



From A Bishop's Journal (768)

Wonderful Witnesses (2)

We are very lucky to have enthusiastic and convinced catechists. A proof of this can be seen in the following testimonies.

Source of Life

Our children appreciate simple words. As a catechist I tell them that Eucharist is the source of life and the most precious gift that the Lord gave us before his death. Passing this great mystery on to our children can be done in different ways in our lives, and day-to-day. The most determining and interesting fact in life is that the Lord is always with us and among us. Every day I pray to him: "Thank you, Lord, for being there with the Eucharist:" this special thank you lives in our hearts. – Isabelle

A Gift of Immense Value

Gabrielle remembers her First Communion, during her third year of religious education. This particular level consists of six sessions where the children's awareness is raised step by step to recalling their baptism and the celebration of forgiveness. Each child is led to an instance in the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, who saw the earth as God's gift. Such a discovery by the children helps raise their level of wonder as they get a better understanding of Jesus. Following the course guide, we make the children aware by tying these facts in the life of Francis to their own small lives. This comes through in the way they behave towards their schoolmates, and how they conduct themselves in school generally, at home, and with their friends. Following their development as small children, what is most determining and interesting in the children's lives in order to receive this beautiful gift that is the Eucharist, is seeing them getting excited about the very moment they will receive the Father's gift. I am not totally certain that at that age they realise the immense value of this gift. So, what makes this question interesting is to continue developing with the children and deepening their understanding of our great Creator God in three persons. – Grandpa Roger and his Grand-daughter

Making God Present

To give the children a taste for communion, I tell them that the Eucharist is the bread of life that God gives us, and that it is a privilege to be able to receive it at church. This bread revives our spirit and helps us be Christians who follow in the footsteps of Jesus. To pass on this mystery to the children I tell them that we are not pure spirits and that we need visible signs of God's presence: it is exactly for this that Jesus came, to make God present. The bread, which is an element of daily life, is the best symbol of this. It is terrific to have a God who makes himself close to us in our material needs, to change this bread into spiritual nourishment. In order to receive communion, it is important to be in a state of greeting, of openness, and of faith. Otherwise, it is like getting a gift and not bothering to look at it, use it, or say thank you. One must desire it, have an open heart, and appreciate it... When the Bread of Life is received, it continues its work in the person receiving it. And so, if I really had God's gift I would not hesitate, and I would receive communion every Sunday! – Louise

Comfort and Hope

My experience as a catechist is most enriching, a special moment that I share with my son and a group of his friends. At this Third Level we prepare two great events, forgiveness, and the Eucharist. The work of the catechist is special because we have the opportunity of sharing the word of God through experiences in the life of Jesus and finding connections with the daily experience of our children. Today life is very complex, the children experience all kinds of emotions, anxieties, and joys. It is a moment I use to share my own experience as a person and a mother. It is a period when they are free to share with us the good and bad moments they have, a time, too, to share the word of God with them; through prayer, they can find comfort and hope. I try to look at life through the eyes of these children, so as to appreciate it in a new way. My experience as a catechist allows me to question my own faith in God: do I apply the word of God that I am passing on to this group of children? We must teach them that life has obstacles, but that through them all we are given the opportunity to deepen our faith in God and become better persons. – Nicole

With More Than Words

I would first like to say how much I enjoy trying to help the children in their spirituality, especially this year when they prepare for the sacrament of forgiveness and the sacrament of the Eucharist. Besides, I truly believe that it is not only with words that it is important to communicate, but also with our beliefs and actions. This is how I try to communicate with the children in my group. And during discussions on forgiveness and communion, I have discovered even more how the word of God and Jesus himself are important for them. To give them the opportunity to participate and to share during the gathering is to give them the opportunity to apply what they are learning to their daily experience. For instance, forgiveness becomes more than an abstract concept: it has beneficial effects in their lives and relationships. – Jean-Robert

A Mystery of Wonderful Love

It is not easy today for parents to give their children a proper Christian education because they lack religious experience and do not know where to begin and how to go about it. For four years now I

have had the opportunity to live an enriching and exciting experience, as I have been given the privilege of dispensing the information necessary so that our children, with the help of their parents, can prepare for the sacrament of the Eucharist. For me, the secret for a good preparation to First Communion is being able to develop in oneself a craving for getting to know always more about our friend “Jesus.” At our gatherings I try to pass on to them what I know and as far as possible, help them meet Jesus Christ and teach them how to recognise him. I show them a face of Jesus that is meaningful to them: a Jesus of love, Creator, present, near to us, who loves us just as we are, speaks to us, forgives us, and listens to us. They learn from the accounts of others and through videos the meaning of sharing, welcoming, respect, forgiveness, and giving freely, in daily life. I give them a specific “mission,” during the gathering: saying a prayer, reading a scripture verse, answering questions. They even have the chance of living an experience by sharing in the life of the Christian community, at parish celebrations. The sacrament of the Eucharist marks the beginning of a life-long friendship with Jesus, as it is reflected in the parable of the vine. The evening of Holy Thursday, following the meal he shared with his friends, Jesus told them: “ I am the vine and my Father is the vine grower. He prunes away every barren branch, but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield... Live on in me, as I do in you... He who lives in me and I in him will produce abundantly... The commandment I give you is this: love one another.” What is the most interesting in life in order to receive this gift better is that through communion we can remain united to Jesus, as if his life’s energy pours itself out in us. Let us go, then, and we shall be able to bear fruit! To me, this is a mystery of wonderful love!

– Marie-Paule

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