

Lifelong Faith

the theory and practice of lifelong faith formation

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Cover Art: "Jesus the Teacher" by Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS

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About the Artist: Brother Mickey O'Neill McGrath, OSFS is an artist, writer, and speaker who loves to explore the relationship between art and faith. Mickey's books include *Women of Mercy* (with Kathy Coffey) published by Orbis Press; *Blessed Art Thou* and *At the Name of Jesus* (both with Richard Fragomeni) published by World Library Publications; and *Jesus A to Z*, a book for children. His newest book is *This Little Light: Lessons in Living from Sister Thea Bowman* (Orbis Books). His web site is: www.beestill.org.



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Welcome to the Fall 2008 issue of **Lifelong Faith**. Our focus in this issue is on "Teaching in the Community Faith."

Our lead article, "The Art of Jesus the Teacher" is by **John Shea**, theologian and storyteller, who helps us discover Jesus' teaching style through an in-depth reflection on how he works with the lawyer in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the rich man, and Peter at the Last Supper.

Stephanie Pace Marshall, the founder of the nationally recognized Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, draws on research and insights on the new frontier of education and learning in her essay "A Decidedly Different Mind."

Kathleen Talvacchia and **Su Yon Pak**, authors and university teachers, address the critically important topic of culture and teaching in their essay, "Attentive Teaching in Diverse Communities and Lifelong Faith Formation." They combine their analysis and insights with practice directions for teaching in diverse communities.

Edmund Gordon, an adult religious educator, presents a view of Catholic adult faith formation that can apply to all Christian churches. Blending theory with practical strategies, Ed explores four elements of adult faith formation: the adult learner, the content, the method, and the teacher.

Mary Hess, professor at Luther Seminary and media expert, offers insights and analysis in her article "Living Faith in a Media World." Mary challenges us to develop an adaptive response to the challenges of the media culture, and provides directions for analysis and action.

As always the journal is filled with practical ideas and strategies for taking the insights of our authors and putting them into action in your church.

I hope you will find this issue helpful. If you want additional copies for your staff or for a course or workshop, just contact me by phone at 203-729-2953 or by e-mail at jroberto@lifelongfaith.com

John Roberto, Editor

Be sure to visit **LifelongFaith.com** to view the new Christian Practices resources. Go to www.lifelongfaith.com.

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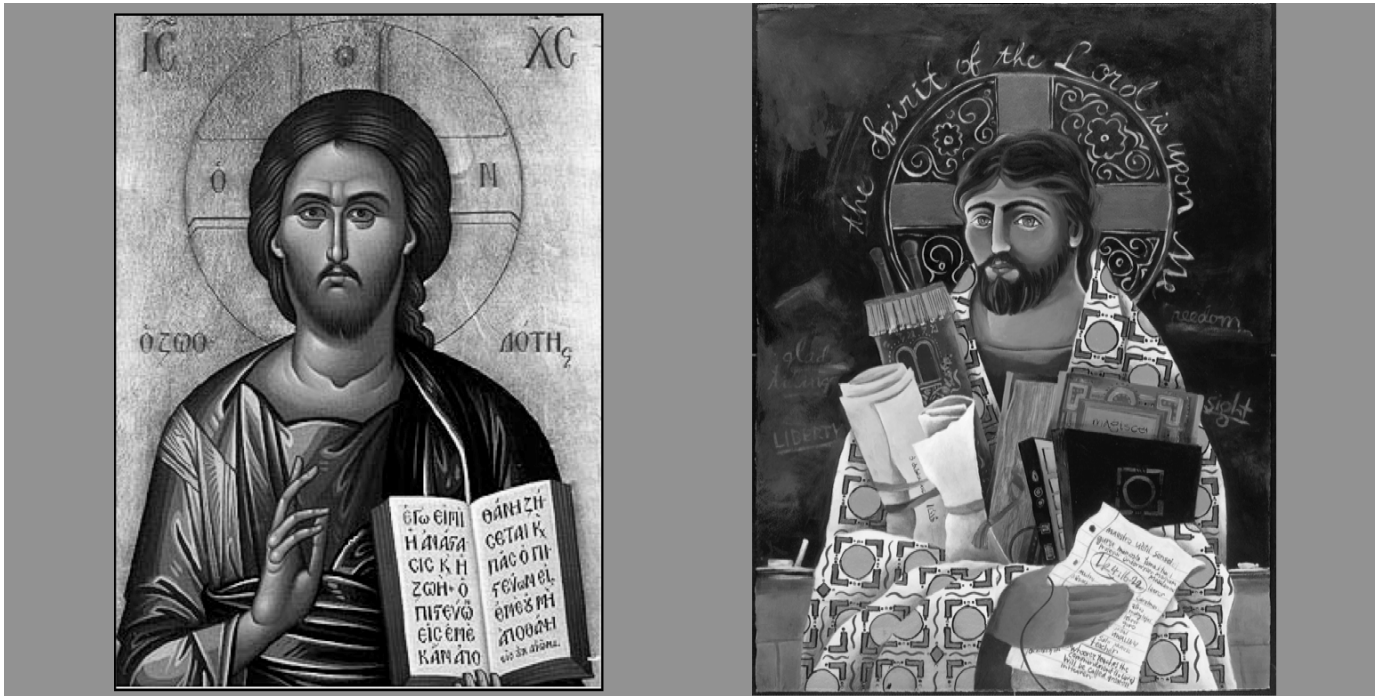
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Formation



The Art of Jesus the Teacher

John Shea

Preaching and teaching the Gospels as spiritual wisdom is a wager. It presupposes Christian congregations and individual believers are ready to listen and learn. They are interested in developing themselves spiritually, but they are not quite sure what it entails or how to go about it. The combination of interest and ignorance opens them to the vision of spiritual transformation in the Gospels. A key feature of this vision is spiritual wisdom. Spiritual wisdom is the catalytic agent. It churns the mind and begins the process of change. When preachers and teachers present the Gospels as spiritual wisdom, they facilitate and resource a process of spiritual transformation.

This transformation entails a change of consciousness and action from a condition characterized as seeing, hearing, awake, found, and risen. The catalyst of this change is the Word. Once this Word is heard, it can be dismissed, received in a shallow way, overcome by competing interests, or fully realized and integrated. Therefore, spiritual transformation is always an invitation offered by the Word to which people respond in varying degrees.

A key insight into this transformative process was that the Word functions as spiritual wisdom. Spiritual wisdom is a form of artful language that tries to open the person to receive Spirit from God and to release that Spirit into the world. In order to do this, spiritual wisdom targets the mind. The mind is the gatekeeper of both the soul's access to God and the soul's capacity for creative action in the world. Spiritual wisdom acts on the mind to increase attention to the spiritual, to develop an understanding of the spiritual, and to integrate the spiritual with physical, social, and mental life. This is its agenda.

John Shea, S.T.D. is a theologian and storyteller who lectures internationally on storytelling in world religions, faith-based health care, contemporary spirituality, and the spirit at work movement. He has published eleven books of theology and spirituality and two books of poetry. His most recent writing is three-volume series *The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers* (Liturgical Press), a resource for lectionary-based preaching and teaching that provides literary/spiritual interpretations of the Sunday gospels. (www.jackshea.org)

(This article originally appeared in *The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers: Year B Eating with the Bridegroom*. Copyright 2005 by The Order of Saint Benedict, Inc. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Reprinted with permission.)

In some circles spiritual wisdom is presented as a series of ideas that detail how the divine and human interact. But in the stories of the Gospels spiritual wisdom is never abstract. Jesus is not a spiritual philosopher who thinks to himself and talks out loud to the stars. He is primarily an interpersonal event, dialoguing with people whose mental openness ranges from recalcitrant to receptive. But no matter where their minds are at, he works with them in the service of Spirit. So he shapes his words as skillful means—confronting one moment and consoling the next moment, carefully constructing an argument one moment and spinning a tale the next moment, asking a question one moment and answering a question the next moment. Jesus lives in a person-to-person, eyeball-to-eyeball, spoken-word-to-heard-word world. His spiritual wisdom unfolds in the context of concrete conversations, however stylized those conversations may be.

This article focuses on the conversational patterns that communicate spiritual wisdom. It presupposes the transformative process from blindness to sights, from deafness to hearing, from asleep to awake, from lost to found, from dead to risen. But it watches that process unfold on a one-to-one basis, in the interaction of the character of Jesus with other characters. In particular, it pays attention to the art of Jesus' teaching style, how he gears what he says to the mindsets of people and how he marshals his rhetoric in the service of breakthroughs in consciousness.

Jesus the teacher is not a straightforward conveyer of information. He is an encounter with a higher consciousness that is bent on opening whomever he meets to the indwelling Spirit. Everything he says and does is geared to the spiritual transformation of disciples, crowds, religious authorities, and individual seekers. "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). This means he knows the workings of their minds, either by careful attention to what they say and do or by direct intuition into their interiors. Then it is "whatever it takes"—confrontation or compassion, story or discourse, image or injunction, commendation or critique—to bring their awareness and action under the influence of Spirit. To watch him at work is to grasp the power of the Word Made Flesh (see John 1:14, especially the KJV Bible). He is embodied spiritual wisdom, bursting with "grace upon grace," and seeking to share its blessings (see John 1:16).

I would like to watch Jesus the Teacher at work with three people. The first is an exchange with a learned lawyer. This interaction will be a success. The man will learn how to *do* love of God and neighbor. The second encounter is with a man

Jesus is not a spiritual philosopher who thinks to himself and talks out loud to the stars. He is primarily an interpersonal event, dialoguing with people whose mental openness ranges from recalcitrant to receptive. But no matter where their minds are at, he works with them in the service of Spirit.

seeking eternal life. This conversation will be a failure. The man will not get what he wants. The third is intimate conversation with Peter. This conversation will be unresolved. The art of Jesus the teacher is displayed in these encounters. Yet, despite the art, the outcomes are uneven. There is a "Yes," a "No," and a "Not now." But, deeper than the art, is person of the Teacher sensitively working with how the mind opens and closes and offering to all a fullness he knows in himself (John 1:16).

Learning to Do Love of God and Neighbor

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

"Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to them, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

*And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."
(Luke 10:25-37)*

The conflicted consciousness of the lawyer is captured succinctly. Although his speech acknowledges Jesus as teacher, interiorly he sees himself as the teacher. He will be the one who will test, and Jesus will be the one who either passes or fails the test. The words of the lawyer's mouth (Jesus is teacher) and the thoughts of his heart (I am teacher) are not integrated.

Although the lawyer is eager to dispute, Jesus is not interested in “*mano a mano*” ego games. Instead, he asks the lawyer about what he knows; the teacher inquires after the consciousness of the one seeking everlasting life. The lawyer cannot refuse this chance to shine. He deftly combines Deuteronomy 6:4-9 with Leviticus 19:18 to produce the double commandment to love. Jesus compliments his correctedness. But also he indicates something more is needed. Knowing the law is one thing; doing the law is another. When you do the law, everlasting life is not a future reward; it is a present experience: “do this, and you will live” (v. 28).

However, the lawyer’s knowledge is not deep enough to overflow into a doing. He has mechanically memorized a text, but he lacks the realization of what both commandments mean and how they are intimately linked. Mere knowledge of what the law says cannot unfold into doing. This lawyer’s mental condition reflects a type often found in religious traditions. They can read the sacred books, even make insightful connections. They are excellent at recital. But they lack an in-depth appreciation of what the texts are meant to express and communicate. “[L]ove the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (v. 27) is a call to spiritual consciousness and transformation. But, at this moment, for the lawyer it is retrieved information.

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In the lawyer’s mind, the first exchange with Jesus, initiated by the question about inheriting everlasting life, has gone poorly. Jesus was not subjected to his scrutiny; he was guided by Jesus’ skilled teaching. The second exchange, initiated by the question of, “[W]ho is my neighbor?” is driven by the lawyer’s attempt to gain the upper hand and claim the role of teacher. However, this exchange will go the way of the first one. The one who wishes to test will be tested, and once again he will answer correctly. However, this exchange is on a deeper level.

Although the lawyer flails about seeking superiority, Jesus is steady in his resolve to bring the lawyer into the true consciousness of the intimate and dynamic relationship between love of God and love of neighbor. Jesus will be successful, and for a second time he will tell the lawyer to “do.” However, this time the “knowing” of the lawyer will be sufficiently deep so that the “doing” is a possibility.

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down the road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

The priest and Levite who pass by the hurting man presumably know the Law. They are able to recite it, just as the lawyer did. But they are not able to do this double commandment. Since the story does not want to dwell on these non-responses, it does not tell us their reasons for not stopping. But scholars have made suggestions. Perhaps there is a conflict of commandments in their minds. Laws about becoming impure by contacting bleeding and/or dead bodies may stop them from helping. Or perhaps this man does not qualify as a neighbor for they cannot identify him without his clothing. But the more we speculate about the possible justifications for their failure to help, the more we stay in the territory of the lawyer. This is what he would love to debate. Are they breaking the commandment to love their neighbor or do they have a legitimate excuse? This fine print is the air the lawyer breathes, and it is the air that suffocates Jesus.

But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’

The appearance of the Samaritan changes the flow of the story and the flow of consciousness in the lawyer listening to the story. The Samaritan is outside the Law, so no external entanglements or prescribed obligations constrain him. He does not travel in the maze of Jewish motivations. Instead, he is interiorly driven by compassion. In other words, he loves his neighbor as himself.

But the path to loving the neighbor as yourself is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind” (v. 27). When you are interiorly centered on God, the ultimate Source, Sustainer, and Transformer of all Creation, you become aware that all Creation arises from the same source as you do. The differences that the surface of life displays are rooted in more foundational sameness. In traditional spirituality, the many arise out of the One. In this sense, all creation shares your identity as related to

the One and, in this sense, becomes yourself. Compassion for others is the natural interior state of someone centered in the love of God.

Also, if you interiorly in communion with God, you also share God's ecstatic and abundant nature. The Divine goes out from itself in overwhelming care. This overwhelming care is reflected in the detailed and extravagant actions of the Samaritan. What he does is over and above any social expectation. It is the abundance of God manifesting itself through the Samaritan, the one who is helping with an energy that goes well beyond a legally refined obligation. This is how to do both love of God and love of neighbor.

But does the story work? Does the lawyer understand the double commandment deeply enough to have a chance at doing it.

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

He said, "The one who showed him mercy."

Jesus said to him, "God and do likewise."

It worked. The lawyer gets it.

In the first exchange, Jesus changed "do something now and inherit everlasting life later" to "do something now and live in everlasting life now." In this second exchange, he changes the legalistic "Who is my neighbor?" to the existential "Who was neighbor?" Anyone who loves God is universally proactive in responding to the needs of all people. The outer discernment of neighbor, enemy, neutral other, etc. is not what determines action. Earlier in the Gospel Jesus teaches:

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.
(Luke 6:27-36)

The Samaritan loves his enemy. He has no social obligation to the robbed and beaten man. Therefore, where does his motivation come from? It can only be from his interior love of the merciful God and his doing of that love by becoming a neighbor. That is what the lawyer grasps because he designates the Samaritan as "The one who showed him mercy" (v. 27). Under the loving guidance of Jesus the Teacher, the lawyer now knows how to do love of God and neighbor. The only thing left is to go and do it. "Go and do likewise" (v. 37).

Luke has put the high art of Jesus the Teacher on display, showing how spiritual wisdom works in an interpersonal encounter. Jesus discerns the lawyer as wanting a battle of egos. He refuses. He also discerns him as someone who can read the Law but cannot do it. Further the lawyer does not know the intrinsic coincidence of action and reward. He sees them as separate and only extrinsically connected: actions done now receive rewards later. Jesus does not directly confront these shortcomings. Rather he works with them.

Jesus tells a story of how an enemy (the Samaritan), who from a legal point of view cannot possibly be considered a neighbor, becomes a neighbor. Therefore, his consciousness must be on a level deeper than social obligations. Also, the abundant nature of his help, his going beyond all expectations, reveals an interior centering of heart, soul, strength, and mind in the overflowing God. Jesus wagered that a story would increase the lawyer's understanding of love of God and neighbor to such an extent that he would know how to do it. The wager was successful.

Failing to Possess Eternal Life

Then someone came to him and said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."
(Matthew 19:16-22)

Since Jesus' agenda is to open people to eternal life, this man has come to the right teacher. But Jesus immediately confronts the way he has phrased his quest. He can never have what he wants if he thinks it is a matter of good deeds getting rewards. Jesus had to work with his mind so that his desire can be fulfilled.

The man attributes goodness to himself. But earlier Jesus has taught, “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). There is only one who is good, the Father in heaven. When people do good works, it is because God is working through them. Spiritually illumined people can discern the Divine as the source of the actions. So the idea of doing good to gain eternal life is the wrong way around. It is when people are participating in eternal life that good works flow from them.

Jesus instructs the man to purify his desire, to understand his drive for eternal life in a more appropriate way. His desire should not be to “have;” it should be to “enter into.” One does not possess eternal life; one enters into it. The way to do this is keep the commandments. Jesus is pointing to the commandments as a path. If the man tries to keep the commandments, something will happen that will show him how to enter into eternal life.

He said to him, “Which ones?”

And Jesus said, “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?”

The man has not heard Jesus’ correction of his mindset. In his eagerness, he thinks Jesus has told him the good works he must do. He must do the commandments. He is still in the framework of doing in order to possess and not in the framework of doing in order to discover how to enter. So naturally his concern is to get more information. There are many commandments. He is an earnest seeker, and so he wants to make sure he has the right ones. “Which ones?” is the misguided question of a man who thinks he is getting closer to his goal.

Jesus tells him the second part of the Decalogue and finishes it with the universal and mystifying command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (v. 19). The strategy of the Teacher is in place. The only way love of neighbor can be enacted is if it is empowered by love of God. The second part of the Decalogue is dependent on the first part, the commandments that embody the relationship to God. If the man did not register Jesus’ first correction about how his goodness and God are related, certainly he will acknowledge the essential link between the relationship to God and the ability to do good by the neighbor as it is enshrined in the tradition. The link

between the first and second parts of the Decalogue is essential.

However the man’s response shows he did not take Jesus’ lure. For the first time, the storyteller confesses he was a *young* man; and he must have been a very young man indeed to have kept all those commandments. More to the point, he had to be spiritually immature to *think* he had kept all those commandments. He asks Jesus what he lacks, and to Jesus’ consciousness what he lacks is obvious. He lacks a sense of dependency on God as the Source and energy of whatever goodness he is able to do. The teacher will now give him instructions of how to fill this lack:

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow me.”

When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

The young man does not lack desire; he lacks understanding. So Jesus the teacher reinforces his desire, as, at the same time, he reconstructs his understanding. The “wish to be perfect” corresponds to Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, “Be perfect, therefore, as our heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt 5:48). Although this perfection consists in embodying a love as universal and impartial as the sun and the rain, the point here is to insist that perfection as well as goodness belong to God. So if one is to be perfect, one will have to be united to God and allow God’s perfection to manifest itself in your life.

The path to this communion with God is to give up the possessive spirit. The young man’s first, and fiercely retained, desire was to possess eternal life. Acquisition is what he is about. The acquisitive spirit is basically ego centered, caring about itself first and foremost. But the spiritual is not like physical or social goods. It cannot be possessed. In fact, the way to participate in the Spirit is through dispossession. He must sell what he has and give to the poor. In this way, he will give up the drive for possessions and, at the same time, consider the well-being of others. This will do for him what his conversation with Jesus has not been able to do. It will break him out of his individual, wrong-headed quest and set him on the right path. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:3).

Divine Love is interested in washing and drying people's feet, in revitalizing them for their journey on earth. This love flows like water pouring in a basin. The God consciousness of Jesus (the highest) drives him all the way down to the feet (the lowest). Spirit is not an escape from the earth; it is a commitment to its transformation.

It will also give him treasure in heaven. But treasure in heaven is not eternal life and is not the goal of his quest. Treasure in heaven is the beginning of a transformation process that Jesus sets out in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:19-21). People are encouraged to store up treasure in heaven rather than treasure on earth. Earthly treasures are prey to moths, rust, and thieves. Heavenly treasures are immune from temporal decay because they participate in eternal life. The teaching concludes: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:21). If the young man begins to value the spiritual, his treasure with God, this value will become more and more integrated into his life. It will become his heart, the radiating center of his being. In other words, he will cooperate with the transformation process of his own growth. That is why he must come back and follow Jesus. His quest is not over. It is just beginning. He will finally be on the right path.

But it is not to be. The story emphasizes that the young man hears this final word of Jesus. The implication is he has not grasped what Jesus has previously said to him. Although now he understands the very different path of spiritual transformation, he does not walk it. Instead, he walks away. His spiritual immaturity holds; it has him in its grip. It so completely owns him that it causes him to grieve. His is the way of possessions, and he has to have it his way. If he cannot acquire eternal life, he will live in sadness and forsake the quest. Jesus the Teacher has done what he could. He tried to bring the young man to wisdom, but the one who persisted in acquisition also persisted in ignorance.

Awaiting Another Time

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is both Lord and Teacher. "You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right for that is what I am." (John 13:13). As Lord, Jesus is one with the Father and reveals Divine Love to the alienated world. As Teacher, he helps people understand and receive that Love and work out its implications for all areas of human life. In a passage that begins the "Last Supper," Jesus first reveals the full purpose of Divine Love and then works with the mind of Peter to help him receive it. (See John 13:3-11.)

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

This is an intimate look into the interior of Jesus, a sketch of his God consciousness. He knows his wither and his whence, his origin and his destiny—he has come from God and is going to God. He is also aware that God is love (the Father) and that all things are in his hands. This echoes his identity as the Word who "was God" and "through" whom "[a]ll things came into being" (John 13:1, 3). He is the mediator between God and Creation, and the next thing he does will reveal the mystery of God and the love of the Father. In order for this revelation to be seen he rises from table and takes off his outer robe. The deep secret of Jesus' relationship with God is out in the open.

Divine Love is interested in washing and drying people's feet, in revitalizing them for their journey on earth. This love flows like water pouring in a basin. The God consciousness of Jesus (the highest) drives him all the way down to the feet (the lowest). Spirit is not an escape from the earth; it is a commitment to its transformation. This is a picture of the Word Becoming Flesh (see John 1:14), of God embracing the struggling life of people. If this washing and drying can be received, it will save the weary world.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you."

For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Jesus the Lord now becomes Jesus the Teacher, working with the mind of Peter. Peter recognizes a revelation has occurred because he calls Jesus "Lord." His problem seems to be a reversal in his expectations. He is Peter and on a lesser level than Jesus. He should be washing Jesus' feet. There is a hierarchical order, and it should not be violated. In Peter's mind God relates to the world as a ruler relates to a realm. God issues orders, and everyone obeys or is punished. Subjects grovel at God's feet. God does not attend to the bruised and battered feet of people. Peter is the servant and soldier of this transcendent King. What Jesus is doing bewilders his mind.

Jesus sees that bewilderment and realizes that Peter does not understand. At the present moment Peter does not comprehend fully this new revelation and so he cannot receive it. But Jesus foresees a time when understanding will arrive. That time will be "the dark night" of Peter's ego. Later, Peter tells Jesus, "I will lay down my life for you." Jesus responds, "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times" (John 13:37-38). Peter will come to illumination (the cock crowing; see Mark 14:72 and parallels) after he has denied Jesus three times (a sacred number). When his strength fails him, he will grasp the need to receive grace and strength from God. The denials of Peter will bring him to the illumination of morning, the time when the cock crows.

But for now Peter is adamant. He fiercely holds to what he knows and refused the new revelation. Jesus tells him there is no other way. Jesus cannot conform to the fantasies of Peter's mind. Jesus only does what he hears from his Father (see John 14:31); he can only do what reveals the love of God. Jesus washes feet; and if Peter will not open to that activity, he cannot share in Jesus' life.

Although Peter does not understand Jesus, he loves him. So he moves from refusing to have his feet washed to suggesting a whole bath. Unfortunately, this poignant openness is wrongheaded. It focuses on

physical bathing, and, as Jesus points out, it is not about cleanliness. If people have bathed, they are clean. Jesus' foot washing and drying is about spiritual receptivity. But Peter's lack of understanding and consequent resistance is acceptable and will continue to be work with. This exchange with Jesus has not been a failure. It is one piece in the ongoing conversion of Peter. Its exact role will only be clear when the conversion is complete.

However, the last line suggests that Judas cannot be worked with. Satan has closed him in an irrevocable way. Even when Jesus gives himself to Judas in the dipped morsel, it is Satan that enters him, and not Jesus (John 13:27).

The spiritual wisdom of the Gospel is more than a message, more than a revelation of theological truths. It happens in the encounter with Jesus, and this encounter is always with particular people with particular mindsets. Jesus addresses those mindsets and works with them in the service of Spirit. The secret energy of Jesus' commitment and creativity to work with the mind is the love of God that wills and brings about the good of the other. Therefore, Jesus the Teacher who works with the mind and Jesus the Lover who embodies divine care are one and the same.

Conclusion

Thomas Aquinas defined love as the affective willing of the good of the other. From a spiritual perspective, the good of others is that that they know themselves as living in intimate communion with God and in service of the neighbor. However, there are many mental tapes and holdings that block this consciousness. These holdings come from negative personal experiences, conventional thinking, and, as the rabbis insisted, evil imaginings. For the most part, these blocks cannot be overcome by individual effort. Someone who lovingly wills this good for others must

work with the blocks until they are not longer obstacles. Therefore, loving others is more than just willing they awaken to the love of God and neighbor. It is actually working to bring it about.

In the Gospels, Jesus is the one who wills this good for others and engages them in such a way that it can happen. He is highly qualified for this teaching task. At his baptism, Jesus realizes he is the Beloved Son who is on a Spirit guided mission (see Mark 1:9-11 and parallels). This identity is not his special preserve. It is extended to others. All who hear and respond to this proclamation and teaching enter into his identity and discover the same structure of selfhood within themselves. So Jesus sees in others what he knows in himself. And he works with these others until they see and love in themselves what he sees and loves in them. It is this patient and perseverant working with the minds of others that manifests his love.

When Jesus interacts with others, what does he know about the working of the mind that helps him? If the encounters with the lawyer, the young man, and Peter are any indication:

- He knows that the mind must open to love of God for love of neighbor to happen because love of God provides the vision to compassionately see the neighbor as yourself and the energy to complete the arduous task of caring.
- He knows that when the mind is attached to ego games of testing, it is not possible to seek true wisdom.
- He knows that the mind retrieves that information has to take another step into realized knowing.
- He knows a story has the power to sneak past mental defenses and touch the heart so directly that a new consciousness emerges.
- He knows that the illumined mind can trace what it sees and hears on the outside to the source on the inside.
- He knows the illumined mind manifests itself as a new freedom to do compassionate acts.
- He knows that when the mind claims moral actions as self-promotional trophies, it is mistaken.
- He knows that minds of immature seekers are centered on themselves and overestimate their ability to do good.
- He knows that moving the mind to centeredness in God entails relinquishing the mind's drive to acquire worth on its own terms.
- He knows that the mind's drive to possess is so entrenched that it is easier to walk away

without what you want than to change and receive what you want.

- He knows that the conventional mind would rather serve a God of transcendent demands than open to a God of imminent revitalization.
- He knows the minds of disciples do not have to get it all at once.
- He knows that love can help disciples persevere when mental understanding is lacking.
- He knows that when he talks about the spiritual, people's addicted minds will hear it as remarks about the physical.
- He knows that even when he gives himself totally, some minds are so closed that he will not be received.

The spiritual wisdom of the Gospel is more than a message, more than a revelation of theological truths. It happens in the encounter with Jesus, and this encounter is always with particular people with particular mindsets. Jesus addresses those mindsets and works with them in the service of Spirit. The secret energy of Jesus' commitment and creativity to work with the mind is the love of God that wills and brings about the good of the other. Therefore, Jesus the Teacher who works with the mind and Jesus the Lover who embodies divine care are one and the same.

The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers

John Shea

Year A - On Earth as It Is in Heaven

Year B - Eating with the Bridegroom

Year C - The Relentless Widow

(Liturgical Press) [\$29.95 per volume]

With a goal of transcendent awareness, John Shea presents this commentary on the Sunday Gospel readings for those who are drawn to the spiritual wisdom of the Gospels. Shea's book takes a literary-spiritual approach. He analyzes the mindsets of characters and how Jesus complimented, critiqued, praised these mindsets, to inspire meditation, reflection, and spiritual development. This set is a Lectionary-based resource that references both Roman Catholic and Revised Common Lectionaries. A Scripture index makes Shea's insightful reflections accessible for personal reflection on the Gospel texts as well as other uses outside of liturgical preparation.



A Decidedly Different Mind

Stephanie Pace Marshall

We are born learning beings. We naturally imagine, wonder, invent, and explore our way into unknown territories and perplexing and paradoxical questions. Our curiosity and insatiable drive to know and figure things out is innate. Even if we wanted to, we could not stop learning and trying to make sense of our world and our place in it. We could not stop trying to understand who we are, why we are here, and how we belong. From the moment of our first breath, we have learned. We have observed and smelled and tasted and touched and laughed and cried. We have walked and talked and taken things apart and put them together. We have wondered about the blueness of the sky, the vastness of the universe, the depths of the ocean, the awesome complexity of our minds, the intricacy of our bodies, the mystery of our spirits, and the transcendence of our souls. And in our irrepressible quest to know, experience, explore, discover, and play, we create our world.

Our Mind-Brain-Body System

Advances in technology have enabled us to observe not only the patterns and structures of our brains, but also the very process of learning as it occurs. We now understand that the brain is not a blank slate or an immutably hardwired computer. It is a magnificent, pattern-seeking, complex living system whose structures are not fixed.

Continuously evolving in complexity, this dynamic, self-adjusting “plastic” living network can not only atrophy with disuse, but can also change, “grow” (build extensive and more intricate neuronal connections), and actually reshape itself in response to challenging, stimulating, and sensory-enriched environments. Because thoughts have a powerful role in mind- and brain-shaping, learning actually *changes* the physical structure of our brains, as noted by Renate Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine in *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*. Among neurologists, it is commonly held that nerve cells that fire together wire together. This amazing capacity of the human brain to transform itself is not limited by time: It is present throughout our lives as long as we continue to actively learn. Fortunately for us, we can indeed teach old dogs new tricks—and nature tells us we must. Continuous learning—growth—is essential for sustainability.

Stephanie Pace Marshall, Ph.D. is a national and international leader, speaker, and writer on issues of educational innovation and schooling redesign. She is the founding president of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. She is the author of *The Power to Transform: Leadership that Brings Learning and Schooling to Life* published by Jossey-Bass. (www.stephaniepacemarshall.com)

“A Decidedly Different Mind” by Stephanie Page Marshall first appeared in *Shift: At the Frontiers of Consciousness*, No. 8, Sept-Nov 2005, pp. 10-15, the quarterly publication of the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), and is reprinted with permission of the author and IONS [www.noetic.org and www.shiftinaction.com]. All rights reserved. Copyright 2005.)

New knowledge has also changed our understanding of learning and intelligence, and this has enormous implications for learning and schooling. We now recognize that human intelligence is composed of multiple potentials that must be intentionally ignited and activated. Cognition is not a fragmented, independent, and prescribed process of acquiring bits of information. It is both biological and social: a dynamic process of constructing meaning by matching new learning to existing patterns and creating new patterns of connections.

Emotions and feelings are not enemies of reason or deterrents to rational thinking; they are essential to learning. It has become clear that our mind cannot be separated from our body and our emotions, that cognition and emotion are inextricably connected. We now understand that learning is not a bounded and linear process of acquiring information, but a holistic and networked process of active engagement and construction of knowledge and meaning. Just as the mechanistic model of the universe is being discredited, so is the disembodied model of our mind-brain-body system.

A new story of the natural world has thus emerged. It is a story of unity, wholeness, reciprocity, interdependence, and co-creation. This “songline” of life is the deeply resonant story that flows through all living systems, including our own. And it tells us that living systems, whether a single cell, an organism, or a rainforest, are fundamentally dynamic “learning systems:” open, creative, exploratory, interdependent, resilient, intricately networked, and free.

Within these learning networks the potential for transformation is innate because they are free to preserve, renew, restructure, and recreate themselves. This capacity for creative and self-directed internal adaptation, called *self-organization* (by Fritjof Capra) or *emergence*, is a key characteristic of all living systems. Unlike closed mechanical systems that change through external pressure, living systems internally respond to external triggers—disturbances and constraints—in ways that are self-sustaining. External forces do not direct or determine the system’s response. The autonomy and dynamic interdependence of living systems ensure they are continuously self-referencing and in a co-creative relationship with their environment.

And yet we cannot underestimate our individual and collective power to consciously “provoke” our system’s transformation in the direction we desire; shared intention and collective purpose drive system innovation and transformation. At the same time, the process of self-organization is internally determined. Contrary to our current management view, real change in living systems—including our schools—occurs from the inside out. We and our systems

change because we continuously learn. There is a conscious shift in our awareness, perception, and meaning about who we are. The source and catalyst for living system transformation is change in internal meaning, not change by external mandate.

The Need for Deep Learning

The nature and quality of our children’s minds will shape who they become, and who they become will shape our world. Unfortunately, the world now being mapped into the minds of our children is one of scarcity, fragmentation, competition, and winning. Our current story conceives learning as a mechanistic, prescribed, and easily measured *commodity* that can be incrementally and uniformly delivered to our children. This narrative could not be more wrong. Learning emerges from discovery, not directives; reflection not rules; possibilities, not prescriptions; diversity, not dogma; creativity and curiosity, not conformity and certainty; and meaning, not mandates.

As mapmakers and architects of our future, it is imperative that our children experience the world as a gift, engaging joyfully in its co-creation and experiencing its abundance, wholeness, connections, and interdependence. To meaningfully engage requires integral and wise minds able to bring a holistic, connected, and imaginative context to experience and to how we ethically act within and make sense of our world. The significance of educating for “integral thinking” is the power of an altered worldview. When we perceive and experience wholeness, we are transformed. We no longer see nature, people, events, problems, or ourselves as separate and unconnected.

Integral minds seamlessly weave together four contexts of knowing:

1. **The multiple ways we come to know, perceive, and belong to our world and one another:** the objective, analytical, and experimental *and* the personal, communal, experiential, and transcendent. Integral minds connect our exterior *and* interior ways of knowing and our scientific *and* indigenous ways of knowing.
2. **Our unique combinations of multiple intelligences:** linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic.
3. **The “languages” of disciplinary domains:** their organizing concepts, symbol systems, and modes of inquiry.

4. **The multiple dimensions of learning:** learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together.

There has never been a more important time to re-perceive schooling and the conditions within which the minds, hearts, and spirits of our children and our future are grown. Mind-shaping is world-shaping. As leaders, we must reconnect our children to the roots of their knowing and their humanity and to their unknowable and abundant potentials as learners.

The attributes of our current culture and story of schooling—rapid, passive, and often superficial acquisition of disembodied information, punitive accountability systems, excessive individualism, risk aversion, and the repudiation of emotion and spirit—reflect our current societal and economic ambitions and predispositions. Our schools have executed the current cultural orthodoxy and pathology quite well—fragmentation, acquisition, consumption, unhealthy competition, speed, and winning—and then wonder why contentment and a sense of meaning and purpose remain so elusive. Ben Okri captured the dangers of this conditioning in his book *Birds of Heaven* when he wrote, “Beware of the stories you read or tell; subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world.”

Our children’s response to this unnatural design of schooling is often *shallow* learning, not the *deep* learning so essential for their future. Shallow learning estranges the learner from her deepest self. It separates her from the experiences, stories, and questions that foster meaning and connections, and from a sense of deep relationship and belonging to others and to something much bigger than herself. It asserts the preeminence of rapid coverage and acquisition over engagement and more deeply constructed understanding. Shallow learning more likely produces risk-averse, uncurious, and emotionally disengaged learners who either believe they are inadequate or believe they understand far more than they really do. In either case, they emerge ill-equipped to respond to the intricate, complex, and very messy problems we face that defy simplistic

categorization, linear analysis, and rapid resolution.

Deep learning is radically different from shallow learning. While shallow learning validates only one way of knowing, deep learning is holistic and inclusive: It recognizes that we are living in a “both/and” universe, not an “either/or” one. It understands that it is often through the integration of polarities and seemingly disparate ways of knowing that genuine understanding and wisdom can be created.

Deep learning is both active and reflective. It is a continual process of mind-making that changes us forever. The questions that hold the greatest challenge for mind-making are not, “*What* did you learn in school today?” but rather, “*How* did you learn in school today and *who* are you now?” By immersing the learner in the interdependence and wholeness of the world and meaningfully engaging her in the “big” ideas, questions, paradoxes, and problems of the human experience, deep learning transforms her. It reignites her passion and insatiable curiosity and weaves a tapestry of connection and a timeless web of belonging that grounds her learning in the roots of personal meaning and purpose. Deep learning provides a context of connections and wholeness that reconnects children to all the ways they come to know and reestablishes their physical, cognitive, and spiritual intimacy and resonance with the natural world and one another.

Deep learning is our radical connection to all of life, and it invites and ignites all the ways we come to know:

- The power of the intellect *and* the power of the body, emotions, and spirit;
- The power of knowledge *and* the power of relationships;
- The power of externally validated, objective, analytical, and experimental ways of knowing *and* the power of internally validated, personal, reciprocal, communal, and transformative ways of knowing;
- The power of rationality and objective truth *and* the power of subjectivity and experiential truth;
- The power of the algorithmic *and* the power of the aesthetic;
- The power of precise observation *and* the power of intuition and wisdom;
- The power of reason *and* the power of passion and discernment;
- The power of rigorous skepticism *and* the power of wonder.

What could our children accomplish if we stopped trying to externally mandate and structurally

direct their learning into existence? Who might they become if we worked with their natural desire to learn—to inquire, create, seek novelty, explore uncertainty, and seek patterns of connection and meaning? What might we create if we use the principles of life and learning to design “naturally” right environments and communities that truly liberate their goodness and genius and provide time and space for students to learn who they are and what it means to be fully human?

Our answers to these questions are embodied in the fundamental unity of life in learning—and it is this integration that grounds the design of a generative and more natural system of learning and schooling.

A Return to the Roots of Knowing

We stand on the horizon of a global transformation of unparalleled magnitude and importance. A deeper, more transcendent, hopeful, and empowering story of life and learning is now emerging. This new story will

change our cultural narrative and enable our children to reclaim their deepest self and reweave their connection to one another, the human family, our planet, and the web of life. It is silently unfolding from the confluence of multiple “new” stories—new stories of the universe, living systems, and learning. These new stories are all rooted in patterns of unity, wholeness, and relationships. The convergence of these generative stories into a new worldview creates new contexts and maps for redesigning the topography of learning and schooling.

There has never been a more important time to re-perceive schooling and the conditions within which the minds, hearts, and spirits of our children and our future are grown. Mind-shaping is world-shaping. *As leaders, we must reconnect our children to the roots of their knowing and their humanity and to their unknowable and abundant potentials as learners.* Our children must feel at home in themselves, with others, and in the natural world. The human future will be defined by our children’s minds and the nature and quality of their presence on the earth. Through deep and natural learning, these “new minds” will imagine and create a just world for all.

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Practice Ideas

The New Story of Learning Nurturing Integral Habits of Mind

Stephanie Pace Marshall

(*The Power to Transform*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006)

(Reprinted from pages 41-44 and 60-62. © John Wiley & Sons Publishers)

Principles of the New Story of Integral Learning

Identity

1. The context and mental model of learning is abundance—activating, developing, and connecting the learners multiple and indeterminate potentials. The focus of learning is meaning—developing understanding and internal authority for learning.
2. Autonomy, meaning, creativity, exploration, and the quest for novelty are powerful and sustainable intrinsic motivations for learning. Learning is shaped and driven by personal purpose.
3. Intelligences are dynamic, multidimensional potentials for information processing, product creation, and problem resolution, not fixed immutable capacities. They are shaped through the dynamic interplay between heredity and environment and can be intentionally activated. Every learner possesses a unique and vibrant constellation of unknowable potentials.
4. The holistic engagement of the learner's mind, body, emotions, and spirit is essential for rigorous inquiry and integrated work. Inviting passion, wonder, joy, and the emotional and spiritual dimensions of who we are into learning enables meaning and creativity. Learning is understood as transformative engagement.

Information

5. Prior knowledge and experience are essential foundations for linking and integrating future learning.
6. Data, information, and knowledge are profoundly different. A learner who has acquired data and information is not presumed to have developed knowledge and understanding. Knowledge is relational, embedded in context,

and continuously constructed by the learner in community.

7. Depth and complexity of understanding are more important than the quantity of information acquired. Understanding creates meaning, wholeness, and integration. Complex and systemic problem resolution emerges from integral minds—from the capacity to understand dynamic relationships within systems and to discern and connect patterns.

Relationships

8. Learning is grounded in a relational epistemology (ways of knowing). This epistemology affirms integral ways of knowing, believes meaning and connections are constructed by the learner, and believes that the learners' passion and love are essential for deep learning. It asserts that relatedness and engagement are at the heart of learning, that there is profound connection between the knower and the known, and that connection to one's self and a coherent sense of self are essential to learning.
9. Learning is inherently relational. Relationships and interdependence enable us to meaningfully connect and belong in community. Deep learning is more likely when a multiaged and multigenerational community is purposefully learning, exploring, and cocreating together.

Process

10. Learning is a purposeful, exploratory, and creative process of discovery. It is a natural goal-directed process of constructing meaning through pattern formulation and active engagement in complex issues and problems.
11. Individual and collaborative inquiry and the creative exploration of messy, ill-structured, and interconnected questions and problems relevant and meaningful to the learner are the processes through which learners acquire the knowledge and repertoire of strategies and skills needed for developing deep understanding and expertise.

12. The purpose of education is to transform minds—to acquire and construct knowledge, develop deep understanding and wisdom, and demonstrate learning through discovery, reflection, and the exploration and resolution of essential questions that advance the human condition.

Patterns

13. Deep understanding gained through pattern recognition and concepts integration promotes wholeness and the flow of knowledge within and between domains. Disciplinary knowledge and understanding can best be encouraged if we teach disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary organizing principles, patterns, and concepts in a coherent and integrative context.

Structures

14. Learning is demonstrated, assessed, and credentialed by multiple forms of evidence and by exhibitions and performances of deep understanding, anytime and anywhere. Learning time is variable. Learning is assessed whenever the learner is ready and is credentialed when learning is demonstrated. Learners actively participate in the assessment of their own and their peer's learning.
15. Rigorous, meaningful, reliable, and legitimate assessment of deep learning is dynamic, flexible, and systemic. It includes both quantitative and qualitative evidence of understanding. It is self-correcting and is demonstrated in authentic contexts and settings that enable complex responses.
16. Meaningful curriculum must be connected to the learner's lived experience, the community's needs, and the world's problems. Life must be the curriculum.

The Habits of Mind of Integral Learners

Learning to Be: Integrity and Intuition

- Aware of and connected to one's identity and integrity as a self-directed learner.
- Learning and meaning making are driven by personal purpose and goals.
- Understands that there is an integral wholeness to the natural world and an integral wholeness to us.
- Knows that our fundamental identity (self) is embedded in the identity of the whole.
- Demonstrates "existential" intelligence—a concern for ultimate human issues and questions (Howard Gardner) and a high level of moral conscience.
- Is intuitive and introspective.
- Recognizes that wisdom and discernment come from honoring and inviting all our ways of knowing and being.
- Understands that deep learning comes through the construction of meaning, the integration and creation of knowledge, the cultivation of relationships, and the reengagement of intellect with heart and spirit.
- Reflectively and creatively pursues wholeness and meaning.
- Continually regulates, assesses, and monitors own learning.
- Thinks in holistic ways.
- Acute reader of context.
- Intuitively seeks connections within and among disciplinary domains.
- Seeks new information that deepens its relationship with the subject.

Learning to Know: Inquiry and Integrity

- Learns from diverse experiences.
- Continuously seeks new information, generates provocative questions, and is driven by inquiry and hypotheses.
- Is insatiably curious.
- Possess deep levels of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary understanding.
- Uses the rules of evidence within multiple disciplines yet looks beyond them.

- Constructs meaning and connections by probing one's own knowledge to expose beliefs and assumptions, clarify ideas, and identify and resolve misconceptions.
- Critically and creatively integrates, synthesizes, and transfers (extends and applies) knowledge, skills, and modes of inquiry learned in one domain to understand another.
- Integrates information gained from accessing multiple ways of knowing—the objective and analytical, the subjective and experiential.
- Seeks multiple perspectives and diverse and conflicting information about significant issues and problems of fundamental importance to the human community.
- Understands that learning is driven by inquiry and that knowledge generation is dynamic.
- Acquires, generates, and uses conceptual and procedural knowledge from multiple disciplines to solve complex and ill-structured (messy) problems.
- Creates conceptual maps and knowledge frameworks around the organizing principles and knowledge structures of disciplinary domains.
- Experiments with multiple forms of knowledge representation: for example, drawing, poetry, literary and scientific writing, and mathematics.
- Discerns and evaluates the deep patterns inherent in knowledge.
- Seeks to understand the unity of knowledge—the patterned logic and organizing and unifying principles that give coherence to multiple disciplinary domains.

Learning to Do: Imagination and Innovation

- Inquisitive, persistent, imaginative, inventive, and passionate.
- Suspends judgment: takes risks; challenges “facts,” authority, and the “logic” of arguments; weighs conflicting “truth claims.”
- Pushes boundaries and continuously constructs questions and generates knowledge that deepens understanding.
- Spontaneously takes ideas and things apart and puts them back together in original ways.
- Seeks novelty and new possibilities.
- Possess skills of both analysis and synthesis.
- Recognizes the importance of wonder and surprise in learning.
- Fluidly integrates the seeming polarities within multiple ways of knowing and being.
- Able to hold the tensions inherent in paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty.

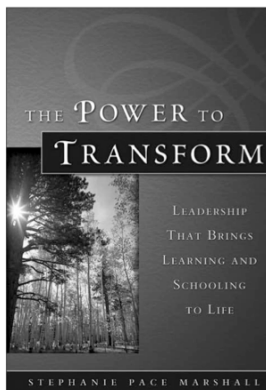
- It is not bounded by more tradition ways of thinking. Is inventive and improvisational.

Learning to Live Together: Inclusion and Interdependence

- Has shifted perception from self as an independent entity to self as a part of the web of life.
- Possess a sense of joy, awe, wonder, and reverence for the mysteries and sacred nature of life in all of its forms.
- Seeks connections to the human family.
- Possess a sense of oneness—a sense of belonging to the natural world and to others.
- Self and other are inextricably connected around significant issues, great ideas, and questions of long-term consequence.
- Ethical behavior and the compassionate use of knowledge are embedded in a natural sense of stewardship.
- Concern for human prosperity and moral action in the world.
- Weaves together multiple perspectives and contexts of meaning to create new relationships and connections.
- Listens deeply. Actively engages with others in inquiry and problem finding, formulation, framing, and resolution.
- Creates diverse networks—real and virtual—to learn with and through others.
- Accepts the rights, responsibilities, and shared commitments of belonging to a diverse community.

Recommended Resources

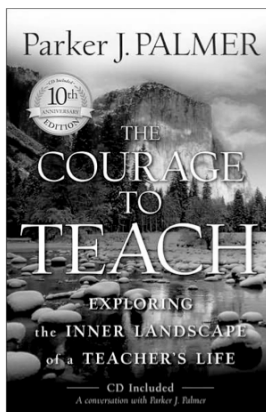
Teaching & Learning



The Power to Transform: Leadership that Brings Learning and Schooling to Life

Stephanie Pace Marshall (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) [\$30]

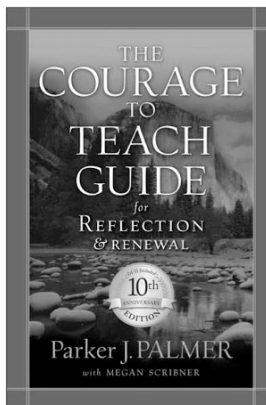
In *The Power to Transform*, Stephanie Pace Marshall argues that by focusing on reforming the contents of schooling and not transforming the context and conditions of learning, we have created false proxies for learning and eroded the potentially vibrant intellectual life of our schools. Finishing a course and a textbook has come to mean achievement. Listening to a lecture has come to mean understanding. Getting a high score on a standardized test has come to mean proficiency. Credentialing has come to mean competence. To educate our children wisely requires that we create generative learning communities, by design. Such learning communities have their roots in meaning, not memory; engagement, not transmission; inquiry, not compliance; exploration, not acquisition; personalization, not uniformity; interdependence, not individualism; collaboration, not competition; and trust, not fear. The book is organized into three parts: Part One: The Journey Toward Wholeness. Part Two: Designing the New Learning Landscape, and Part Three: A Call for Leaders.



The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life (10th Anniversary Edition)

Parker Palmer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) [\$18.95]

Over the past ten years, the *Courage to Teach* has had a profound influence on education and teaching. Through writing, teaching, and presentations, Parker Palmer has guided teachers on an inner journey toward reconnecting with themselves, their students, and their colleagues, and toward reclaiming vocational passion. The *Courage to Teach* builds on a simple premise: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique but is rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher. Good teaching takes myriad forms but good teachers share one trait they are authentically present in the classroom, deeply connected with their students and their subject. Good teachers weave a life-giving web between themselves, their subjects, and their students, helping their students learn how to weave a world for themselves.



The Courage to Teach Guide for Reflection and Renewal (a separate book) has been thoroughly updated and expanded to help readers reflect on their teaching and renew their sense of vocation. The *Guide* proposes practical ways to create safe space for honest reflection and probing conversation, and offers chapter-by-chapter questions and exercises to explore the many insights in *The Courage to Teach*. The companion DVD brings *The Courage to Teach* alive through a 70-minute interview with Parker J. Palmer,

- For more resources on *The Courage to Teach* and to learn about workshops and study programs go to the **Center for Courage & Renewal** web site: www.CourageRenewal.org.



Attentive Teaching in Diverse Communities and Lifelong Faith Formation

Kathleen T. Talvacchia
Su Yon Pak

To say there is a need to form educators capable of teaching in a diverse community of Christian religious believers seems to state the obvious. In ideal form Christian communities should encompass all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, or any other category we might think as representing a difference. As Paul told the community in Corinth: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12–13).

But in ways that are both unintentional and intentional, Christian religious communities are at times the most segregated places in our world. We are all too painfully aware that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s statement in 1963 about Sunday morning at 11:00 being the most segregated hour of the week remains true 45 years later. Because they form as intentional communities, Christian churches can at times be strictly monocultural in a way that does not represent the universality of the Christian vision of the world and the openness of God to all.

Communities are intentionally formed by, for example, ethnicity and race so as to provide support for their congregants when the larger community outside of the church is not supportive or is discriminatory. Throughout the Black experience in America, African American churches have provided a bulwark against white racism in society. In this process, they have maintained a distinctive Christian tradition, and practices that have served and identified that community. Similarly, immigrant churches have provided fellowship, support, social services and language facilitation for their congregations as they assist them in their entry into a new environment. Like African American churches, immigrant churches have formed distinctive traditions and practices in response to the religious experiences in their new soil.

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However, groups from the dominant culture can intentionally and unintentionally exclude communities of people with whom they do not wish to be associated. These exclusions could be based on race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, or any other socially determined category of difference. Thus, we bring to the discussion of teaching in diverse religious communities an important assumption: while diversity is a value in Christian religious community, in reality many Christian churches exhibit memberships and leadership in ways that might not be viewed as consistent with the Christian value of embracing all members of the Body of Christ.

This, of course, is not an uncontested assumption. There are diversities and separations present in Christian churches that some would argue are biblically sanctioned and mandated. However, these issues, while important, are not the focus of this article. Setting aside those conflicts, it is important to consider the apparent contradiction that Christian communities, which are intended to be inclusive, are often precisely the opposite of that value. This is particularly important in light of the findings of the 2008 study from Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. The study indicates that religion in America is “non-dogmatic and diverse and politically relevant,” which is reflective of the great diversity of religious affiliations, practices, and beliefs in the U.S. (Pew Forum). Statistically, immigration has played a major role in the shift in the U.S. religious landscape, whereby the majority of those who affiliate with a religious tradition are from communities of color.

Another assumption involves the inevitable connection between the church and the values of society. At times these contradictions exist because the sins and discriminations of the world are brought into Christian communities, which are not immune to these forces. The church brings into its community the ideas and values of the world, and when those values are at odds with Christian values they must be challenged.

Thus, teaching in a diverse Christian community entails asking critical questions about who is present and who is not present in the community, and why different categories of people might be absent. It requires a thorough understanding of social differences based in marginalization, and how these play out in the lives of religious communities. To teach well in a diverse context, then, involves openness, critical thinking and a deep understanding of differences understood from a social structural perspective. It requires a stance of attentiveness, a stance that both acknowledges and welcomes that which is new, unfamiliar, or different.

Attentive teaching is essential for educating in a diverse community. What are the characteristics of attentive teaching? This type of teaching attends to the biblical value of hospitality as a necessary aspect of religious community, and a grounding stance of openness. It attends to the development of social analysis and critical thinking skills in teachers so they can examine the make-up of a community, understanding both its diverse and homogenous components and the reasons why these exist. It attends to forming critical minds and discerning hearts in teachers in order to develop in them the habits of mind and heart to understand difference and engage it constructively.

Consider this scenario:

You are the head of religious education in your church in an urban setting. You are responsible for training a cadre of volunteer teachers for work with youth. The neighborhood that your church is located in has been in flux and in transition for the last 30 years. Formerly considered one of the “big steeple” churches in the area, the more affluent white members have moved out to the suburbs and subsequently moved their membership to their suburban churches.

The changing face of the neighborhood was in part due to African Americans moving into the area and, after 20 years, a new population of immigrants began to move into the area, creating an uncomfortable dynamic between the African American community and the new immigrant communities. Because of the changing demographics of the area, your church has transitioned from a predominantly white Euro-American population to one that is more racially diverse. Socio-economically, the diversity of social class that has been a part of this church has become more pronounced due to the influx of new immigrants. Language issues are now part of educating. Social service needs for immigrant members of the church now compete with a wider fellowship culture of the congregation.

The demographic of the congregation is roughly 1/3 Euro-American, 1/3 African American and 1/3 Asian immigrant. The leadership of the church is predominantly white. The volunteer teachers are predominantly African American. The demographic of the youth population is 1/2 African American and 1/2 Asian immigrant.

We assert that in order to be effective educators in a diverse context engaging in attentive teaching, teachers must ground themselves in the following educational practices: attending to hospitality, understanding the social texts and contexts, and forming critical minds and discerning hearts.

This scenario is not uncommon in urban contexts where a rapidly transitioning social environment transformed the makeup and the social dynamic of the church community. If we were to take seriously the act of attending in order to teach in diverse contexts, what kind of teachers would we want to educate our children? What would the teachers need to know to be effective educators? And what kind of people would they need to be? We assert that in order to be effective educators in a diverse context engaging in attentive teaching, teachers must ground themselves in the following educational practices: attending to hospitality, understanding the social texts and contexts, and forming critical minds and discerning hearts.

Practices nurture the spiritual discipline of attending. This practice helps us to be observant and comprehending about the diverse reality of people with whom we engage. This discipline is not something learned once and for all, as we learn initially to teach. Rather, it is a discipline that must be nurtured throughout one's life as ongoing faith formation. The more we learn to attend deeply and comprehensively, the more we will be aware of the experiences and realities of people who are different from what we understand from our own lives. In short, the more we learn to be attentive, the more we are opened to diversity. Mature practices of attending are those that form attentive teaching, which creates effective teaching in diverse communities.

Attending to Hospitality

Teachers who teach competently in a diverse context must have their faith grounded in the practices of hospitality. As Ana María Pineda states so clearly, "In the traditions shaped by the Bible, offering hospitality is a moral imperative" (Pineda, 32). For her this means attending to the presence of strangers

and guests in our midst, and committing ourselves to be good hosts to them.

Grounded in the sense of moral imperative, hospitality creates a sense of welcome inclusion (Talvacchia, 94-95). When we welcome someone into a learning space, we do it with warmth and respect and an openness that makes the person feel wanted. By our openness and warmth, we indicate our desire to share both our resources and ourselves. Hospitality is the positive disposition we have to invite others into the environment we create. As Lynn Westfield reminds us, hospitality is an attitude (Westfield, 48). But welcome must also be paired with inclusion which involves attending to the experiences of the stranger, or the alien, and make those experiences a vital part of one's thinking, understanding, knowledge base, and teaching.

Attending to hospitality means attending to diverse expressions and cultural codes of hospitality. Different cultures understand hospitality in different ways. Within church communities these diverse understandings must be negotiated together. And thus, attentive teachers seek to engage the variety of expression and intention around hospitality that is present in the group. What is hospitable in some cultures can seem to be inhospitable in another culture. Thus, understanding the variety of culturally defined notions of hospitality is a fundamental practice of attentive teaching.

For example, Westfield notes that constitutive elements of women's practice of hospitality are intimacy, reciprocity, and safety. (Westfield, 48) Some cultures may thrive in the intimacy of this hospitality, while others might find it inhibiting. As another example, in the Korean American community, eating together with Bible study, worship, and prayer is an essential part not only of hospitality but also of practicing faith. Pak, et al., calls this practice of hospitality "ricing," sharing food (rice) and resources together as a practice of openness and inclusion. In the Korean culture, "to satisfy hunger is to live, and to eat rice together is to share life resources with others" (Pak, et al., 89).

Attentive teaching invites students to participate in a variety of conversations that are imperative to their formation as religiously grounded persons. These conversations introduce students to the history of their community, to the moral norms that define it, to the sacred Scripture that grounds it, and to the ideas that form an understanding of God in the world.

Gallagher refers to teaching as an act of intellectual hospitality (Gallagher, 137). Teachers act as hosts to introduce students to conversations already under way to help ease their disorientation and promote their participation in the ongoing

conversation. Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass would add that such a stance as a teacher is also an invitation to a religious practice. In entering into a Christian practice, one finds “that you are part of a community that has been doing this for centuries— not doing it as well as it should, to be sure, but doing it steadily, in conscious continuity with stories of the Bible and in frequent conversations about how to do it better” (Bass, 7). This act of introduction is, then, an act of hospitality. It commits itself to the moral stance of welcoming strangers, it acts out of an attitude of welcome inclusion, and it understands the cultural codedness of acts of hospitality and seeks to communicate through an awareness of this cultural coding.

In our scenario of the changing urban church presented above, what ways could the church community attend to hospitality? In what ways can they find rituals to welcome “strangers?” What conversations would the leadership have about diverse expressions of hospitality, given the diverse nature of the congregation? How might this spirit of hospitality permeate from the usher at the door, to the sermon from the pulpit, to the teachers teaching Sunday school, to fellowship at the coffee hour, or to the AA groups that meet in the basement? What type of educational programming could arise from these diverse groups in conversation with each other? What are the conversations that have been going on for many years? Who will introduce newcomers into these conversations? These are all acts of attending to hospitality.

Attending to the Rigorous Study of Texts and Contexts

Attentive teaching also requires an understanding of diversity that is more than an understanding of variety. While it is true that diverse environments imply variety, noting that fact is not enough to educate in a diverse community. Rather, to educate in a diverse context, teachers need to understand that the variety they see is connected to different power relationships among the diverse groups, which creates different experiences of living in the world. Some of these experiences are of privilege while others are of marginalization. Properly understood, understanding diversity means understanding diverse groups and their experience of privilege and marginalization. This is the process of doing social analysis.

Social analysis is the practice of rigorous study of texts and contexts. Texts can be sacred texts of a

community, e.g., the Bible and Confessions. But texts also include important traditions that have formed and continue to form that community, such as polity, rules and disciplines, spiritual writings, and oral and written histories. Contexts have more to do with a holistic sense of culture, identity, and values that make up a community of believers. For example, this can be the economic structure of a society, its political institutions and ideological stances, or the demographics of the community and neighborhood. Also, it can be a more amorphous aspect, such as the personality of the community or its ethos.

Contexts and texts are always in conversation with each other. Texts are part of contexts but contexts are more encompassing in their embrace of the full picture of a social world. Looking at diversity through the lens of this practice allows us to examine the deeper realities of what we see, and to put a critical perspective on those realities. It forces us to think deeply about what we see and experience in our social context and to understand it fully.

Attentive teachers need an understanding of social analysis so they can understand the texts and contexts of the students with whom they will be interacting. Attentive teachers will teach most effectively in diverse communities when they understand the complex textural realities of their students.

Doing Social Analysis

How does one do this textured analysis? That is, how does one do social analysis? Rather than a tool of experts or intellectual elites, social analysis is a communal process of persons examining their social context and making critical judgments about what they see. More importantly, social analysis mixes personal observation with historical and objective knowledge about a community or group so as to move the analysis beyond personal experience alone, allowing an analytical and empirical basis for judgment. An important value in any social analysis is an assumption that local is inextricably connected to global. Thus, questions about contexts must have local, national, and international perspectives.

Fred Kammer thinks of social analysis as “asking the journalist’s questions: who, what, why, when, where, and how?” (Kammer, 41). He understands the intention of social analysis to be the process of asking the fundamental questions of everything that engages the community on a local, national, and international level. With this information, a community delves deeply into the material critically and honestly. For Kammer, asking the right questions is the essence of good social analysis.

Using these journalistic questions, Kammer provides a clear and usable explanation of a “how to” that is useful for our discussion. This process is a simple act of gathering as much information as possible about a particular problem in the community. He believes that many well-meaning religious leaders attempt to make it more difficult than it is. Social analysis is neither about dramatic revelation nor about a ponderous examination. Rather, it is about using all of the resources we have to gather all of the available facts.

1. Who and What

As a beginning, the “who” and “what” questions fill out the particulars of the basic facts that have been assembled. Asking comprehensive, detailed questions is the key to engaging the “who” and “what” questions. For example, in our urban church scenario, one can ask questions such as: Who are the people in congregation? Who are the ‘old guard’ and who are the newcomers? What are their characteristics in terms of age, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, economic status, and status as differently-abled? What is their relationship to the institution? What are the defining characteristics of the church? What is its polity? Where is the money located, and does this group have any access to it? Who makes decisions for the congregation? Who does it affect positively and whom does it affect negatively? Who are the teachers and leaders?

2. When

“When” is the question of timing. Kammer believes this question considers the present and future, but also, at least three senses of history. The first is the sense of history that seeks objectively to discover what actually happened. This is the most difficult to ascertain because of the inability to know fully the exact facts of an event. The second sense of history involves articulating the facts of an event as a person has remembered them. Of course, memory is selective and is engaged in an interpretive function. As such, the details conveyed in describing the event indicate to the listener what is really important to the speaker. The third sense of history for Kammer is one in which the speaker selects what he or she remembers, in which what the speaker remembers is tied to an ideological perspective or worldview. An example of this would be the revisionist historical projects of immigrants, women, and other marginalized groups to recover memories that tell a fuller picture of history.

In many ways such experiences of remembering can affect a person’s sense of the present and future.

For many people, having sense of the future determines their present. And how they understand their present is often determined by their history. Thus, the “when” question puts the “who” and “what” questions in historical perspective. From our example, the community might ask questions about how the church was founded, how the mission of the church was developed, and whom this community was intended to serve. What alternative histories exist and when were they developed? In what ways does this history point us in a direction toward the changing face of the church?

3. Where

Asking the question “where” locates the “who” and “what” concretely within institutions and structures in a society. In this reality we see connections between people, events, and institutions that shape the particulars of the community’s life in specific social structures. The “where” question situates us in the organizations, institutions, and social systems that affect our daily lives. These structures “convey that what is freeing, community-building, and love-generating (grace) and what is isolating, alienating, and destructive (sin) is structured into social, cultural, political, and economic realities” (Kammer, 52). These structures are not just abstract realities removed from a community’s experience. In fact, the community can internalize the beliefs of these structures and the values and attitudes they express to become part of the community’s own belief system.

Thus, a social analysis must question the role of social institutions in the life of the community, and question the viewpoints, attitudes, and values that shape the way the community thinks and acts. For example, in our scenario, the following questions could be asked: what are the major institutions in the community? What are the boundaries of the church’s service area? What one social or economic feature of the community has the greatest impact on the majority of people? What is the composition of the population? What are the political entities that are part of the community? Are there any major industries? Are they in growth or in decline?

4. How

The question of “how” assesses the impact and interaction of those social institutions on the community. In order to do this the community must examine what Kammer refers to as the “institutional faces” of an organization, that is, the way in which an institution presents itself to outsiders as well as to insiders. The outer face of an institution acts in the external environment and is the face shown to the

public. The inner face of the institution is harder to see, and is represented by its organizational structures, decision-making modes, personnel policies, and actual personnel.

Social analysis examines institutions both in their internal and external faces to see how they are acting and how they are designed. For example, in our scenario, the community might want to ask a question about the local school system. What does the school system say externally about its inclusion of diverse groups of people? How is that lived out internally in its structure and personnel and its mandates for the classroom activity and the curricula? Another example would be the church itself: how does it describe itself in its mission statement, and how does it live out this reality in its activities, governing structure, educational programming and its liturgy?

The question of “how” asks a further question about particular types of institutions. This question seeks to establish with clarity the relationships between the institutions. Specifically, the questions of “how” look to uncover the institutional alliances among the organizations so as to understand power relationships. For example, in what ways does the church relate to the school? How does the major employer of the area relate to the local government and the church? What is the relationship between social service organizations for poor communities and the church?

Finally, the “how” question examines the social divisions that are part of these institutional structures. The divisions of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and physical or mental ability are powerful stratifications in organizations, and their analysis helps teachers to understand diversity in important and powerful ways. Kammer states, “We then must ask repeatedly what social divisions are at work? *How* are we divided in this institution or neighborhood and *how* do these groups interact?”⁶ These questions are exactly the type of questions that can be asked in our urban church example.

5. Why

The “why” question is arguably one of the most difficult aspects of social analysis because it enters into areas of conscious and unconscious motivations, explicit and implicit reasons, and acknowledged and unacknowledged needs and wants. Yet, to ask “why” unmask a simple question: what is the reason for what we have observed, examined, and analyzed around us? Who benefits from the situation remaining the way it currently is? Who will bear an unjust burden because of this set of relationships? In many ways, then, the “why” question forces the community to confront unjust social relationships and

begin to change them to just social relationships. This can be a point at which the community loses heart in its social analysis.

Before this step in the social analysis, the community focuses on establishing facts and relationships. Now those facts and relationships have judgments attached to them. At times these judgments can be contested among competing groups in the congregation. This is where the community needs to be reminded of St. Paul’s scriptural mandate: “I therefore...beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1–3). The community members may disagree about the reasons why relationships exist, but these differences can and must be negotiated toward the larger aim of understanding the situations they see around them.

It is this combination of practices — hospitality, social analysis, and compassion — that makes up the next required aspect of attentive teaching: the capacity to develop a critical mind and a discerning heart.

The Practice of Compassion: Forming Critical Minds and Discerning Hearts

So far we have seen that forming attentive teachers who are capable of teaching in diverse religious communities requires attending to hospitality and developing the skills to understand texts and contexts in a community through the method of social analysis. But these two aspects are not sufficient in and of themselves. Hospitality without analysis is compromised, for inhospitable actions could result from our attempts at hospitality. Social analysis uses critical thinking to articulate a clear-eyed understanding of social context, and its realities of privilege and discrimination. But human beings are more than the social forces and institutions that affect them. Human beings are also individuals who have hope and fears and needs and joys. Thus, hospitality

must be paired with social analysis, which must be paired with compassion.

It is this combination of practices — hospitality, social analysis, and compassion — that makes up the next required aspect of attentive teaching: the capacity to develop a critical mind and a discerning heart. Talvacchia uses this image to denote the fundamental spiritual grounding for multicultural teaching. She proceeds from an important assumption: the spirituality of multicultural teaching entails changing our understanding about those who are “other” to us, rather than merely changing our teaching techniques. This requires a spiritual conversion that entails attentiveness to the experiences of those who live the reality of marginalization, as well as a commitment to stand with socially marginalized groups and work with them in their empowerment (Talvacchia, 7). The practice of compassion is the act of attending to the experience of the other *and* a commitment to stand with and for the other’s empowerment.

Through attentiveness, which is grounded in the practice of compassion, the process of forming critical minds and discerning hearts takes place. Attentiveness involves connecting one’s heart empathetically to the real experiences of people living in a social system that frequently does not benefit them. Theologically, attentiveness involves what Thich Nhat Hanh refers to as “mindfulness,” that is, “keeping one’s consciousness alive in the present reality” (Hanh, 1987, 11). Attentiveness as mindfulness allows us to access compassion as a resource to understand the experiences of struggle that we and other human beings face. It means, as the late William Sloan Coffin challenged, “If you are not outraged, you are not paying attention.”

The practice of compassion is the grounding impulse of multicultural teaching. It embodies a tension in our understanding that allows us to see our students and ourselves both as unique persons *and* as members of social identity grouping(s). Holding these realities in tension is an important aspect of the practice of compassion: it is a spiritual practice. The spirituality of pedagogy sensitive to a multicultural community must embody this tension, for as Talvacchia states,

In order to teach effectively in a diverse context, teachers need a spirituality that engages both critical social analysis and empathic sensitivity. In short, a spirituality of multicultural teaching demands that teachers form themselves with *critical minds*, capable of seeing the social structural realities of society and their effects on learners, and *discerning hearts*, capable of viewing each person as an individual who has hopes,

dreams, aptitudes, skills, fears, insecurities and scars. The spirituality of multicultural teaching involves attentiveness to the twin realities of social discrimination and personal and group resistance to it. It is this combination of critical thinking and discerning compassion that marks teachers who are ready to engage the complexity as well as the rewards of teaching in diverse contexts. (Talvacchia, 10)

Attentive teaching necessarily holds in tension the reality of a critical mind and a discerning heart, and brings that spiritual stance to bear in our efforts to teach in a diverse context.

Step One: Listening and Understanding the Experience of the Other

Talvacchia articulates three steps in the process of spiritually forming a critical mind and a discerning heart. The first step listens to and understands the experience of the other. However, this can be only done through attentiveness to several concerns. To listen and understand experiences of others, we first need to seek to understand our own marginalization, or the lack of it, in relation to the experiences of others. This puts our world in dialogue with the world of others who are different from us. We seek to understand the marginalization of others empathetically. Next, we see those experiences of marginalization — both our own and others — from the perspective of power, understanding the privilege of some groups over others in an unjust society.

In the example of our urban church, this step might play out in the following way. An African American church schoolteacher who can access her own experiences of exclusion in the church has the possibility of greater empathetic awareness of the experience of exclusion that an immigrant member might feel. Experiences of marginalization can at times impede our awareness about how others too might be marginalized. A spiritual leap of faith and vision allows a person to access one’s own pains and compassionately stand with others who do not share the same history of marginalization. In this way, the practice of compassion invokes an attentiveness that translates into effective teaching in a diverse context.

Step Two: Seeing Clearly

The second step in developing a critical mind and discerning heart is seeing clearly. This involves attentiveness to conversion in our perception of the other — to turn away from the fear of those who are different and turn toward acceptance of differing worldviews and experiences. One of the challenges of

a diverse context for teachers is that they are required to communicate with and engage people with whom they might not have a basis to do so. For example, in our urban church scenario, a teacher at an adult education seminar who is from an upper middle-class economic background may bring certain assumptions about choices and possibilities for one's life that might not be true for someone of a lower economic class. Without a conversion to understanding clearly the experiences of another group and what is possible for them, this teacher will be ineffective and possibly offensive to others gathered.

Once you listen and understand empathetically, you have the potential of that awareness to convert you. This means awareness that others might have something to teach you that you cannot see due to your own privilege. For example, when you are reading the Bible with poor people, you have to be ready for them to lead you in an understanding about the Bible that may be outside of your framework.

Step Three: Acting Differently

The third step in developing a critical mind and a discerning heart challenges teachers to act differently. This involves integrating the steps of listening, understanding, and seeing clearly in our hearts and our minds so that our teaching practice demonstrably changes. Attentive teaching in a diverse context comprehends the experiences of others who are different, and accepts the conversion of heart and mind. This leads to acting differently, which forms convictions. These convictions ground attentive teaching in a moral sense of embracing diversity and responding to its demand pedagogically.

For example, let's return to our initial component of attentive teaching: the act of hospitality. Acting differently asks several questions of hospitality: who are the strangers among us? How do I/we interact with them? In my capacity as a teacher, how have I made space for and introduced the ongoing stories of a community? How has our worship changed to reflect the newcomers in our midst? How has our pedagogy and curriculum changed to incorporate the educational concerns of the new group? In what ways can we concretely establish a sense of welcome and inclusion in our educational programming? Acting differently challenges attentive teachers to not just "talk the talk" but to "walk the walk" so that genuine openness to a diverse community is embodied in our curriculum, our programs, and our worship.

...faith formation must embrace a spiritual stance of attentive teaching that grows and develops throughout a person's lifetime. We must be trained for the church of the present and anticipate the church of the future, grounded in the traditions of the past. The challenge and the hope of teaching in a diverse community is this: that we embrace our differences in finding our common vision and goal.

To be sure, taking this challenge seriously means that certain other programs may not be funded in this time of reduced resources and tight budgets. There will be some sacrifices to the "status quo" to make space and room to practice hospitality to the "strangers among us." But this is the conviction that leads to acting differently—a response to God's invitation to continue the process of co-creating God's kingdom here on earth. These and our everyday practices are all "tangled up with the things God is doing in the world" (Bass and Dykstra, 4).

Let us also be clear. We do not always do this well or perfectly. But when we set our teaching in this context, we, they, are transformed. So an innocent "aha" moment becomes a practice of thanksgiving. A shared experience of hurt during the course of the class becomes a practice of solidarity with the oppressed. Making space for a quiet shy student to articulate her understanding of a Bible verse becomes a practice of hospitality. These are all practices that, when seen "tangled up with the things God is doing in the world," become the activities of the Holy Ground. And we all take off our shoes.

"It is not that the world has become more multicultural. We have always been a world of pluralistic cultures and peoples....we now accept the reality of that pluralism as a norm" (Talvacchia, 1). The Pew study reminds us that the religious landscape is changing in the twenty-first century and that it will become more diverse in terms of ethnic groups, beliefs, and affiliations. To be formed in faith with practices and attitudes shaped solely by the demands of the twentieth century is inadequate. The only way that churches can accommodate the dramatic changes that have occurred from the

twentieth to the twenty-first centuries is to embrace and accept diversity as normative.

Negotiating these changes cannot be accomplished by a one-time teacher training session. Rather, faith formation must embrace a spiritual stance of attentive teaching that grows and develops throughout a person's lifetime. We must be trained for the church of the present and anticipate the church of the future, grounded in the traditions of the past. The challenge and the hope of teaching in a diverse community is this: that we embrace our differences in finding our common vision and goal.

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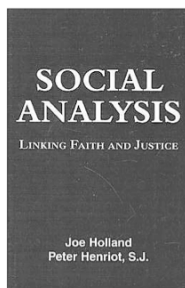
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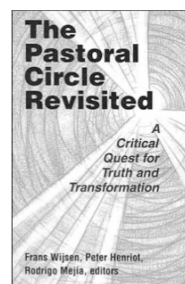
Resources for Social Analysis



Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice

Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983) [\$19]

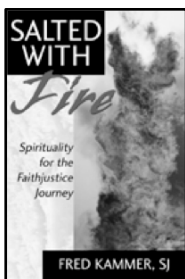
Social Analysis is the classic handbook to the pastoral circle, a four-step process that opens up dynamics for faith and action. The process—insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning—can be applied to the a variety of settings: education and action for justice, small groups and large groups, and organizing people for social justice. This is still the best introduction to social analysis, combining the theory and practice of social analysis.



The Pastoral Circle Revisited

Frans Wiljzen, Peter Henriot, Rodrigo Mejia, editors. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005) [\$22]

To mark the 25th anniversary of the book, *Social Analysis*, this volume explores the use of the pastoral circle in parish and community life as well as in adult and higher education settings with articles from a variety of scholars and religious professionals. Helpful appendices lay out the basic steps in the pastoral circle.



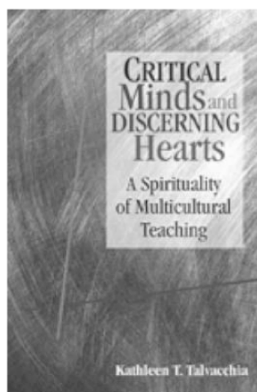
Salted with Fire: Spirituality for the Faithjustice Journey

Fred Kammer S.J. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008) [\$18]

Salted with Fire blends the realities of social justice and the burdens of working for justice and peace with a hopeful spirituality. The author is a social service practitioner, who can deal both with the intricacies of social analysis as well as with a spirituality of coping, hoping, surviving, and even flourishing amidst often discouraging conditions and bureaucratic red tape. Adopting a four-fold "pastoral circle" as his conceptual tool, Kammer offers a solid, practical, and pastoral primer for those seeking to build a more humane and just society.

Recommended Resources

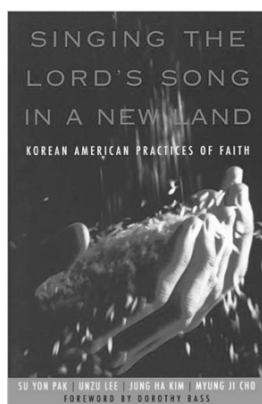
Teaching in Diverse Communities



Critical Minds and Discerning Hearts: A Spirituality of Multicultural Teaching

Kathleen Talvacchia (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003) [\$16.99]

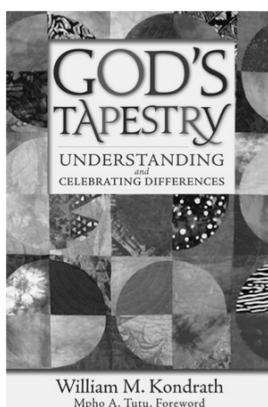
Kathleen Talvacchia explores the understandings of mind and the habits of heart that she sees as imperative for the work of teaching in a culturally diverse world. She writes that the “spirituality of multicultural teaching entails changing our understanding about those who are ‘other’ to us, rather than merely changing our teaching techniques.” This book goes beyond the “how-to’s” of teaching to offer a pedagogy founded in spirituality, providing teachers with the elements necessary to create a truly multicultural classroom. Chapters include: Perceptive Attentiveness, Listening and Understanding, Seeing Clearly, Acting Differently, and Staying Faithful.



Singing The Lord's Song In A New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith

Su Yon Pak, Unzu Lee, and Jung Ha Kim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005) [\$24.95]

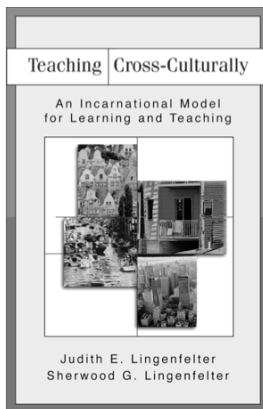
Singing the Lord's Song in a New Land explores how faith practices work differently in a racial/ethnic community. It is the only book to focus solely on ministry in Korean American churches. The authors identify eight key practices and explain how they are unique to the Korean American church: keeping the Sabbath, singing the faith, praying together, remembering the generations before, shaping the generations ahead, building community, piety, and hospitality.



God's Tapestry: Understanding and Celebrating Differences

William M. Kondrath (Herdon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008) [\$20]

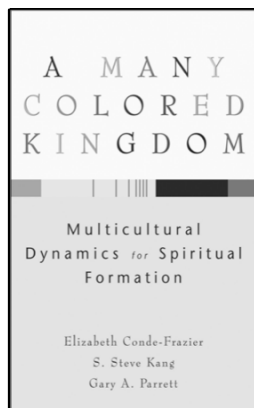
Our differences are our greatest blessings and our greatest challenges, maintains William Kondrath. Theologically and ecologically, differences foster life and growth, but discord within denominations and congregations frequently have to do with the inability of individuals and groups to deeply understand and value differences. In *God's Tapestry*, Kondrath shows us how to embrace our multiculturalism — our differences of race, culture, gender, age, theology, language, sexual identity, and so forth. He does this by exploring differences on four levels — personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural. He also demonstrates a threefold process for becoming multicultural: recognizing our differences, understanding those differences and their significance and consequences, and valuing or celebrating those differences.



Teaching Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching

Judith E. and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) [\$14.99]

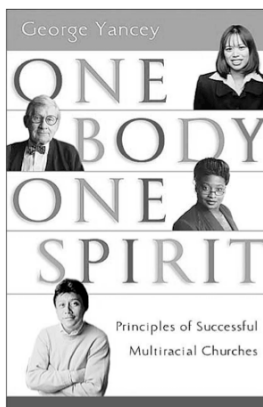
Teaching Cross-Culturally is a challenging consideration of what it means to be a Christian educator in a culture other than your own. The book helps teachers understand their own culture of teaching and learning, become effective learners in another cultural context with specific focus on learning for teaching, and reflect on the cultural differences and conflicts they have with others using the perspectives of Scripture and faith in Jesus Christ. Chapters include: Teaching Cross-Culturally, The Hidden Curriculum, Understanding Traditional Learning Strategies, Intelligence and Learning Styles, and The Role of the Teacher.



A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) [\$22]

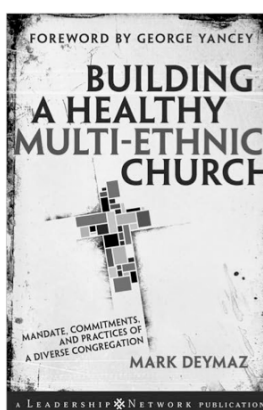
How do ethnic and cultural diversity affect spiritual formation? *A Many Colored Kingdom* explores Christian formation and teaching in the church, with a particular focus on intercultural and interethnic relationships. The authors describe relevant aspects of their own personal journeys, presented in compelling narrative form; key issues emerging from their studies and teaching germane to race, culture, and ethnicity; and teaching implications that bring right practice to bear on church ministry. A final chapter contains a conversation among the authors as they respond to one another's insights and concerns.



One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches

George Yancey (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003) [\$15]

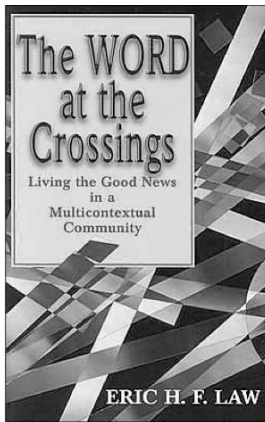
Sociologist George Yancey's pioneering research on multiracial churches offers key principles for church leaders wanting to minister to people from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds. Insights from real-life congregations provide concrete examples of how churches can welcome people of all heritages, giving them a sense of ownership and partnership in the life of the church. Based on data from a landmark Lilly Endowment study of multiracial churches across America, this volume offers insights and implications for church leadership, worship styles, conflict resolution and much more.



Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church

Mark Deymaz (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) [\$23.95]

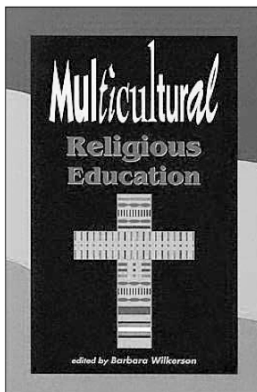
Through personal stories, proven experience and a thorough analysis of the biblical text, *Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church* illustrates both the biblical mandate for the multi-ethnic church as well as the seven core commitments required to bring it about. Mark DeYmaz, pastor of a multi-ethnic church, writes from his experience and his extensive study of how to plant, grow, and encourage more ethnically diverse churches. He argues that the "homogenous unit principle" will soon become irrelevant and that the most effective way to spread the Gospel in an increasingly diverse world is through strong and vital multi-ethnic churches.



The Word at the Crossings: Living the Good News in a Multicontextual Community

Eric H.F. Law (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004) [\$18.99]

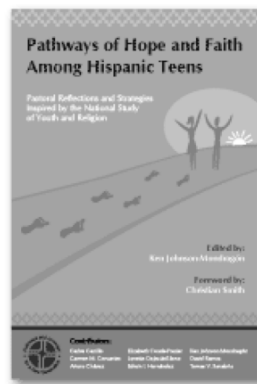
In the introduction to the book Eric Law writes, “As I struggled how to share the gospel in a pluralistic world, I began to see more clearly that it is not a matter of *what* I teach, but *how* I teach. The process of arriving at the preaching moment is as important as the final sermon. The process that I use to teach is as significant as the content of the lesson. The more useful question I have found myself asking when I plan my sermons or agenda for a meeting or a class: Does the process that I use follow the pattern of Christ’s way, truth, and life?” In this book Law proposes different practical disciplines, models, and techniques for teaching and preaching at the crossings.



Multicultural Religious Education

Barbara Wilkerson, editor (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1997) [\$25.95]

One of the most comprehensive and thorough books on multicultural religious education, it gives the foundational bases of effective multicultural religious education: Biblical, theological, psychological, and sociological. It covers virtually all major cultural and racial groups in North America. The book also offers a practical research-based treatment of how to construct a successful multicultural religious education curriculum and how to teach religion effectively to learners from a wide variety of cultural and racial backgrounds.

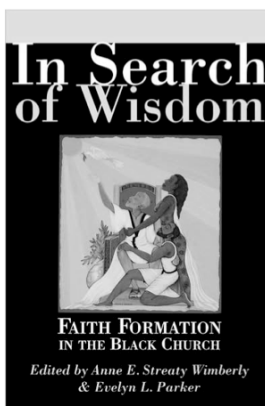


Pathways of Hope and Faith among Hispanic Teens

Ken Johnson-Mondragón, editor (Stockton: Instituto Fe y Vida, 2007) [\$29.95]

Contact: www.feyvida.org

Building on the National Study of Youth and Religion, leading Catholic and Protestant experts recount in unprecedented detail the experiences of God, faith, community, youth ministry, and family among the fastest-growing segment of young people in the country — Latinos. The book includes young Hispanics describing their faith and hopes in their own words; an understanding of the major issues affecting their religious development and life prospects; and strategies for improve your ministry or family life with insightful pastoral recommendations.



In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church

Anne E. Wimberly and Evelyn Parker, editors (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002)

[\$19]

This book is a collection of essays that unlock the way toward wise thinking and the intergenerational transmission of wisdom not only in the Black Church but for all communities that seek to teach the ancient art of discernment. It integrates the understandings of mentoring, discipleship, and healing on both the personal and communal levels. At a time when Christian educators face the need for creating community for a postmodern generation, this book offers a way to seek wisdom from the rich heritage of the black church. Chapters include: Forming Wisdom through Cultural Rootedness, Forming Wisdom through Cross-Generational Connectedness, Wisdom Formation of Youth, Wisdom Formation in Middle and Late Adulthood, and Forming a Spirituality of Wisdom.



Adult Faith Formation: A Catholic Vision

Edmund Gordon

These are interesting times for Christians in the United States, and for Catholics in particular. Sociologists have been studying believers for many years, and over the last twenty-five years or so, a group has been paying close attention to Catholics. Since they have been asking the same questions over a period of years, they can see trends emerging. Here are a few implications of their findings.

- *Catholic parishes will have fewer liturgies every Sunday.* More important than the looming priest shortage, all of the studies show that those who are under 40 are much less likely to participate in liturgy on a weekly basis than those over forty (CARA, 2002, 4).
- *Catholic parishes will have fewer financial resources.* Not only will there be fewer people who attend liturgy on a weekly basis, but younger Catholics give a smaller percent of their income to the Church than do older Catholics.
- *There will be a smaller percentage of Catholic children in Catholic schools.* Despite the fact that there is a correlation between attending Catholic schools and commitment to the Church, our present schools are often located in areas where there is a declining Catholic population. The parents of school-age children are less likely to have attended Catholic schools themselves than those of previous generations (CARA 2002, 3). And the relatively high cost of Catholic schools means parents may need to sacrifice to send their children there, a choice they may not be willing to make. In all probability there will be fewer Catholic schools in the near future.
- *There will be fewer marriages performed in the Church.* Despite the growth in the number of Catholics in the United States, the number of marriages has declined from 348,999 in 1985 to 207,112 in 2005. Catholics under forty are marrying later, and are more likely to marry someone not of the Catholic faith and marry outside of the Church (D'Antonio, et al., 144).

The Pew Religious Landscape Survey of 2008 said, "Approximately one-third of the survey respondents who say they were raised Catholic no longer describe themselves as Catholic. This means that roughly 10% of all Americans are former Catholics." Studies of American Catholic teens (Smith) and generations of adults (D'Antonio et al.) indicate continuing diminishment in commitment to the Church. "Young adult Catholics are less likely than their elders to say that their faith is 'the most important part' or 'among the most important parts' of their lives" (CARA, 2002, 4).

Edmund F. Gordon is the Secretary for Catholic Education and the Director of Religious Education of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware. He has been the president of the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) and served as the project manager and executive producer of the video-based catechist formation program called *Echoes of Faith* (RCL-Benziger).

And yet, the future is not inevitable. It is only inevitable if the institutional Catholic Church does not change its way of being church in this country and this culture. Someone once said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

It is my firm belief that we need to change our focus and priorities to place more of our resources and efforts into forming adults. Numerous catechetical documents published since the 1970s have articulated a vision of catechesis with adult faith formation at its center. Yet, in practice this appears more a hope and dream rather than an operational imperative. We are still doing what we did for the last one hundred years and expecting different results.

If the current trends in the Catholic Church are to be reversed or stemmed, the Church must increasingly direct its efforts to invigorating its adults, and move them from membership to discipleship (*National Directory of Catechesis*, 47, A3). We will need a different culture in the Catholic Church, one that takes seriously the importance of lifelong learning, and puts more emphasis on and resources into creating a Church of adult disciples. The creation of this culture must be purposeful and intentional.

Dr. Thomas Walters of St. Meinrad Seminary says that all discussions of catechesis—and in fact, education—focus on four areas: the learner, the teacher, the content, and the methods. This article will use these categories as a guide for reflecting on the topic of teaching adults, and the role this plays in creating a new church culture.

The Adult Learner

There is no “generic” adult. Adulthood encompasses the longest part of life and can be divided in a number of different ways. One such classification parses it this way: young adulthood (20-45), mid-life (46-65) and old age (65+). Yet even these categories are elastic. At one time, one could fairly well describe the various life tasks associated with the ages of adulthood. This is no longer the case. For instance, today we find persons in mid-life with younger children, seniors who have the vitality and life force of those much younger, and those in their mid- to late-thirties just beginning their families.

In other words, some of the developmental tasks assigned to each of these groups are sliding back and forth among the age groups. Younger adulthood is lengthening, extending from the early twenties to the mid-forties, as a result of people living longer and taking longer to accomplish many of the development tasks of early adult life (Wuthnow, xvi). Despite the

challenges of categorization, it is helpful to look at the adults in a congregation to see what programs might be most helpful to persons in various stages of life. Each of these age groups has a different set of needs for the development of their spiritual lives.

Another way to perceive American adults is to think of the generations of adults. This is an approach favored by many sociologists who study American Catholics (see D’Antonio, et al.). One such study states, “Our previous studies have shown that Catholics who are born at different points of history learn to approach the faith and the Church in different ways” (D’Antonio, et al., 11).

The general breakdown of these historical cohorts is:

- *Pre-Vatican II Catholics*, whose central values and spiritual life were shaped in the period before the Second Vatican Council, are the adults born before 1945. This group makes up about seventeen percent of adult Catholics. Some describe them as “Catechism Catholics” because a catechism was the principal tool used in their faith formation. These Catholics “respect civil and religious authorities; they were taught to do what their elders asked them to do. The Church is very important part of their lives; they believe in it and know they have to support it. They are most likely to emphasize the Church authority and the importance of participating in Church” (D’Antonio, et al., 70). They have a strong Catholic identity (defined by how important the Catholic Church is to one’s life, whether one would ever think of leaving the church, and attendance at the Eucharist).
- *Vatican II Catholics*, born between 1946 and 1964, are formed in the Catholic Church of Vatican II. They comprise about thirty-three percent of adult church members. They are the generation of seekers (Roof) who have “mixed feelings about authority (versus making up their own minds) and institutional commitment (versus personal spirituality)” (D’Antonio, et al., 70). Various studies have shown that commitment to the Catholic Church and a sense of Catholic identity are less strong among this generation than among their parent’s cohort. At the same time, one still finds that much of the Catholic identity of this generation has been inherited from the pre-Vatican II Catholics, and the residue of an ethnic Catholic culture persists, especially among the oldest members of the cohort. One

can see, however, a loosening of institutional ties among these Baby Boomer Catholics.

- *Post-Vatican II Catholics* fall into the group of people born between 1964 and 1980, which has been labeled Generation X. They are sometimes called “Christian Catholics” to emphasize their lack of a strong Catholic identity. These adults comprise about forty percent of adult membership and are much more loosely connected to the institutional Catholic Church. Scott Appleby, professor at the University of Notre Dame, said, “Previous generations had their Catholic identity given to them. This generation has had to create their own.” One often finds they don’t create their identity out of a whole cloth but rather out of bits and pieces they find helpful and meaningful. As such, their Catholic identity is more like a quilt (see Wuthnow).
- *Millennials* are the emerging adult generation, born in the 1980s and ‘90s, who are coming of age and being formed by the culture of the late 1990s and the beginning of the new century. At this time they make up less than ten percent of the Catholic adult population. However, it appears that the Millennials have an even more tenuous relationship to the Catholic Church than the Gen-Xers. Catholic identity for this group is similar to the post-Vatican II group, that is, loosely connected and weakly committed. Yet this generation seems to emphasize many devotional aspects that puzzle their elders, especially the Vatican II Catholics, who hold most of the leadership positions in church ministry (except for youth ministry).

These four generations gather at the same Eucharistic table as sons and daughters of God. Each of these generations brings a different set of experiences to the faith, and looks at faith through a different lens. Is this diversity a blessing or a burden? Adult faith formation programs need to honor these differences and keep them in mind when designing educational programs.

Reaching the Young Adult Population

Almost every conference or symposium in Catholic circles has at least one workshop about reaching young adults. Everyone has the same concern: “How can we reach out to the members of this age group,

who are nearly invisible in many of our parishes, and draw them into the life of the church?” Several creative efforts initiated in recent years include the highly successful “Theology on Tap” (Archdiocese of Chicago), “Beer, Bots and Benedict” (Archdiocese of Detroit), and “Catholics On Call” (Catholic Theological Union).

Most church ministers and educators want to know why so many young adults are unconnected to the Catholic Church. In their book, *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice*, the authors conclude, “Many young adult Catholics today, however, are not angry at the Church. They are simply distanced from it. Their knowledge, understanding, and familiarity with the tradition are limited and hallow. They are less interested in the institutional Church and its rules” (Hoge, et al., 220). The authors go on to say that pluralism, not secularism, is the issue. Many don’t see a Catholicism that captures their imagination or is worth belonging to in any sacrificial way.

In his book, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*, Robert Wuthnow explains the current situation in a different way. He indicates that almost every Christian denomination is struggling to maintain its young adults. He explains that, “Family and work, where one lives, whether one has children, and who one socializes with have powerful influences on religious behavior” (Wuthnow, xvi).

Young adults are postponing marriage until much later in life. Marrying later means having children later. If one is not married, one doesn’t often set down roots in a community, and one tends to move more often and change jobs more frequently. These factors, according to Wuthnow, are the principal reasons young adults aren’t present in our churches. He describes religious young adults as “tinkerers” (Wuthnow, 13ff), who create what they need from whatever is at hand. The young adults of today, with a wide range of experiences, friends, knowledge, and acquaintances, piece together a spirituality and a religion that is similar to the major faith traditions and denominations but has a unique, individualistic twist. They create their religious identity out of bits and pieces.

Neither Wuthnow nor the authors of *Young Adult Catholics* are pessimistic about the potential for churches to attract young adult members, but the old paradigm will not do. We must pour new wine into new wineskins. Among other things, we need a faith formation that is challenging and edifying, and captures the imaginations of young adults. It needs to be action-oriented.

Young adults also need mentors to coach them in the basics of how to be a Catholic: from the use of

language, to prayer, to the application of moral teaching, to reading the Bible and other religious texts (Muldoon, 22). In the words of the theologian Robert Barron, we can have “no more beige Catholicism.” Wuthnow emphasizes that churches “will have to invent evangelistic strategies capable of reaching busy adults who are no longer in high school or college. They will probably need to initiate programs less focused on the nuclear family and more appealing to single adults in their late twenties and thirties” (231).

Implications for Adult Faith Formation

1. Examine your adult faith formation offerings to identify which ones will have appeal to each generation. It may not even mean that the subject matter is different, but more applicable delivery methods may be needed for the different generations.
2. Make a grid and look at which of your programs will appeal most to each generation. Is there enough diversity among your programs for the various segments of the adult community? Are you using methods that appeal more to one generation than another? What media speak most to each generation?

The Teacher of Adults

What types of teachers do we need to provide effective learning experiences for today’s adults? Catholicism is a tradition that places great emphasis on revelation. It teaches what it has received. Thus it emphasizes the magisterium’s role in preserving revelation in its entirety. One result of this emphasis suggests a model of the teacher as someone who has more knowledge than the learners and “teaches” them what they do not know. In some ways, it is what Paulo Freire called the “banking concept of education,” focused on making deposits. In her work, *Toward an Adult Church*, Jane Regan describes it this way: “the teacher has the information and the student’s engagement extends only as far as receiving and filing the deposits” (Regan, 101).

There is another model of teacher that also depends on the magisterium, yet in a different way. According to Catholic teaching, the magisterium depends on the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who ensures the unity of the Church and confirms the truth of her message. This same Spirit is present in all of the faithful. So in this model, everyone in the Church is called to be a teacher and a learner. The Holy Spirit teaches all.

The teacher is the one who facilitates the dialogue, the conversation, who helps the community become a learning community (Regan, 160).

Regan believes that learning should be transformative, and that the single best way for this to take place is through a sustained critical conversation about that which is of consequence (Regan, 162). In this type of learning, listening is as important as speaking; asking important questions is as important as giving answers. There is a certain equality between the teacher and the learner.

Implications for Adult Faith Formation

1. If a church is dedicated to lifelong learning it will have more teachers for the adults than for the children. The reality is, however, that in any given congregation there are always more teachers for children and youth, even though these make up only a small percentage of the community.
2. We need to identify and train a whole new generation of religious educators because the diverse modes of adult faith formation necessary today call for a different kind of teacher, one whose skills include facilitating groups for faith sharing, for critical reflection, and for service/action.

The Content of Adult Faith Formation

Evangelization forms the cornerstone of adult faith formation. It is part and parcel of our mission as Christian disciples. Unfortunately, evangelization is not a priority in most parishes, and in a recent article, Fr. Frank DeSiano outlined two reasons for this.

Whatever homage the Catholic Church pays to the idea of evangelization, inertia makes it tend to concentrate on those who come to church, forgetting those who do not. The Catholic Church, second, seems to have an inability to develop simple strategies of evangelization and to stick with these strategies. When it comes to evangelization, Catholics appear like children with attention deficit disorder, taking interest in something for a moment, dropping that interest for something else, and wondering why it all seems boring. (DeSiano, 11)

For the last few decades, the Catholic Church in this country has turned inward. Religious liberals and conservatives have been engaged in intramural

battles, often over insignificant issues, while the sex abuse scandal has preoccupied many in the Church. If we focus on the mission of the Catholic Church, so beautifully articulated in *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II) and later documents, then many issues will be placed in proper perspective. Our mission as Christians is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the mystery of the kingdom of God and witnessing to its presence in our midst.

The community needs a clearly articulated vision and mission that is relevant, big enough, and worthy of the commitment of every member of the Church. Fr. Ronald Rolheiser writes about the Christian mission today: "What is lacking is fire, romance, aesthetics, as these pertain to our faith and ecclesial life" (Rolheiser, 13). If we are clear about our mission, it will bring passion back to living our faith.

In one of his short stories, titled *Smorgasbord*, Tobias Wolff has the narrator reflect on an earlier period in his life and on his passions. He thinks,

We're suppose to smile at the passions of the young, and at what we recall of our own passions, as if they were no more than a series of sweet frauds we'd fooled ourselves with and then wised up to. Not only the passion of boys and girls for each other but the others too—passion for justice, for doing right, for turning the world around. All these come in their time under our wintry smiles. Yet there was nothing foolish about what we felt. Nothing merely young. I just wasn't up to it. I let the light go out. (Wolff, 225)

We need a church whose members have a passion for the mission, who will keep the light shining brightly.

Jesus came proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. He taught his disciples to pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...." The Gospels are filled with parables about the kingdom of God. Theologians tell us that the kingdom is at the center of Jesus' message and his person. Yet, many of our adults would be hard-pressed to speak about the mysteries of the kingdom or point out its presence among us—or more importantly, to become part of the mission of building the kingdom.

N. T. Wright, the Anglican Scripture scholar and bishop, has written quite a bit about the centrality of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus and his death, resurrection and ascension.

It is the story of God's kingdom being launched on earth as in heaven, generating a new state of affairs in which the power of evil has been decisively defeated, the new creation has been

decisively launched, and Jesus' followers have been commissioned and equipped to put that victory and that inaugurated new world into practice. (Wright, 204)

Yet what does that new world look like? How many of our adults would be able to describe it or know it if they saw it?

The more one truly understands the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, the more one fully enters into, comprehends and is captured by worship and liturgy. The more one experiences the challenge of attempting to bring about the kingdom of God here on earth, the more one enters into prayer and a spirit of dependence on the Holy Spirit. The more one captures glimpses of the kingdom of God, the more one lives a life of gratitude. The more one appreciates that bringing about the kingdom is God's work, the more we can allow the power of God to flow through us, and the more we will live as sons and daughters of God, as true disciples.

Implications for Adult Faith Formation

1. **Focus on the essentials.** Tertullian offered this theological description of the early Christian community: "See how they love one another." To some extent, love *is* all you need. The church must be known for what it does and who it is. A church geared for mission needs to travel lightly, ready for the journey.
2. **Teach for discipleship, not membership.** The church is a community of disciples called together and formed for the mission. It is not a club built solely upon membership. The church constantly calls its members to "come and follow," to be disciples. But how do we form disciples? The same way Jesus did. "Jesus instructed his disciples (in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven); he prayed with them; he showed them how to live; and he gave them his mission" (NDC, 20, 20).
3. **Focus on Scripture.** Scripture needs to be at the heart of our teaching and the kingdom of God at the center of our Scripture studies. This calls for an understanding of both the Old and the New Testaments, especially the Gospels.
4. **Focus on what disciples do.** There are actions and ways of living that are indicative of discipleship, and others that are not. Too much of our formation begins in a classroom with the hope it will move out into the world. Jesus taught while on the road, stopping every now and then

to reflect on what the disciples were seeing, what they were doing. The disciples of Jesus continue this work-in action, seeing learning as a continuous process, part of our lives 24/7.

5. **Focus on prayer and spirituality.** Almost everyone in church ministry has met someone who said, “I am spiritual but not religious.” This can mean any number of things—and I don’t want to simplify all the subtexts—but I think it often means, “religion is about rules and stuffy theology and not related to my life.” Ouch! We know that among the Millennials and the Gen-Xers there is a real hunger for a deeper spiritual life. So why don’t they come to our churches for their spiritual needs? Most adult education programs based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* adopt a linear approach: creed, sacraments, morality, and prayer. I would suggest we begin with prayer. Through prayer we grasp the Spirit, or should I say, *are grasped* by the Spirit. In this Spirit, the other parts of the *Catechism* make sense and give life.
6. **Focus on companionship.** Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. One reason for this was cultural, so they could testify and back each other up. Another reason was so they could support each other and correct each other. Disciples are not lone rangers. They are rooted in a community of companions. We often forget that the word “companion” derives from two words, *bread* and *with*. As such, a companion is someone with whom we break bread. In a culture of excessive individualism, teaching community may be one of the greatest challenges to religious educators.

Methods for Adult Faith Formation

It should be obvious at this point that a wide variety of methods are needed for the faith formation of adults. Small groups, faith sharing groups, intergenerational sessions, action groups, discussion groups, and base communities are just a few of the models in place to foster an adult Church. We need to remember that, essentially, the parish is the curriculum, so adult educators need to pay much attention to the “system” that supports the programs. In this regard, there are two methods that have not received much attention, but which can add much to our efforts to change the culture.

The Experience Economy

A few years ago, I received an invitation to conduct a workshop for adult religious educators based on the book, *The Experience Economy* by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore. The authors begin by describing the development of the modern economy. The first level of an economy deals primarily in “commodities,” such as coffee beans. The second level takes the commodity and does something with it so it becomes a “good.” Roast the beans, grind them, and you have a “good” that you can sell for much more than the commodity. The third level is the “service” economy. Take the pound of coffee, brew it, and sell the cup of coffee (service).

The authors go on to say that we are now in a new economy, one that goes beyond service; the “experience” economy. To continue our example, take the cup of coffee, add in an experience that provides lots of choices for the consumer (skim milk, sugar, chocolate flavor), friendly baristas, a nice environment (music, soft chairs), and charge a premium price: welcome to the experience economy.

The greater part of the book shows the steps necessary to take a product or service and shape it for the experience economy. “Companies stage an experience whenever they engage customers, connecting with them in a personal, memorable way” (Pine and Gilmore, 4). This is exactly what we want to happen in the adult learning event.

Many of the ideas in the book can be applied directly to adult faith formation. Here are several questions and suggestions for teaching adults posed by the *Experience Economy*:

1. **What do we want adults to experience when they come to one of our events, or when they enter our websites or participate in a learning event?** Most often we plan our events based on the content, which we define as information.
2. **What do they want to experience?** There needs to be constant interaction with the persons who are attending or who might potentially attend one of our events.
3. **What is the theme of the event?** The theme allows us to “script” the event so that every aspect of it contributes to deepening the experience and creating indelible impressions. This would lead us to ask questions such as, what do the participants experience when they first arrive? How many of their senses can be engaged in the process? Are they passive or active? How actively can

we engage the participants in the process?
Are they helping to create the process?

4. **What indelible impressions do we want to leave with the participants?** Impressions are the “take-aways” from the experience. “If no intention exists other than to be done with the work...then the work will lack the potential to engage” (Pine and Gilmore, 118).
5. **Do we plan thoroughly enough that our events will be so memorable that people would want something to remember them?** Every event today that attempts to include memorable experiences also sells many items that help people remember the experience, such as the T-shirts, coffee mugs, posters, stuffed animals, etc., sold at concerts, plays, and sporting event.
6. **How would our event be different if persons were paying a premium to attend?** At the end of it, would they be able to say it was “worth it”?

While we are not selling religion or faith, we *are* competing today for a person’s time and commitment. Indeed, there is much we can learn from those in the marketplace.

Cultural Discernment

We all live in a culture. We form culture and culture forms us. There is a growing awareness of the power of culture to support or distort faith, and the relationship between faith and culture has been a concern for at least two generations. In his classic work, *Christ and Culture*, Richard Neibhur described five models of this relationship. *Gaudium et Spes* attempted to articulate a new relationship between the Catholic Church and the dominant culture. (In recent years some have said the vision of Vatican II regarding culture may have been naïve and overly simplistic in its embrace of the world’s culture.)

Michael Paul Gallagher has written an important work on the relationship between faith and culture, where he writes, “Evangelization, echoing the Incarnation itself, demands the insertion of ‘the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures’” (Gallagher, 104). In Gallagher’s image we should have neither an open hand nor a closed fist as we engage the culture. We should help our adults “identify the dehumanizing factors present in lifestyles and assumptions of the culture” (Gallagher, 114). At the same time we need to identify those

elements of the culture that are life enhancing, life-giving. This is the discernment that is called for.

Gallagher further argues for a process that begins with a positive attitude toward the culture, not based in a naïve understanding, but rather in the Incarnation and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. “In fact it involves a double expectation: there will be conflict, ambiguity, anti values enthroned, but there will also be signs of hope and of real hunger, fruits of the Spirit” (Gallagher, 123). Adult faith formation needs to teach adults the process of cultural discernment.

Because the dominant culture in the U.S. today is incredibly powerful and formative, every adult faith formation effort should begin with attention to the culture. Unless we do this, our efforts will be in vain. In developing our catechetical methods, we might well echo the words of Bernard Lonergan, the great Jesuit theologian, who advised, “be attentive.”

Conclusion

A Church focused on mission, a church of disciples, engaged with the culture and proclaiming the kingdom of God, has the potential to reverse the trends cited at the beginning of this paper. A Church focused on mission can attract the young adults who are looking for something and someone to believe in. Adult faith formation will play an essential part in forming adult disciples for the mission. It will take a reprioritizing of resources to bring about a different culture in the church, but it will be worth it. Let us begin now.

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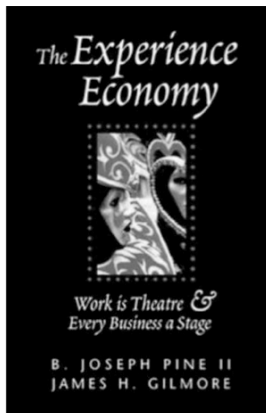
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Resources on the Experience Economy



The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage

Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999) [\$24.95]

There is much that can be applied to learning in the church from Pine and Gilmore's groundbreaking work on the experience economy. Pine and Gilmore see a new economic era in which all businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers, scripting and staging experiences that will transform the value of what they produce. Pine and Gilmore see experiences and transformations as the basis for future economic growth. The strategies and processes described in the book for creating experiences and transformations can easily be applied to a church setting. Chapters include: Setting the Stage, The Show Must Go On, Get Your Act Together, Work is Theater, Performing to Form, Now Act Your Part, and Finding Your Role in the World.



Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want

Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007) [\$26.95]

Pine and Gilmore's second book describes how businesses must grasp, manage, and excel at rendering authenticity. They explain that today's consumers seek the authentic where and when they buy. Satisfy consumers' demand for authenticity and you'll capture their hearts and minds. Through examples from a wide array of industries as well as government, nonprofit, education, and religious sectors, the authors show how to appeal to the five different genres of authenticity.

Practice Ideas

Ways to Strengthen Adult Religious Education

The Fall/Winter 2007 issue of Lifelong Faith reported on research into best practices in faith formation. Use the following strategies and planning questions, in conjunction with the article, "Best Practices in Adult Faith Formation," to assess your current efforts and plan for strengthening and expanding faith formation with adults in your congregation. (For the entire article go to www.lifelongfaith.com. or order the entire back issue.)

Best Practice 1. Adult faith formation pays attention to what is going on in the lives of adults and listens very carefully to what adults are talking about.

- What are the needs and interests of adults that your congregation is addressing through your current adult faith formation programming?
- How does your congregation systematically listen to the needs and interests of adults using a variety of methods, such as surveys, interest finders, focus groups, and interviews?

Best Practice 2. Adult faith formation targets the times of transitions and change in the lives of adults.

- What transitions and changes in the lives of adults does your congregation currently address in adult faith formation (e.g., family changes, loss of a loved one, unanticipated illness, career transitions)?
- What are several transitions and changes in the lives of adults in your congregation that can be addressed through adult faith formation? How will your church address these transitions?

Best Practice 3. Adult faith formation is centered on spiritual growth processes in the lives of adults.

- What types of retreats and spiritual formation experiences does your congregation currently offer adults?
 - Online spiritual formation
 - Mentoring with a spiritual director
 - Prayer group or prayer breakfast
 - Church-based retreats: evenings, one-day, weekend, Advent, Lent
 - Retreat programs at local retreat houses
- How can your congregation strengthen the spiritual formation opportunities for adults? What are one or two new retreat or spiritual formation experiences that you can offer?

Best Practice 4. Adult faith formation connects with the motivations and interests of adults.

- How does your congregation's adult faith formation programming connect with the motivation of adults (e.g., input into the program design, enjoyable and enriching programs, ability to do something, relationship-building, time constraints)?
- How can your congregation more effectively build on the motivations of adult learners in adult faith formation programming?

Best Practice 5. Adult faith formation programs are guided by learning goals and measure the outcomes of programs.

- What are the outcomes your congregation has established for adult faith formation? What are the expectations and criteria for success?
- Does your congregation develop learning outcomes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) for each adult faith formation program? How is each program evaluated?

Best Practice 6. Adult faith formation utilizes a variety of program models to address the diversity of adult backgrounds, faith maturity, interests, and learning needs.

- Which of the following learning models is your congregation currently using in adult faith formation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your current models? What new models can you introduce?
 - Independent Learning Opportunities** (e.g., reading, magazines, podcasts and audio learning, video podcasts and video-based learning, online courses, online learning centers)

- ❑ **Small Group Learning Opportunities** (e.g., discipleship or faith sharing groups, Bible study groups, topical study groups, practice-focused groups, special interest groups, ministry groups)
- ❑ **Large Group Learning Opportunities** (e.g., multi-session courses, one-session program, speaker series, round table discussions, parent parallel learning, field trips, intergenerational programs, workshops, film festivals, conferences)
- ❑ **Study-Action Projects** (e.g., justice and service projects, church ministry/leadership group)
- ❑ **Online Learning / Church Web Site**
 - Does your church have a web site with a special section targeted to adults?
 - What features does your congregation incorporate on the web site?
 - ❑ adult programs and opportunities in the church and in other churches
 - ❑ online learning courses and activities
 - ❑ online small groups, courses, and reading groups
 - ❑ formation resources for adults on a wide variety of topics and interests
 - ❑ social networking among other adults who are taking courses or participating in small groups
 - ❑ daily Bible study (on the web or e-mailed to young adults)
 - ❑ audio and video podcasts of sermons and guest speakers, and link to other sources such as iTunes
 - ❑ question and answer box
 - Does your church web site provide podcasts directed at adults (e.g., Sunday worship service, sermons, and presentations by guest speakers)?
 - Does your congregation utilize e-mail to communicate and stay in-touch with adults? Does your congregation send an e-newsletter to adults?

Best Practice 7. Adult faith formation is designed using a variety of learning methods that respect the diversity of learning styles of adults.

- Examine each of your congregation's adult faith formation programs and resources for adults to determine how well they utilize the characteristics of adult learning.

- ❑ Utilize adults' experience and prior knowledge in a learning program.
- ❑ Respecting the variety of learning styles among adults by incorporating a diversity of learning activities and methods in a learning experience.
- ❑ Incorporating activities that teach to the different intelligences of adults.
 - verbal-linguistic
 - logical-mathematical
 - visual-spatial
 - bodily-kinesthetic
 - musical-rhythmic
 - naturalist
 - interpersonal
 - intrapersonal
- ❑ Incorporate learning activities that are realistic and that involve, stimulate thinking, and challenge the adults.
- ❑ Incorporate real-life application of learning. Providing ways for adults to practice what they are learning promotes the transfer of learning from the session to their daily lives.
- ❑ Incorporate a variety of features into the learning experience. Adults enjoy learning experiences that combine eating, praying, sharing, discussion, and receiving new information about their faith. They like sessions that allow them to physically move and even change rooms.
- How can adult programs and resources be strengthened and/or re-designed to more effectively address the characteristics of adult learning?

Best Practice 8. Adult faith formation programs create hospitable learning environments and build relationships among adults.

- How do adult faith formation programs create a safe and comfortable environment for adults, characterized by physical comfort, mutual trust and respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences?
- How do adult faith formation programs create opportunities for adults to build relationships with one another in a caring community of learners?
- How can your congregation's adult faith formation programs strengthen the community and relational dimensions of adult learning?

Practice Ideas

Adult Learning Methods

From: *The Art of Great Training Delivery: Strategies, Tools, and Tactics* by Jean Barbazette.
(San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2006, pages 6-7 © Jean Barbazette)

| Technique | Description (Written from the learners' perspective) | Best Use | | |
|---|--|----------|---|---|
| | | K | S | A |
| Behavior Modeling | See a model or ideal enactment of desired behavior demonstrated by instructor or video | X | | |
| Case Study or Scenario | Analyze and solve a problem, a case situation, or a scenario, alone and/or in a small group | X | X | X |
| Demonstration | Hear the instructor verbally explain and see the instructor perform a procedure or process | X | | |
| Discussion | Discuss problems or issues, share ideas and opinions in a group | | X | X |
| Field Trip or Observation | Experience or view actual situations for first-hand observation and study | X | | |
| Film, Video, or Skit | View a one-way organized presentation | X | | |
| Games, Exercises, Structured Experiences | Participate in planned activities, then discuss feelings, reactions, and application to real life | X | X | X |
| In-Basket Exercises | Review typical paperwork to sort, delay, discard, or act on immediately | X | X | X |
| Information Search | Search for information in source materials alone or in a group | X | | |
| Inquiry-Oriented Discussion | Participate in a discussion during which the facilitator asks planned questions to encourage discovery learning | X | | X |
| Interview | Question a resource person on behalf of the audience | X | X | |
| Jigsaw Learning or Teaching Learning Team | Concentrate on different information in study groups, where members re-form in groups to teach each other | X | X | X |
| Learning Tournament | Review material, then compete against other study groups in self-scoring test | X | | |
| Lecture | Listen to a one-way presentation of information | X | | |
| Practice or Return Demonstration | Repeat performance of a skill under supervision of instructor, and then again without supervision | | X | |
| Printed Resources | Use charts, posters, laminated job aids, cards, and handouts for reference or as a resource | X | | X |
| Role Playing or Skill Practice | Dramatize a problem or situation, then follow with discussion | | X | X |
| Self-Assessment or Inventory | Examine own values, skills, style, etc., through experiences, surveys, and activities | X | | X |
| Simulations | Experience a situation as nearly real as possible, followed by discussion | | X | X |
| Study Groups | Read material individually, then clarify content in small groups | X | | X |
| Task Force Project | Generate plans in groups that can be used in the actual work situation to solve a real problem | X | X | X |
| Teaching Project to one another | Teach new information or skills | X | X | |
| Tests | Answer questions or complete activities that test comprehension, recall, application, etc., of the learning material | X | X | |
| Writing Tasks | Reflects on own understanding of and response to training, usually descriptive—either planning to use skills or describing an event. | X | X | X |

Best Use: K = knowledge, S = skills, A = attitudes

Recommended Resources

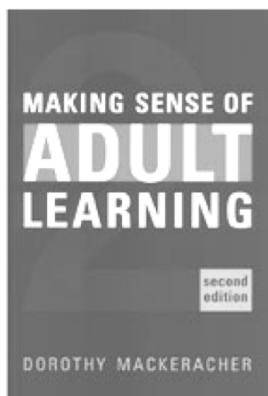
Teaching Adults



The Art of Great Training Delivery: Strategies, Tools, and Tactics

Jean Barbazette (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2006) [\$45]

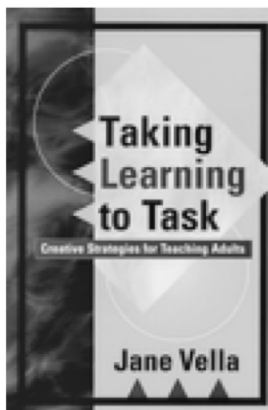
The Art of Great Training Delivery is one of the most comprehensive and helpful books for designing adult learning and teaching adults. It is designed to help trainers move their training and facilitation skills to the next level of performance. Written by Jean Barbazette—an expert in the field of training and development—this vital resource is filled with down-to-earth advice and illustrative examples for selecting and using a variety of training methods. Her advice helps trainers create the best learning experience that will improve learner retention. The book covers a wealth of topics including how to use case studies, conduct inventories, exercises, games, and simulations, facilitate role plays, as well as conduct effective and safe demonstrations and administer tests. *The Art of Great Training Delivery* is a volume in *The Skilled Trainer* series for Pfeiffer.



Making Sense of Adult Learning (Second Edition)

Dorothy Mackeracher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) [\$35.95]

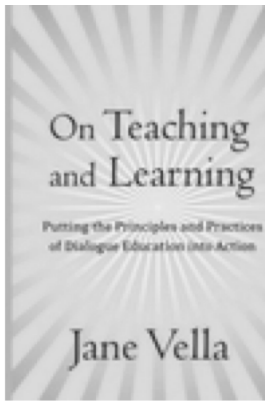
One of the finest books on adult learning available, *Making Sense of Adult Learning* covers the characteristics of adult learners—emotional, cognitive, social, physical, and spiritual—blending research and practice. Mackeracher includes chapters on the cycles and styles of learning and strategies and models in facilitating adult learner. Concepts are presented from learning-centered and learner-centered perspectives. Each chapter has learning and teaching principles that provide practical ideas about facilitating adult learning more effectively.



Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults

Jane Vella (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001) [\$35]

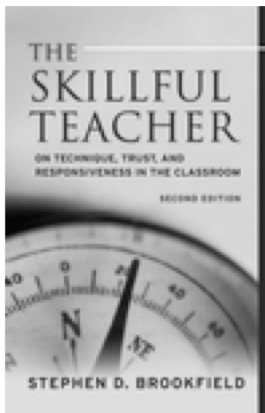
In *Taking Learning to Task*, Jane Vella shifts the spotlight from teaching tasks to learning tasks. Unlike traditional teaching methods, learning tasks are open questions leading to open dialogue between teacher and learner. She provides seven steps to planning learning-centered courses, four types of learning tasks, a checklist of principles and practices, critical questions for instructional design, key components for evaluation, and other tools. She also shares real-world examples of successful learning programs, including online and distance-learning courses. *Taking Learning to Task* is a hands-on, practical guide to designing effective learning tasks for diverse learners and diverse content. (See also *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach—The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* by Jane Vella, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.)



On Teaching and Learning: Putting the Principles and Practices of Dialogue Education into Action

Jane Vella (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) [\$36]

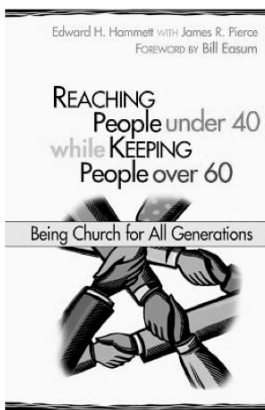
On Teaching and Learning takes the ideas explored in renowned educator Jane Vella's best-selling book *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach* to the next level and explores how dialogue education has been applied in educational settings around the world. Throughout the book, she shows how to put the principles and practices of dialogue education into action and uses illustrative stories and examples from her extensive travels. Dialogue education values inquiry, integrity, and commitment to equity. Learners are treated as beings worthy of respect, recognized for the knowledge and experience they bring to the learning experience. Dialogue education emphasizes the importance of safety and belonging. It is an approach that welcomes one's certainties and one's questions.



The Skillful Teacher: On Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom (2nd Edition)

Stephen D. Brookfield (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) [\$38]

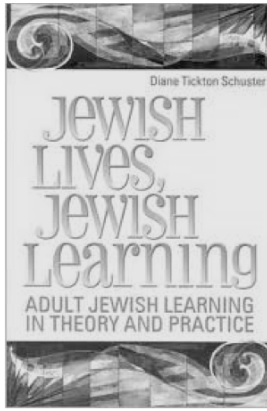
The Skillful Teacher by Stephen D. Brookfield, now a classic in the field, offers inspiration and down-to-earth advice to new and seasoned teachers. *The Skillful Teacher* is a comprehensive guide that shows how to thrive on the unpredictability and diversity of classroom life and includes insights developed from the hundreds of workshops conducted by the author. This new edition includes new chapters that deal with emerging topics such as classroom diversity and teaching in online learning environments. Chapters include: Experiencing Teaching, The Core Assumptions of Skillful Teaching, Understanding Our Classrooms, What Students Value in Teachers, Teaching in Diverse Classrooms, and Teaching Online.



Reaching People Under 40 While Keeping People over 60

Edward H. Hammett and James R. Pierce (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2007) [\$24.99]

Many established churches are facing a number of challenges in today's increasingly secular culture. Such a shift in many communities creates a challenge of church growth and church health when it seems that satisfying the needs of one group creates barriers to reaching another group. So many are asking, "How do you keep people over sixty years of age—who often hold church culture values—while at the same time reach people under forty—who often hold postmodern values?" If a church is interested in growing, this situation becomes a major challenge. *Reaching People Under 40 While Keeping People over 60* looks at the church as it seeks to function in a new world. It looks at the differences in the generations and at postmodernism—not just a generational difference but a global change. Most importantly it looks at what a church can do in this new age to help the church survive and thrive! The book is organized in three sections: Part 1: Understanding the Challenge of Church Today, Part 2: Discovering the Points of Tension, and Part 3: Finding the Win-Win for the Church.

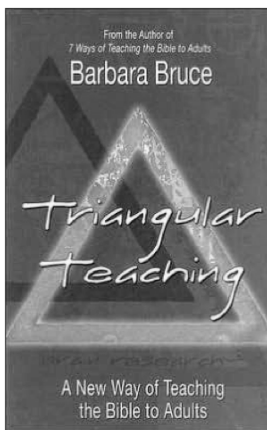


Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning: Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice

Diane Tickton Schuster (New York: UAHC Press, 2003) [\$15.95]

Diane Tickton Schuster has written a well-research, practical guide to adult learning that uses stories of learners and teachers, as well as research into adult development and education. Each chapter identifies practices for effective adult learning in congregations. The book covers a wide variety of topics, including principles and practices of adult learning, understanding the different kinds of learning, creating learning-centered education, and practical strategies and models for adult learning. Written for Jewish educators, the insights and wisdom in this book apply to all congregations and the efforts to promote adult learning.

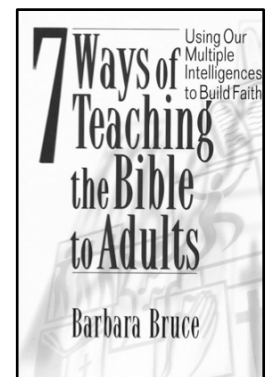
- **JESNA** (The Jewish Education Service of North America) has an excellent web site, www.jesna.org, with research, articles, and resources for Jewish learning that all congregations will find helpful. See especially the issues of the journal, *Agenda: Jewish Education*, and the “Redesigning Jewish Education for the 21st Century Report.”



Triangular Teaching: A New Way of Teaching the Bible to Adults

Barbara Bruce (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007) [\$15]

Triangular Teaching helps teachers and leaders to engage their adult students with Scripture so that it becomes life-changing. This practical, hands-on book trains Christian educators in the methods of “triangular teaching,” an integrated approach involving multiple intelligence theory, brain research, and creative and critical thinking. It includes a section explaining triangular teaching methods and Bible lessons that illustrate the methods. The book includes helpful triangular teaching tips for Bible lessons and an appendix with worksheets. Bruce’s approach can be used to teach any content area.



7 Ways of Teaching the Bible to Adults: Using Our Multiple Intelligences to Build Faith

Barbara Bruce (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000) [\$16]

Barbara Bruce helps teachers and learners understand seven different learning styles, or “intelligences,” and how these learning styles can be used to bring the Word of God alive for adult students. Chapters include suggestions of activities to incorporate a specific intelligence into lessons, questions for the teacher on his or her own preference for the particular intelligence, a lesson focusing on the intelligence and a prayer demonstrating the intelligence. In addition, the book contains suggestions for teacher training, bibliographies, a glossary, and a self-discovery sheet.



Faith Formation in a Media World

Mary E. Hess

One of the many gifts this journal has brought to public conversation is a vibrant sharing of “best practices” in various forms of faith formation. I wish I could begin this essay on media and faith by listing such a set of best practices in the digital media sphere. But two challenges make that difficult. First of all, media is such a pervasive element of our culture that it makes little sense to write about media practices as separated in any way from practices of faith more generally. Secondly, digital tools are being invented and changed at such a rapid pace that almost the instant you begin to describe a particular form of media it has already shifted to a different format or context.

It’s hard to imagine that the Web did not even exist until 1992. Yet while an older generation is just now coming to learn how to use e-mail, many members of the younger generation are abandoning e-mail in favor of sending messages through mobile devices, and via social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. Mobile computing—that is, accessing the Web through handheld devices such as “smart” phones (think iPhone and Blackberry)—is now growing rapidly the world over, and it’s not inconceivable that there may be an end to computers as we now know them.

In an effort to provide something of use in the midst of such change, I’d like to offer in this article a conceptual framework by which to develop and assess our work within a media culture.

Seeing Clearly

During the Easter season this past year, I was struck anew by the juxtaposition of two very familiar Gospel stories: the tale of doubting Thomas, and the tale of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The story of Thomas, you’ll remember, is about a disciple who wasn’t around when Jesus first appeared after his resurrection. Thomas was the one who wanted to put his fingers in Jesus’ nail holes, and his hand in Jesus’ wounded side. I can hear him in the echoes of children’s voices today—show me! show me! I want to see! Perhaps a little of that impulse remains even in the hearts of adults, who are charged with helping children learn how to practice their faith.

In the week following the Thomas story, we heard the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Here we have two of Jesus’ disciples walking with weary feet and heavy hearts toward Emmaus, not yet believing

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what they were told by the women who had seen the empty tomb. Along the way, the men encounter a stranger and tell him the story of what they've been going through. Far from being amazed, Jesus turns around and reinterprets Scripture for them. They invite him to join them for dinner that evening, and in the breaking of the bread they suddenly recognize the stranger as Jesus — at which point, he vanishes. They then exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he spoke to us?"

These Gospels present us with two very clear stories of "show and tell," stories that can be of enormous help as we chart a path that connects the tools of our culture, particularly media, with our work as religious educators. What does it mean, for example, to "show and tell" in this fast-paced, mediated world we live in? What does it mean to share the stories of our faith, the stories of our lives, with children and each other?

For many people, trying to live and share faith in a media culture can be both frightening and tiring. Consider an e-mail I received recently from the Minnesota Family Council, an invitation to an educational event. In it they suggested:

The great battle of our age — indeed, of every age — is the battle over the minds of our children. God's word tells us we must love him with all our mind, be transformed by the renewing of our mind, have the mind which is in Christ, be of a sound mind, and set our mind not on earthly things but on heavenly things. This is the mind we are commanded to build in our children. Against this mind comes the popular culture. The news and entertainment media, and particularly the secular education establishment, seek to build an entirely different mind in our children. It's not easy to carry out our most important task under such a barrage of hostile fire. But we know it can be done. We know it must be done.

Sounds like quite the challenge, yes? The language of the e-mail is fierce: a battle we must engage, a command we must follow to build an "entirely different mind," and one we must fight "under hostile fire." I don't want to belittle the fearful feelings this type of talk may engender, because many people feel it strongly. But I *do* want to ask us to think a bit about such fear, and what our responses as Christians really ought to be.

How are we — who live in a world of facile sound bites, in an age of war and terrorism and famine and global climate change — to witness to the resurrection? We are an Easter people, but often, it feels like we're on the road to Emmaus and have not yet met the stranger. The fatigue and fear that can set

in on the journey is doubly hard for Christian educators, especially if we work with children, because if we can't keep up our own energy and sort through our own challenges, how are we to lead others? How are we to "show and tell"?

Rather than riding out to face the enemy, let me propose another approach. Why aren't we asking our children what they are learning from the media culture? Here is fertile territory, an opportunity to look at what it is they are learning from the world around them, then taking that information and fashioning an appropriate response. Because in truth we must ask this question: Is everything that is presented by the media to be avoided? Or is there something our children have found there that might be lauded and used to the advantage of effective faith formation?

Most children have a keen ability to be fully present to the moment; this ability can be useful for us to use as we explore the positive and negative effects of media. As Jesus so clearly tells us: "Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:3–5).

Being present to the moment is an attitude that takes time to develop once we have moved beyond the relative innocence of childhood. Yet in order to be aware of both the dangers and possibilities offered by media, we *must* be present to its reality in our world today. Relearning how to be present in the moment can assist us in seeing clearly our role as religious educators, and the ways we can best use the tools at hand today.

Responding to the Challenge: Technical or Adaptive

How are we to understand and live with the challenges presented to us by the digital age? How do we respond to what's available to us and to our young people, and discern what is beneficial and what is detrimental to spiritual health? How do we help our congregations, from young to old, live faith-filled lives and grow along their spiritual path in light of the resources available to them? We have to start by acknowledging there are no clear or precise answers to these questions.

Ronald Heifetz, one of the world's leading authorities on the subject of leadership, makes an important distinction between "technical" challenges and "adaptive" challenges. The former has to do with very clear problems that have very clear solutions.

One example of this is breaking a bone cleanly. Here one needs a doctor who can set the bone well: you want a doctor with the best technical skills. Your role as patient is to be as cooperative as possible in order to allow the expert to do what needs to be done. It's a clear problem, with a clear solution.

Most people today couldn't imagine living in the world without media. How many of us would be willing to give up our televisions, our computer, our cell phones, or our music systems? Yet why are we so reluctant to engage media in our teaching?

An adaptive challenge, on the other hand, is much messier, one without clear definition, borders, or obvious solutions. Perhaps you go to the doctor and discover you have a chronic disease, whose symptoms can be improved by changing your diet and exercise. Here the doctor must work with you to help you adapt to your disease, and learn how to make appropriate changes in your life. But there is no clear answer to dealing with the disease. You might have to try a few different medications and work out an effective diet and exercise plan. Even then, there may be no cure—just fewer symptoms. That's an adaptive challenge.

Living with faith in media culture is an adaptive challenge. Unfortunately, far too often we in the church tend to treat it like a technical problem.

Remember the e-mail I quoted earlier? It was aimed at mobilizing people to attend a training event in order to learn specific ways of battling the media. Many of us who work in Christian education are familiar with this kind of search for a technical response. "Our summer program is having problems; let's look for a new curriculum." "Our Sunday school is not drawing as many kids as last year: let's switch curricula." "I know, let's try video clips!" or perhaps even, "let's add a projector to worship!" Sometimes finding a new curriculum *is* the right answer to catechetical conundrums, and I'm all for utilizing digital tools if they serve your mission and vision. But these are technical responses to basic problems.

Far more often what we're facing is an adaptive challenge, and what we need to find is a way through it, a way in which we can participate together and collaborate on a process that works toward a solution.

AKM Adams, a priest and theologian, wrote that we need to

discern how to make affirmations in a world of ambiguity, how to deal with uncertainty in an uncertain world. That involves reliance on God, not because God resolves our ambiguities into clear-cut, iron-clad certainties that circumvent our travails, but because in turning to God we enter a Way that promises forgiveness for the missteps we make in earnestly endeavoring to draw nearer to God. We follow in that Way—we don't determine it ourselves. We offer forgiveness as a condition of our presuming to ask forgiveness. We commit ourselves to pursuing a truth we don't control, a truth that may lead us to conclusions we don't like, may oblige us to change our minds.

It is this way, this path, this journey that we strive to follow in our search for what it means to live with faith in the midst of a media culture.

How do we apply the theory of adaptive challenge to a religious context? Within a community of faith this means doing our best to stay grounded in our faith while remaining open to new ways of teaching and of living out the faith. Being adaptive means helping each other share and explore our core faith stories in ways that are open and honest and full of authenticity.

What are the mainstream researchers teaching us about kids and media? They show us, for instance, that no matter how much we worry about content, what's far more important are the *practices* in which that content is embedded. Is watching TV (or DVDs or film or whatever) something you do together, as a family? Or is it something family members do alone? Do your kids work on the computer in the midst of the rush of family life, in a common place, like a kitchen or family room? Or are they huddled away in the corner of a room all by themselves?

Think about your church settings. Is popular music a regular part of conversations about faith? Or is there an unspoken agreement that certain kinds of music or content are not allowed into conversations about religion? Do you help the kids in your church programs engage the media they play with? Better yet, do you help them *create* in those media? Are you working in narrow, technical ways, or working in an adaptive way to see the full range of possibilities present in sharing the faith?

Three Elements for Religious Education in a Media Culture

There are three crucial elements we need to remember in our efforts to develop effective religious education in a media culture.

1. **We need to remember that engaging with media is a daily reality.** There is truth in what the Minnesota Family Council says in their e-mail noted earlier: media and pop culture are always present, everywhere. As religious educators, do we try to hide from their influence and create safe spaces they can't enter? Or do we incorporate elements of contemporary media into the learning process?
2. **We need to be open to encountering strangers.** The communities of which Jesus was a part, the communities from which the disciples were drawn, had a fundamental commitment to hospitality. You not only encountered the stranger in the road, you walked and talked with him, and invited him to dinner. Imagine what might have happened if the disciples had crossed over to the other side of the road to Emmaus instead of engaging the stranger in conversation? Far too often we do the same with media and pop culture. Instead of being open to what the media and pop culture have to offer, we try to exclude them from the "conversation." Yet God is present in and speaks to us from all places in our lives. Being open to what the culture has to offer as a tool for catechesis only broadens the opportunity to engage our listeners in active faith formation.
3. **We need to remember that our practices matter.** If we listen to kids' music only to tell them how wrong or bad it is, we teach them there is only one way to hear something. If we listen to kids' music and ask them questions and help them articulate what moves them and connects them with that music—then perhaps helping them connect that to their faith—we teach them something very different. But remember: our goal as educators isn't simply to affirm what children and youth are engaged with, rather, to develop a set of practices that can help all of us navigate through the pervasive presence of media in our world today.

Moving from a world with few digital tools to one that is flooded with them is an adaptive challenge. Meeting that challenge involves active communication to take our thoughts and ideas about media and

pop culture, and turn them into concrete patterns of practice.

The point is to find the ways God continues to be revealed in our world today. As Scharer and Hilberath note, "the authentic *theological* places where God shows God's self to human beings in history include not only their biographies but also their interaction and communication. The Christian belief in the One and Triune God, who is personal relationship, makes every human communication a theological challenge" (Sharer and Hilberath, 147). Using all the tools available to us and our students allows us greater latitude in effectively communicating the ongoing revelation of God in our midst.

Knowledge and Skills for Learning in a Media Culture

Contemporary researchers in the field of education are clear about the skills today's children need in order to be successful in learning. For instance, an influential policy paper suggests children should be competent in "play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multi-tasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation" (Jenkins, 2006). These twenty-first century literacy skills are not easily taught with paper and pencil exercises, but rely increasingly on computers and other "screened" devices. Jenkins further writes that:

students can no longer rely on expert gatekeepers to tell them what is worth knowing. Instead, they must become more reflective of how individuals know what they know and how they assess the motives and knowledge of different communities. Students must be able to identify which group is most aware of relevant resources and choose a search system matched to the appropriate criteria: people with similar tastes; similar viewpoints; divergent viewpoints; similar goals; general popularity; trusted, unbiased, third-party assessment; and so forth. If transmedia navigation involves learning to understand the relations between different media systems, networking involves the ability to navigate across different social communities. (Jenkins, 50)

The skills needed to succeed today emerge through collaborative and constructive learning, and require participatory strategies—ones that engage a full range of resources. Yet many communities, particularly communities of faith, have historically

been very worried about the use of screened devices (televisions, computers, and so on) in the process of education. Jenkins further says:

The [often-prevalent] focus on negative effects of media consumption offers an incomplete picture. These accounts do not appropriately value the skills and knowledge young people are gaining through their involvement with new media, and as a consequence, they may mislead us about the roles teachers and parents should play in helping children learn and grow. (Jenkins, 11)

Those of us who care about lifelong learning in faith, who take seriously God's active agency in the world, must begin to see the potential media holds for religious education. Imagine setting up a social networking site, like MySpace, then helping kids write a page for each biblical character they are learning about. What would a MySpace page look like for David? Who would he "friend" and what plug-ins would he keep on his site? Instead of complaining about the time children willing spend online, while at the same time begrudging any time spent on church activities, why not find constructive ways to help kids utilize this media in a religious education context?

Engaging Media as a Faith Practice

One of the most prevalent assumptions in religious education is that there is some expert knowledge out there we simply must hand on to our learners. Parker Palmer is perhaps the most eloquent of the writers to take this idea to task, arguing instead for something he calls "the community of truth." (Palmer's critique and proposal are most clearly elaborated in his books, *To Know as We Are Known* and *The Courage to Teach*.)

The other model, or what Palmer calls the "objectivist myth," assumes that the authority or expert on a given topic is the best person to teach something. This model suggests that such interaction always goes in one direction, from the teacher to the student. Yet consider how problematic this is for religious education. If we, as educators, are the only ones who hold the truth to be shared, what if we are wrong, or if we fail?

It seems to me that some of the negative energy felt in discussions of media and faith in various church contexts grows out of this inadequate model. As long as we are "held" by this assumption and think that it's the only way we can teach religion, we cannot properly engage media culture.

We have all too often seen the negative and destructive images and stories afloat in commercial media. On the other hand, if meaning is made in the process of passing from the media-producers to the media-receivers, then we have the opportunity to contribute to what is being learned there. Indeed, engaging media might be its own form of faith practice. And by engaging media, I don't mean simply critiquing it for why it is bad, or refusing to use it at all, but rather creating it and participating in the meaning being made with it.

Part of the challenge I face in my own attempts to work with faith issues and the media comes from this unexamined assumption of the objectivist myth. Religious education programs modeled on schoolroom classes with paper and pencil texts, or confirmation curricula heavy on doctrine and light on faith practice, disparage any attempts to bring contemporary media into the discussion.

What might our faith formation programs look like if the natural ability children have to play and to create, to attend and to participate, were harnessed in the service of telling their stories through the media with which they are increasingly fluent?

Perhaps an analogy to art education is apt. Most art educators will argue that children are natural artists, but they become schooled away from their creativity in classroom settings where they learn to "draw within the lines." Religious educators who spend thoughtful and engaged time with young children will tell you they are natural evangelists, asking deep questions of the world around them, and attending to its intricacy and beauty in ways few adults can match. But these same children learn to let go of such questions, and thin their attention to such a degree that by the time they are in confirmation class, their faith too often has shrunk down to a commitment to "get through the hoop" so their parents are happy.

When we add to this the notion that popular media—particularly television, music, films, and the Web—are somehow not a fertile environment for practicing faith, or perhaps even damaging to such practice, we create a context in which young people face the choice of either giving up their faith practices

or giving up media practice. It does not surprise me how many of them choose the first.

Most people today couldn't imagine living in the world without media. How many of us would be willing to give up our televisions, our computer, our cell phones, or our music systems? Yet why are we so reluctant to engage media in our teaching?

Most children today are learning rudimentary media skills in their school classrooms. Far from being paper and pencil-based learning, increasingly, regular classrooms are places of creation with tools such as Keynote and PowerPoint, digital video, basic Web pages, and so on.

What might our faith formation programs look like if the natural ability children have to play and to create, to attend and to participate, were harnessed in the service of telling their stories through the media with which they are increasingly fluent?

Why not pass around a digital camera and ask children to take pictures of places where they can feel God's presence? Such pictures could then be combined into a short presentation and shared with friends and the church community. Then imagine what could happen if adults gathered around them and "caught" some of their natural enthusiasm, and started to talk about ways in which they, too, have felt God's presence in the world around them. Imagine those stories caught and shared, interwoven in a creative way with the larger story of God found in the Bible. Then imagine the resulting media pieces published on the Web for community access.

Media is about the culture. Perhaps we can think about the word "culture" in terms of a medium in which something is grown, like the medium used in biology labs. What teachings and faith practices can we "grow" within the media "culture?" What are the ways and means by which we are present in this medium, this culture? What kinds of engagement with media might be transformative in our faith formation programs?

Using Online Social Media to Enhance Faith Sharing

Sharing one's faith with a friend is hard enough, let alone with a stranger. But there are creative ways to engage people in expressing their thoughts and ideas about faith.

Sharing faith can be enhanced and made more accessible through digital tools. Imagine setting up a church blog, led by a pastoral leader, that invites frequent comments about where one finds God (for an example, see http://pastorpam.typepad.com/living_word_by_word). Or imagine a Web site where

If media culture invites us into sympathy, religious education invites us into empathy. What media producers know is how inviting people into other people's stories through images, music, and movement inspires sympathetic identification with those stories. What educators know is that learning involves growth and transformation, and sharing our stories and experiences can facilitate this process.

people from all around the world are gathered virtually to pray the same text (see <http://www.sacredspace.ie/>), or one where people can comment briefly on where they have found God today (see <http://www.other6.net/>).

For all of the concern about the negative effects of social network Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook, there are many positive ways young people are using them to address challenges in their lives and in the world. For example, young people were contacted via the Web to participate in the immigration rallies in Los Angeles. Note too the widespread use of social networks by today's political candidates, who, along with disseminating information about their campaigns, encourage voter registration and awareness of the issues. Social networks allow people a far-reaching to show their care for each other, particularly when friends are in trouble or die.

Christianity constantly pushes us beyond sympathy to empathy. Sympathy involves being able to imagine oneself into another's position by using one's experiences to "feel" with them. Although it involves an "other," sympathy does not really stretch beyond oneself. Empathy, on the other hand, involves being able to feel with another even if one has never had the same experience. Empathy involves self-differentiation and compassion that is other-oriented.

This distinction is very clear in many of the Gospel stories. Jesus is asked "who is my neighbor?" and replies that, in fact, one's neighbor might even be one's enemy (Luke 10:29). In Matthew 20, the parable of the workers in the vineyard, *every* worker is paid the same, even the ones who only worked an hour or so. The outrage of those who worked a full day comes from sympathy: "Shouldn't I be paid more because I worked longer?" But paying all the same

wages regardless of their hours spent working grows out of an empathic sense. Might the worker who spent most of the day waiting to work have suffered in doing so, without hope they would see a day's wages?

If media culture invites us into sympathy, religious education invites us into empathy. What media producers know is how inviting people into other people's stories through images, music, and movement inspires sympathetic identification with those stories. What educators know is that learning involves growth and transformation, and sharing our stories and experiences can facilitate this process.

As lifelong learners in faith, we must be ready to support each other, to keep each other afloat in a sea of changes and possibilities, to find the ways to nourish learning that can meet the adaptive challenges the media culture places in front of us.

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Resource on Media Literacy: Center for Media Literacy (www.medialit.org)

A pioneer in its field, the Center for Media Literacy (CML) is an educational organization that provides leadership, public education, professional development and educational resources nationally. Dedicated to promoting and supporting media literacy education as a framework for accessing, analyzing, evaluating, creating and participating with media content, CML works to help citizens, especially the young, develop critical thinking and media production skills needed to live fully in the 21st century media culture. The ultimate goal is to make wise choices possible.

The CML web site provides a variety of materials that you can download and purchase. One of their primary resources is the *CML MediaLit Kit*TM which provides both a vision and an evolving guide for navigating today's global media culture. *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World: Deconstruction* is a classroom activity guide with 25 core lesson plans for K-12 media literacy.

About Media Literacy

Media literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate using messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

Five Key Questions for Media Literacy

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

Five Core Concepts of Media Literacy

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Practice Ideas

Media @ Home

Mary Hess

(This page may be reproduced for use in your church.)

- ❖ Ensure that media engagement is never done in isolation. Watch television together, and ask religious questions about the characters and situations you're seeing.
- ❖ Share the task of choosing programs to watch with children, respect and engage their choices and expect them to do the same with yours.
- ❖ Ensure that media engagement is never simply with commercial media. Search out and enjoy alternative media, too; the rise of independent and foreign films has provided an especially broad mix of additional media in this category.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for kids to raise questions and to initiate conversations; just giving them the room to do so will raise religious issues.
- ❖ Limit or stop watching live television. Instead make choices using TiVo or another service that gives you the opportunity to choose what will be viewed in your household.
- ❖ Have children tell you stories that build on the stories they've seen in the media. For example, if they love a particular character in a TV show, have them tell a new story starring that character.
- ❖ Tell stories that put characters children love in religious situations: take SpongeBob SquarePants to church, build a church from Legos, have the X-Men meet Jesus.
- ❖ Respectfully listen to and engage your children's media, even if your first reaction is negative.
- ❖ Let your own religious questions be audible.
- ❖ Search out stories of those who are marginalized in popular mass mediated culture.
- ❖ Deconstruct the news, and then reconstruct it, especially locally.
- ❖ Really listen to others, that is, embrace conversation.
- ❖ Do a television fast for Lent; turn-off the TV for the 40 days.
- ❖ Add music to a dinner prayer (this should include adding so-called "secular" recorded music that resonates with your prayer concerns).
- ❖ Make a point of muting television commercials and use the time as an opportunity to ask questions about the shows you're watching.
- ❖ Learn how to make videos and have your kids interview each other, friends and neighbors about religious questions.
- ❖ Add DVDs with explicit religious themes to your typical film/TV practices.

Practice Ideas

Incorporating Media Literacy and Critical Thinking into Any Curriculum: 12 Basic Principles

Project Look Sharp © Ithaca College, 2004. All rights reserved. (www.ithaca.edu/looksharp)

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, critically evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms. At Project Look Sharp we define “media” very broadly to include books, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, movies, videos, billboards, recorded music, video games, and the Internet. The following 12 principles are general guidelines for thinking about ways to integrate media literacy into any curricular area. For each principle, media literacy can be incorporated through the use and analysis of existing media content and/or through media production. The activities listed for each principle are meant as examples only.

General Media Literacy Practices

When engaging in critical analysis of any media message, it’s useful to ask some or all of the following questions:

1. Who made—and who sponsored—this message, and for what purpose?
2. Who is the target audience, and how is the message specifically tailored to that audience?
3. What are the different techniques used to inform, persuade, entertain, and attract attention?
4. What messages are communicated (and/or implied) about certain people, places, events, behaviors, lifestyles, etc.?
5. How current, accurate, and credible is the information in this message?
6. What is left out of this message that might be important to know?

Twelve Basic Principles

- 1** Use media to practice general observation, critical thinking, analysis, perspective-taking, and production skills by
 - encouraging students to think critically about information presented in any media message (including the information from their textbooks or the popular media they use at home)
 - pointing out ways in which media messages might be interpreted differently by people from different backgrounds or groups

- fostering observation and general memory skills by asking students to look for specific things when they view videos or read print material, and then asking them about those things afterward
- allowing students to go beyond the curricular issue at hand to identify and comment on incidental aspects of a media message (e.g., the characteristics of the people presenting the material, the techniques used to attract attention, and the ways in which advertising and product messages intrude into other types of media content)
- fostering creative skills through encouraging the production of media messages about a topic

- 2** Use media to stimulate interest in a new topic by
 - showing an exciting or familiar video clip or reading a short book or story (fiction or nonfiction) about the topic
 - having students work in small groups to read, analyze, and discuss a controversial magazine, newspaper, or online article about the topic
 - using a short video, magazine illustration, or brief article to stimulate discussion, encouraging students to express what they already know or their opinion about a topic
 - showing students how to search for information about the topic on the Internet
 - encouraging students to plan and design a media product (a montage of pictures, a video, a newspaper or magazine report, or a Web page) about the topic for other students to view
- 3** Identify ways in which students may be already familiar with a topic through media by
 - giving examples from popular media content to illustrate what students might already know about a topic or things they might be familiar with that relate to the topic
 - drawing links between the way a topic is typically treated academically and how it might be used in popular media (e.g., written

poetry versus song lyrics or advertising jingles)

- clarifying the way specific terminology related to the topic might be used differently in an academic sense than it might be in the popular culture
- building on the intuitive knowledge students have gained from media about the content area (e.g., about story and character development, problem solving, terminology, rhyming)

4 Use media as a standard pedagogical tool by

- providing information about the topic through a variety of media sources (books, newspaper/magazine articles, instructional videos, websites), comparing the usefulness of different media, and addressing conflicting information that may come from different sources
- using media to convey information more richly and effectively than would be possible with a standard classroom discussion or demonstration
- encouraging students to follow (and write about) current events reported in the media about a topic
- using media content as assigned homework (reading material, searching for information about a topic in newspapers or magazines, etc.)
- encouraging students to share information in class that they have gotten from various media sources (inside or outside of class)

5 Identify erroneous beliefs about a topic fostered by media content by

- analyzing media content that misrepresents a topic or presents false or misleading information about a topic
- identifying misleading ways in which data are presented in the media (citing statistics incorrectly, drawing false conclusions from misleading data, presenting unclear figures and tables, etc.)
- identifying false beliefs held by students about a topic that may have come from fictional media content
- encouraging students to create their own false or misleading media messages (PSAs, commercials, digitally manipulated print advertisements, etc.) and then having them present the message and “debunk” it for the other students in the class

6 Develop an awareness of issues of credibility and bias in the media by

- teaching how to recognize the source (speaker) of a media message and the purpose of producing the message, and how that might influence the objective nature of information
- clarifying the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in different types of media reporting on a specific topic
- identifying ways to decide what are credible sources about this topic within different types of media (e.g., books, magazines/journals, the Internet)
- emphasizing the importance of getting information from many different sources and how to give weight to different pieces of information (e.g., if the information is based on research or other evidence versus personal opinion)
- producing media messages about this topic, emphasizing ways in which bias can be introduced through the words and tone used to present the topic, sources of information used, what is selected to be presented and what is left out, etc.
- exploring how media messages reflect the identity of the creator or presenter of the message and how the same message might come across differently if it were presented or created by someone of a different background, age, race, gender, etc.

7 Compare the ways different media present information about a topic by

- contrasting ways in which information about a topic might be presented in a documentary, a TV news report, a newspaper article, an advertisement, or an educational children’s program (what is emphasized, what is left out, what techniques are used to present the information, etc.)
- comparing the amount of time/space devoted to a topic in different media from the same time period (and discussing why the difference occurs)
- analyzing different conclusions that might be drawn by people exposed to information presented in one medium versus another
- discussing the strengths of different media to best get across a particular message
- producing reports about the topic using different forms of media, or manipulating the same information and visuals to convey different messages

8 Analyze the effect that specific media have had on a particular issue or topic historically and/or across different cultures by

- discussing the role that the media have played (if any) in the history of this topic (i.e., ways in which the media have changed the nature of this issue or topic)
- discussing how people of earlier generations might have learned about this topic, what sources of information were available to them compared with sources available to us now, and what difference that would make in people's lives
- exploring the level of knowledge about a topic in different cultures and how that knowledge is influenced by the media available
- identifying media forms that are dominant or available in other cultures that may be seldom used in the United States, and vice versa

9 Use media to build and practice specific curricular skills by

- using print media (books, newspapers, magazines) to practice reading and comprehension skills
- substituting excerpts from existing media content for standard story problems or practice examples (e.g., to practice math skills, to correct grammar or spelling, to identify adjectives or adverbs)
- using media production to practice specific skills (e.g., grammar, poetry, math used in timing and proportions of media messages, scientific principles involved in calculating size, distance, and lighting)
- preparing examples for practicing skills that include media literacy information (e.g., comparing the lengths of news stories about different topics, computing the Nielsen ratings for different shows, analyzing the ways in which two products are described in advertisements)
- fostering computer skills by encouraging students to search for information on the Internet, develop multimedia projects, and use computers to present information about a topic

10 Use media to express students' opinions and illustrate their understanding of the world by

- encouraging students to analyze media messages for distortions and bias issues of particular interest to them (e.g., messages

about sex and gender, messages promoting harmful behaviors, race and age distortions in the "media world" compared with the real world, and advertising targeted to people their age)

- encouraging students to express their feelings and knowledge through media messages that they produce
- encouraging thoughtful critiques of various media productions
- promoting discussion of different points of view about popular media articles and productions

11 Use media as an assessment tool by

- having students summarize their knowledge about a topic in a final report that employs other forms of media beyond the standard written report (e.g., computer-illustrated reports, audio or video productions, photographic illustrations)
- encouraging students to work in groups to illustrate their understanding of a topic by creating mock media productions (e.g., newspapers, advertisements, news reports, live or videotaped skits)
- presenting, at the end of a unit, a media message (e.g., from a newspaper, magazine, or video) that contains false information about the topic and seeing if students can identify what is correct and what is incorrect in the message

12 Use media to connect to the community and work toward positive change by

- finding collaborative possibilities for projects with community institutions (e.g., museums, libraries, galleries) that may involve students analyzing or creating media messages
- having students contact community service agencies related to the curricular area and offer their assistance with production (e.g., photography, video, design and layout, or computer skills) to help with agency projects
- encouraging older students to teach production techniques or media literacy principles to younger students in the same school
- using media forums (e.g., local community access TV, newspapers, and magazines) to communicate messages or share research projects about the topic

Practice Ideas

How to Use Digital Storytelling in Education

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Storytelling is a vital skill with seemingly unlimited applications. Done well, it can have a magical effect — moving, enlightening, or entertaining audiences of any size. We tell stories to woo lovers, calm children, or reassure ourselves. Lawyers rely on the power of storytelling to vividly re-create crimes to juries, archaeologists conjure former civilizations, and teachers make abstract concepts real to their students.

In today's digitized world, visual storytelling is a favorite classroom tool, and the affordability and accessibility of technology such as iMovie provides opportunities not imagined a decade ago. Joe Fatheree and Craig Lindvahl, two teachers who have made seven films between them and who teach filmmaking workshops to educators, say that even when teachers are comfortable with the technology, they don't often feel confident about teaching the art of storytelling. But they probably know more than they think, say Fatheree and Lindvahl, who offer the following advice to help teachers:

1. Learn from what you watch.

Think of movies you adore, movies you could watch again and again. What makes them so effective? Is it the dialogue, the character development, the way shots are framed? Likewise, consider movies so bad they make you squirm. Just why are they so excruciating? Work with your students to dissect several well-known films; you'll soon find yourselves with several categories that fall under the rubric of storytelling techniques. You will be amazed at how much you already know.

2. See technology as a storytelling tool, not as a teaching goal.

Though students need some knowledge of how to use equipment, teaching about technology should never be the focus of the curriculum. Simple editing programs such as iMovie are intuitive and easy to learn. If you have a camera and a computer with FireWire, you're ready to go; your creative aspirations will drive your technology learning curve. Once you think of an element you want to include that requires more advanced software or gear, you'll be compelled to learn how to use it.

3. Allow your students to push you (and lead you).

Don't be intimidated if your students learn faster than you do. Many of them are accustomed to quickly absorbing technology. Use their aptitude to your advantage by letting students teach each other; you'll find that they show their strengths fairly quickly. Within a class, you'll have great writers, editors, camera operators, and technicians. They can improve their weaker points while using their strengths to help others (including you).

4. Learn by trial and error.

Accept the fact that you will spend a portion of your time scratching your head, wondering, "Why won't that work?" Seek out resources where you can post questions and get answers quickly. (Creative Cow is an excellent online destination; it has sections for virtually every kind of production and post-production software and hardware.) Every glitch will build your technology savvy until you get to the point where you can anticipate the kinds of problems students will have. Take heart in remembering that most great filmmakers come from a creative background, not a technical one; they depend on others to make technology work on their behalf.

5. Give your students freedom, but hold them accountable.

Kids are not used to the kind of freedom they'll need to do great creative work. Some will thrive in that environment, others will require close supervision to make sure they complete their projects. One good way to do this is to have students pitch a one-paragraph description of their project and provide a production schedule. In essence, it's a work contract.

6. Consider yourself the executive producer.

Work with your students as a partner learning about technology and storytelling, but don't forget that you call the shots. You have to be the arbiter of good taste and the studio boss who decides whether an idea is production worthy. Serving in this role as a teacher is

actually much easier than it is for a real-live executive producer, because students naturally look to you for leadership.

7. Don't forget to celebrate your students' work.

Whether you show completed projects to the class alone or to the entire school or even the whole community, present the stories your students tell.

There's a good chance their work will be much more professional than you expect, and light-years beyond what your community might anticipate. A great side benefit of public showings is that your students will take their work very seriously. The knowledge that others are going to see it (and you can't hide C-quality work on a big screen) has been the source of tremendous inspiration for filmmakers for a hundred years.

Try This! Youth Voices: Tell Your Students to Speak Up

*Try this project with children or youth in your church. Just modify the question to fit your focus.
The idea was developed by Edutopia.org*

Be sure to check-out all of the resources on Edutopia.org, The George Lukas Educational Foundation.

Edutopia.org wants to hear from you about which skills you think your school should teach to help you succeed in life. Young people are experts on the modern digital world, and we think it's time adults listened. Create a video stating your opinion, and submit it by October 15—we'll publish our favorites on Edutopia.org.

It's simple—there are just five steps:

1. Create a video, no more than one minute long, answering this question: "What do you think is the most important skill to learn for your future—and why?" The footage could consist of straightforward talking to the camera, or something more creative.
2. Introduce yourself with your first name only.
3. Obtain parental consent for taping and posting on the Internet if you are younger than eighteen years old.
4. Post the video on YouTube and tag it "edutopiaskills." (Note that YouTube users must be at least thirteen years old.)
5. Send an email to skills@edutopia.org, telling us your name, age, parental contact information, and hometown, and include a link to the video.
6. You'll need a (free) YouTube account to do the upload. Find YouTube's instructions for uploading and directions for tagging.