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# Spiritual

## *Called to Proclaim the Kingdom*

*by Reverend Louis J. Cameli, STD*

In Luke's Gospel we read that after the disciples have been with Jesus for a while, listening to his teaching and watching his works of healing, forgiving, and casting out demons, he sends them out on mission. It is a kind of trial run. And what an amazing trial run it is.

After Jesus summons the Twelve, he sends them "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:2). That is a formidable task, and we would assume that he would equip them with every resource possible to insure their success. In fact, he seems to do the opposite. He says quite deliberately about resources: "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic" (Luke 9:3). They are to approach their mission with a profound sense of poverty. What does this mean?

It means, first of all, that they are not to rely on their own resources or their own cleverness. If there is to be any dependency, it will be on him, on his word, and on his promise. They have received a mission from him, and that is enough. It also means that the single most important and decisive resource is their own faith in Jesus.

If they have come to know the power of his word and the power of his healing, they will be ready "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal." All this has great importance for catechists today.

As teachers of the faith, of course, we need to study the faith and employ those resources that will be helpful in communicating it. We should be ready to avail ourselves of whatever means are available. At the same time, the Gospel picture of the Twelve on their trial run mission tells us that the essential resource is really quite simple. As persons of faith and as believers, we are the essential resource.

Another way of understanding this is to see the link between ourselves and our service or work. Who we are and what we do must come together in the ministry or service of catechesis. Who we are as believers in Jesus is absolutely integral to what we do as catechists. Our identity as believers is fully linked to our task as communicators and educators of faith.

*Our faith  
in Jesus Christ is  
our most essential  
catechetical  
resource.*

# Reflection

Think about this for a moment, and you will begin to realize that this is not an ordinary way of thinking in the world. Most people would say that they are who they are, and they *have* a job, a work that they do. If what they do is compatible with who they are, that is all for the better. More often than not, however, things do not unfold so smoothly. They are not selling a product because they really believe in it. They are not manufacturing something because it has some intrinsic and life-giving value for them. For most people, most of the time, there is a separation between who they are and what they do. For us, as catechists and communicators of the faith, that can never be the case.

Jesus summons us, as he summoned the Twelve. He sends us, as he sent the Twelve. To them and to us, he says, "Go and proclaim and heal, not because of the resources that you have but because of who you are as my disciples."



## For Reflection

- If you are a parish catechist, how would you describe the difference between your work as a catechist and other kinds of volunteer work that you do?
- If you are a Catholic school teacher, how would you describe the difference between teaching religion and teaching other curriculum subjects?

**Louis J. Cameli** is a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago and pastor of Divine Savior Parish in Norridge, Illinois. He completed his theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome and obtained a doctorate in theology with a specialization in spirituality. He is the former director of ongoing formation of priests in the Archdiocese of Chicago and director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House, Mundelein, Illinois. In February, 2002, he received the Pope John XXIII Award from the National Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC) for his contributions to the continuing education and ongoing formation of priests. He has authored numerous books on spirituality and also served as a writer and theological consultant for RCL's *Faith First* and *Faith First Legacy Edition* K-8 curriculum.

# Called by the Lord

Lord Jesus, you have summoned us  
to continue your work.  
Through our **ministry** of the word,  
we stand before you,  
ill-equipped, inadequate, and fearful  
of the great task to which we have been **called**.

Yet you reassure us that  
we need nothing for the journey  
save our abiding **faith** in you.  
Help us remember that  
it is **you** who speak through us.  
It is **you** to whom we point the way.

It is **you** and your Spirit  
who will sustain us  
on our journey  
as your ministers.

*Amen.*

# Overview: Roles of the Catechist Module

As a catechist you are a symbol of the Church community. You have received and responded to a call from God to lead others to growth in faith and an understanding of the Catholic faith tradition. This module will help you focus on four of the key roles of a catechist:

- **Teacher-companion:** Embarking on a journey with your learners, building a faith relationship with them, and drawing them into the Christian community
- **Storyteller:** Telling the story of the faith tradition with conviction and passion
- **Leader of Prayer:** Becoming a more prayerful person yourself so that you can be more effective in teaching others to pray
- **Witness for Justice:** Helping learners embrace the call of the Gospel by taking up the work of building the reign of God

To explore these four roles, you will engage in a process of faith reflection using three components: a DVD, a companion booklet, and a CD-ROM. See page 5 for an explanation of how these components complement one another. You began your work on this module with spiritual reflection and prayer (pages 6–8). The exercise on the next page will help you reflect on and assess your present catechetical practice. The four segments that

follow will lead you through a four-page process to reflect on the DVD content and help you choose ways to apply the content to your faith-sharing setting.

1. **Introduction:** States the goal and objectives for the session and provides a question for personal reflection
2. **Looking Ahead—Presentation:** Includes a video overview and space to write questions and comments
3. **Looking Back—Reflection:** Includes three questions to check comprehension and offers a chance for group reflection
4. **Looking Beyond—Application:** Includes an opportunity to summarize new insights and apply them to a practical setting

There is an enrichment article at the end of each segment process that extends learning by exploring a topic related to the segment theme.

Since one of your key roles is to serve as a teacher-companion and build a faith community in your catechetical setting, try to model this by participating in the learning process of this module in a group setting. Experience can be your best teacher. If circumstances require that you work independently, find at least one other facilitator with whom you can work and share your reflections.

**Rita T. Minkley** currently serves as the Director of the Catechetical Center in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. She has ministered for more than 30 years as a religious educator, pastoral administrator, and retreat leader. Rita especially enjoys working in adult faith formation. Balance between family and ministry is central to her spirituality and a top priority. Rita holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and a Master of Arts degree in religious studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

# The Catechist as Storyteller

Catechists share the responsibility of passing on the beliefs and traditions of our faith community in a way that touches the heart and hands as well as the head. Jesus often used stories and parables to convey his message, and catechists strive to teach as he did.

In this segment you will learn the importance of storytelling and some ways to use this technique to engage your learners.

## Goal

To appreciate the importance of storytelling in conveying the Christian message

## Learning Objectives

- To identify reasons why people tell and listen to stories
- To develop a variety of techniques for storytelling
- To describe the connection between storytelling and catechesis

## Exercise

*Take a few moments to reflect on the following questions. Then discuss them with another person or with a group.*

Recall a significant family story that you have retold. Why do you tell this story to others? What does it signify for you about your family?

## Prayer

*Lord Jesus, you invited your disciples to walk with you as companions on a journey to the Father and showed them by your storytelling, your words, and your actions how to love, heal, and forgive. Help us follow your example and serve as your witnesses to a new generation of seekers. Amen.*



# Looking Back

Reflect silently on one or more of the questions below and then jot down your response(s). Then share your thoughts with another person or with a group.

1. Recall a story from the video. Referring to the reasons listed in the box on the right, what were some reasons for telling the story?

Explain why this story was effective?

2. Describe some of the storytelling techniques in the video that you would like to incorporate into your own catechesis.

3. Recall the dramatization of Jesus telling the parable of the tenant farmers (Mark 12:1–11). What message was Jesus able to communicate through this story?

## Remember . . .

### REASONS FOR STORYTELLING

To find out who you are



To discover your heritage



To know those who went before you



To discover your own beliefs



To learn right from wrong



To discover truth



To learn from heroes



To entertain



To experience adventure



# Looking Beyond

Storytelling stimulates the imagination of your learners. It can be a device to convey your message or to reinforce your learners' understanding of it. The exercise below will help you plan a storytelling activity for your class.

[T]he disciples came and asked [Jesus], "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He answered, "... The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.'" Matthew 13:10-13



Note the list of selections from children's literature on pages 36-38 that connect with faith themes.

## PRACTICE FOR CATECHISTS

### A Story About Forgiveness

Think of the way that Jesus taught in parables. Plan a story that would convey Jesus' teaching about forgiveness to your learners. What images from everyday life could you use? Writing out the message or the point of the story first will help. When you have chosen some images, share with another catechist your ideas for your story.

#### Message

#### Images

#### What Did I Learn?

*In this space, summarize the most important insights you gained in this segment.*

#### What Will I Change?

*In this space, write one thing you will do differently as a catechist because of what you learned in this segment.*

# Storytelling

by Barbara Kay Bowie

We are all storytellers. Our voices mesmerize others as we tell of the feats we have accomplished or the bargains we have found. No formal training is required for using these natural techniques for telling our own stories. We can use these same storytelling techniques during our catechetical sessions.

Our greatest storytelling model is Jesus. The way he taught shows that Jesus understood that his followers learned his message through the stories of ordinary experiences. Just as Jesus' disciples came to understand the message more clearly through a story or parable, our learners, too, will remember a story's message far longer than a statement taught through a lecture. Our learners use their imaginations when they actively listen to a story. They imagine scenarios and characterizations that will continue to remind them of the faith message after the session is completed.

Storytelling is the "theater of the face." Our face is the "stage" on which we demonstrate tone and mood in concert with our voices.

In preparation for a session, we read the story or parable quietly to determine the Scripture message or lesson of the story. Then we practice reading the story aloud. It is automatic for our voices to emphasize the most dramatic parts, for our eyes to open wide or close slowly for the climax, and for the expression of our faces to change according to the mood and/or action of the story.

Next, we must decide the tempo for retelling each section of the story, determine the volume of our voice to be used at the climax, and practice ways to change the tone of our voice. While it is not necessary to use a different voice for each character, our voices must reflect the emotional tone of the character or the theme of the story.

After we identify the tone, mood, and volume of our voices, we look in the mirror and match them with our facial expressions. Our facial expressions and voices need to inspire our learners to picture in their minds the

*Our greatest storytelling model is Jesus, who understood that his followers learned his message through the stories of ordinary experiences.*

**Barbara Kay Bowie, EdD**, has been a teacher of children in grades pre-K through eight, a principal of an inner-city school, a consultant to several school districts and publishers, and a college and university professor. She is the author of an early childhood religion curriculum. Dr. Bowie has been a consultant for the National Catholic Education Association and a director of elementary education at Loyola College in Baltimore, Maryland. She holds a doctorate of education from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

## BIBLE STORYTELLING

Identify  
the message.



Practice  
reading the  
story aloud.



Decide the  
tempo for  
each part.



Determine the  
volume of  
your voice.



Change the  
voices of the  
characters.



Match facial  
expressions  
with moods.



Blend story,  
voices, and  
dramatics.



Retell the story  
without a book  
or Bible.

characters and settings of the story to help them retain the story's message.

While there needs to be a blending of story, voices, and dramatics, it is important for us, however, not to overdramatize the story, for our actions can easily overpower the message.

After we have told stories during the first few sessions, our next challenge is to retell stories in our own words without using a book or the Bible, using only our memories and storytelling techniques. When we can retell stories in this way, we discover that the faith stories become

our own, and using our voices correctly becomes automatic.

Why is it so important to tell the stories of faith in religious education settings? Storytelling is essential because it is through our personal faith stories and the great Story of faith handed down through Scripture and Tradition that we discover the movement of God in our lives and all that God intends for us. As we tell our stories we help our learners and ourselves envision our future, as individual pilgrims and as a people of faith on the way to the Father through the way of his Son, Jesus.

### *For Reflection*

- Who do you know who is a good teller of stories? Why do you remember them?
- What skills did you learn in this article that you will incorporate into your catechesis?