

Philosophy

Introduction to ***Growing Faith*** by Bill Huebsch



“We’ve been meaning to do this for a long time,”
one parish religious education director told me.
She was talking about bringing adults
into the learning circle of her parish.

“Catechesis for adults,”
the [General Directory for Catechesis](#) tells us in article 59,
“...must be considered the chief form of catechesis.
All other forms, which are indeed always necessary,
are in some way oriented to it.”

Is this true in your parish?

All of us who work in parish ministry today
want to do a better job of reaching adults,
of offering them faith formation.
We attend conferences and read excellent resources.
We talk among ourselves in the hallways and cloak rooms
of diocesan meetings.
We plan and study and invite and cajole
-- and sometimes even plot --
to find ways to interest adults and help them
grow in their faith.

We have learned a few things over the years.

First, adult formation
is a two step process.
Pope John Paul II has made a tremendous contribution
to our ministry by articulating so clearly
that the “first step” for most adults
will not be actual instruction in the faith
but conversion to Jesus Christ.
You can find the pope’s own words on this topic
in his Apostolic Exhortation, [Catechesi Tradendae](#).

The sad fact, however,
is that, within our parish communities,

many if not most adults have *not* turned their hearts to Christ,
have *not* “put on Christ like a garment,”
as St. Paul suggests.

This lack of conversion
produces a lack of real *heart* for the faith.
A lack of enthusiasm.
Even a lackluster presence in the Sunday Assembly,
or no presence there at all....

Again, the “first step” isn’t instruction in the faith,
but the turning of the heart to Christ.

The process of introducing folks to Christ
is important and essential for every parish.
It’s the first step of the catechumenate,
the first step before baptism,
and essential for every Christian throughout their lives.
We call this process by a name in the Catholic Church today,
and that name is “*evangelization*.”

For many Catholics, this is a new and difficult term.
It suggests to many the sort of television-based ministries
which are popular among evangelical Christians.
In Catholic thinking and practice, however,
the term *evangelization* has a different meaning
than the one these evangelical Christians mean by it.
For us Catholics and many other main line Christians,
we believe that we cannot know Christ
without at the same time knowing and being part
of the Body of Christ
which is the Church.

Christ is the head of this body, after all!

So for us, knowing Christ fits into living our Catholic lives:
being at Mass,
celebrating the sacraments,
working for justice and peace,
following the precepts of the church,
learning from the pastoral leaders of the church,
and developing mature, adult faith within a community.

And yes, it also leads for most people to some form
of actual *instruction in the faith*
which is where **Growing Faith** comes in.

In 1972, Pope Paul VI gave the church
a very important and easy-to-read Apostolic Exhortation
about evangelization,

entitled [*Evangelii Nuntiandi*](#).

Reading it is a pleasure; it's like making a retreat!

The second half of the process of growing in faith
is to study it!

As we just said, to know Christ is to know the church.
Because of this, studying our faith
is one of the ways we come to know Christ better.

And, as we just said,
that's where ***Growing Faith*** comes in.
Here at last is a product designed for the youth,
young adults,
and adults of all sorts in today's church.

It's beautiful in design,
easy to use,
easy to facilitate,
and absolutely Catholic!

People will want the booklets as keepsakes
and they will read and re-read them for many years!
They will give them to family members and friends;
they will refer to them when questions arise.

Growing Faith is designed to support the journey of faith
that so many Catholics are on today.

If used from front to back,
it provides a systematic and comprehensive presentation
of the Catholic faith.

Whether used in groups or in privately,
it presents the beauty and deep meaning of our faith
in language which is common
and with illustrations which touch the heart.

Each component booklet (there are 48 in all)
opens up one important dimension of our faith.

Each new insight about your faith,
each reflection that sticks in your mind afterward,
each line of the text or memory of the artwork,
is a gift.

Receive these gifts gratefully.