**Sound Catechesis Requires a Convincing Story**

The premise behind communicating a convincing story is to make it relatable to your audience. In other words show them they are part of the actual story. Any good narrative relies on the existence of natural truths that help anyone come to a realization that this story actually means something to the person.

When the premise behind a good narrative is the actualization of faith, the key word is actualization. Expanding on this a bit further, any sound narrative offers the listener an opportunity to engage the story and at some point assent to the premise of the story and the realities associated with it. These realities or actualizations when associated with Christ for example take on a whole different meaning because the intent is an assent of faith to Christ. But to convince someone to assent to Christ we must first provide the backdrop i.e. the premise behind this assent. And here is where the story needs to be convincing i.e. God’s plan for our salvation and His desire for us to be in full communion with Him.

**At the Heart of the Story**

Sound catechesis rests on the principal that what you are echoing i.e. teaching is Christ in order to develop an intimate relationship with Him and thus deepen our understanding of His story which we are also a part. When the Archangel Gabriel introduces himself to the Blessed Mother in Luke’s Gospel (1:26-31) his first words were not about himself, instead his very first statement is a direct affirmation from God on who she is: “Hail full of grace the Lord is with you!”

Applying the Annunciation model to our premise on “the story” our first catechetical step should involve an introduction to God’s narrative e.g. where we fit in God’s plan and what we are called to do within this plan. Any sound catechist would tell you that the first preparatory step in teaching the faith to anyone is a clear and precise introduction of God’s story and that His story is also ours and that we are still currently still in it. This basic principle is found again in the Annunciation narrative where after the Archangel Gabriel affirms our Blessed Mother he initiates a second phase of communication by telling Mary that she has “found favor with God.”

A good catechetical narrative aspires to reveal the mysteries of Christ and that these mysteries are not beyond our reach. Let’s keep in mind that the mysteries of Christ can be understood to the degree that we see the process of Divine Revelation throughout history and the development doctrine rooted in Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. Even though we tend to speak of mystery as something that cannot be understood at all in relation to God, this is far from the case when we see what has been revealed in light of Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. One needs to look no further than the Catechism of the Catholic Church to gain a better appreciation on how the mysteries of Christ can be understood in light of Divine Revelation.

 **The Centrality of Catechesis is the Kerygma**

Part and parcel toward offering a convincing story is setting the stage for a proper understanding on how to live within the story. In other words those we teach should be exposed to the visible witness of our own sacramental life i.e. authentic Christian living which leads to holy action. St. Paul speaks about the need to mature our faith in order to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-13). This particular point reflects the union between the Kerygma i.e. the proclamation of the living Gospel of Jesus Christ and our ability to articulate it through sound catechetical practice, content, and method. The kerygma for all intense purposes sets the stage toward embracing the story of Salvation History; meaning after a specific period of time guiding an individual toward the saving realities of God’s plan for our lives, Salvation History begins to make a little more sense. And this step can take some time depending on the individual’s state in life.

The effective aim of catechesis relies on a clear submission of God’s plan for our lives and how this plan is fully realized in Jesus Christ. Our catechetical instruction cannot be void of the central message of Christ because our way to the Father is through the Son and not ourselves (Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32). This reflects a concerted effort to teach the content of the faith and not be anchored by anything the deviates from what has been echoed (the Deposit of Faith).

**What Does a Convincing Story Reveal?**

A convincing story reveals truth. And this truth creates a walkway where a person can see him or herself engaging the potentiality of a route to Christ thus having a desire become members of Christ and His Church (Rom 6:3-4).

Part of our fundamental task as catechists is to help people young and old become aware of their vocation and of their purpose in life as a Christian. The study of Christian doctrine thus becomes an opportunity to not just memorize the faith it is an opportunity to help the person become aware of the Church’s doctrinal truths through a personal invitation to enter into God’s plan introduced at Baptism. The Catechism (156) reinforces this point even further:

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe “because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.” So “that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit.” Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church’s growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability “are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all”; they are “motives of credibility” (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is “by no means a blind impulse of the mind.

Effective catechesis reveals that God is waiting for an answer to His personal invitation. This is where the story offers its most convincing position in that God is waiting and not going away no matter how hard we try to replace or ignore Him. Our response of faith is not solely based on our intellectual prowess, instead our response is an unreserved desire to follow God’s loving plan in Christ made more evident by the birth of His only-begotten Son as mentioned earlier in the Annunciation narrative. God’s story is our story, whether we realize it or not. The only way we can truly embrace our doctrinal call and duty is to understand the relationship between our vocation as created beings in the image likeness of God and the response of faith that results from this creation. In other words the symphony of faith rests on the saving realities brought to us by Jesus Christ Himself who is Lord of History.

“But above all it’s the Gospels that occupy my mind when I’m at prayer; my poor soul has so many needs, and yet this is the one thing needful. I’m always finding fresh lights there, hidden and enthralling meanings.”

St. Thérèse of Lisieux