Taizé: Essential Writings** selected by Marcello Fidanzi*

Trust in God is not conveyed by means of arguments which want to persuade at all costs and so end up causing anxiety, and even fear. It is first of all in the heart, in the depths of our being, that a Gospel call is received.

Stories are Important

- *Crow and Weasel*
- Author
Barry Lopez
- Illustrator
Tom Pohrt



Crow and Weasel

Barry Lopez, Ill. Tom Pohrt

The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. ...Sometimes a person needs a story more than they need food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves. ...Never forget these obligations.

Unleashing the Power of the Word

- Not only was the Word made flesh over two thousand years ago,
it still is among us.
- Emmanuel is not confined to Advent.
- Beginning with our creation stories through all the pages of the Scriptures, we discover who this God is.

How have you experienced God's word in your life? Like a...

- Life-giving rain for (y)our dry land
- Lamp for my feet
- Light to my path
- Fertile seed that depends on rich soil
- Flaming fire
- Hammer shattering rocks
- Two-edged sword, but only sharper

Always ask...

- What does the story say about the nature of God's attitude toward humanity?
- What does the story say about the condition of human relationships with God and one another?
- What hints does the story give about the way in which one ought to go/act?

W.J.A. Power, *Once Upon a Time*

Promises of Jesus

I am with you always Matt 28:20

- I will be for you the Best Wine of all.
- I will still the storm, restore you to tranquility.
- I will honor you by coming to your house to eat.
- I will empower you to stand up straight again.
- I will lay my body down between your enemies and you.
- I have forgiven you ahead of time.
- I AM the Resurrection and the Life.

That was Then, This is Now:

- Scripture is as relevant today as it was when it was written.
- These stories contain universal truths that keep appearing in our own lives.
- These stories are our stories and they are happening right now.
- Preach the Gospel at all times...

NDC, no. 18, p. 54

- Catechesis is
 - Nourished when the Word of God is more deeply understood
 - Enlivened in the celebration of the Liturgy.
 - Enriched when the Word of God shines forth in the life of the Church, especially
 - In the lives of the saints
 - In the Christian witness of the faithful

The Power of Story

“...the shortest distance
between a human
being and the Truth
is a story”

--the shortest distance
between the Gospel
and people's lives is
a story

