

Observing and Measuring Discipleship in Children

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The Great Commission

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go** therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

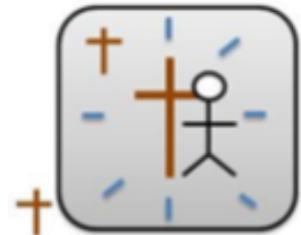
What did Jesus mean by this?

Workshop Overview:

1. Introduction
2. The Dynamics of Discipleship-Making
3. A Look at Childhood Spirituality
4. Observing Spiritual Experiences in Children
5. Tools for Measuring Spiritual Growth in Children
6. Nurturing Discipleship

The Dynamics of Discipleship-Making

What is a Disciple? Someone who has made a decision to put Jesus at the center of his or her life and lives in such a way that Jesus influences every aspect of life...work, school, recreation, friendships, leisure time, etc.



What is Conversion?

“The purpose of this evangelization is to bring about faith and conversion to Christ. Faith involves a profound change of mind and heart, a change of life, a “metanoia”...

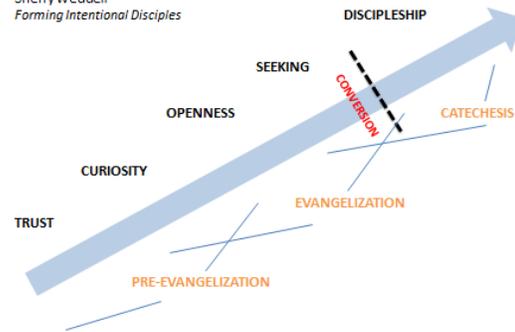
The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ. It is the fruit of God’s grace and the free response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. It arises from the depths of the human person and involves such a profound transformation of heart and mind that it causes the believer to change radically both internally and externally...

For the Christian, this metanoia reorients all aspects of the person’s life to Christ. This conversion is the acceptance of a personal relationship with Christ, a sincere adherence to him, and a willingness to conform one’s life to his. Conversion to Christ involves making a genuine commitment to him and a personal decision to follow him as his disciple.” (National Directory of Catechesis, 17)

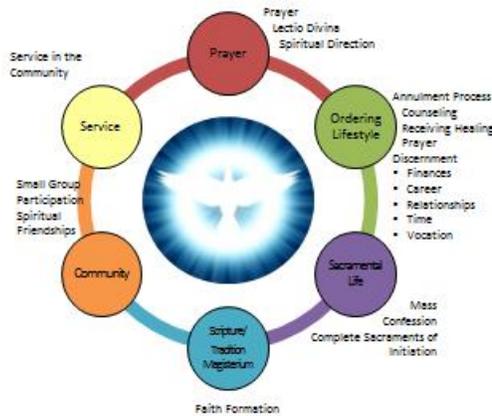
“Within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself . . .” (St. John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time*, 20)

Thresholds of Conversion

Sherry Weddell
Forming Intentional Disciples



An Individual's Areas of Growth in Discipleship

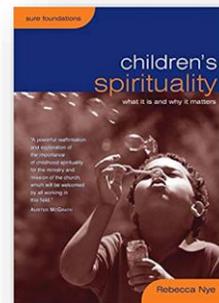


Portrait of a Disciple

- Change in Priorities and Conversation
- Hunger for the Word of God
- Desire to Pray
- Expectancy for God to Speak and Act
- Desire to go to Mass
- Desire to learn more about Christ and His Church
- Desire to serve

A Look at Childhood Spirituality

- What is a child's capacity for God?
- Often underestimated
- Childhood often seen in terms of its limitations
- Misconception that one needs intellectual capacity to encounter God
- Not being able to verbalize experiences doesn't mean they are not happening.



Characteristics of Childhood Spirituality

- Holistic way of seeing things; not analytical
- Open and trusting
- Natural capacity for wonder
- Not threatened by mystery
- Do not hide from feelings
- Desire to learn more about Christ and His Church
- Sensitive capacity for non-verbal communication
- And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

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Let’s not forget Baptism!

The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the *grace of justification*:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism. (CCC 1266)

Faith and Spiritual Development

AGE	CHARACTERISTICS
Before Age 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faith highly imaginative - Pronounced sense of emotional life - Images and characters help make meaning of complex matters
Grade School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Want to know about how things fit together, - Fascinated with stories - Aware of inner life - Develop sense of conscience; concerned with right and wrong - More verbal about spiritual life
Adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Struggle with independence, intimacy, and identity - Questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where do I fit in? What will I do with my life? - Model themselves after heroes and respected authority figures

Compiled from James Fowler's Stages of Faith and Stages of spiritual development outlined in Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters by Rebecca Rye

Observing Spiritual Experiences in Children

Three Spiritual Needs of Children

- Children need to be listened to
- Humble and respectful adults
- Good quality space

Ways in Which Spiritual Experiences Manifest in Children

- Conversations
- Physical Reactions
- Non-Verbal Communication

Unleash the Gospel – www.unleashthegospel.org

Pastoral Letter by Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron

Archdiocese of Detroit, June 3, 2017

“ . . . the Archdiocese, following the call of Pope Francis, is resolved to undergo a “missionary conversion,” a change in our culture, such that every person at every level of the Church, through personal encounter with Jesus Christ, embraces his or her identity as a son or daughter of God and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is formed and sent forth as a joyful missionary disciple. For families this means that every family embraces its role as the domestic church and, in connection with other families and single persons, actively seeks the spiritual and social renewal of its neighborhood, schools and places of work. For parishes and archdiocesan services it means the renewal of structures to make them Spirit-led and radically mission- oriented. For everyone in the Archdiocese it entails making one’s relationship with Jesus and alignment with his will the central guiding principle of every aspect of life. This missionary conversion entails a strikingly countercultural way of living grounded in prayer, Scripture, and the sacraments; unusually gracious hospitality; a capacity to include those on the margins of society; and joyful confidence in the providence of God even in difficult and stressful times.” (Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, *Unleash the Gospel*, Foundational Conviction)

Archdiocese of Detroit Religion Curriculum

Grade 3 Evangelization Outcomes

1. recognize that God knows and loves him/her personally and has a plan for their lives
2. encounter the Lord Jesus Christ through experiential activities such as guided meditations using Sacred Scripture and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
3. recognize that Jesus wants to be in a relationship with him/her
4. recognize that sin separates them from God and one another
5. understand that the consequence of sin could be eternal separation from God
6. understand and articulate the "good news" that Jesus died on the cross for their sins so that they can go to heaven
7. be invited to make a choice to invite Jesus into their lives

Archdiocese of Detroit Religion Curriculum Appendix

Observing and Measuring Discipleship

<http://www.aod.org/being-catholic/catechesis/>

Click on Religion Curriculum and Print Complete book. Forms are in the Appendix

- Discipleship Portfolio Teacher Checklist
- My Life as a Disciple of Jesus
- Student Self-Reflection on Discipleship
- Teacher Observations of Spiritual Growth
- Discipleship Year-end Summary

Parents & Final Thoughts

- Include Evangelization in your curriculum (Kerygma 4 Kids, www.ministry23.com)
- Allow time for wonder, silence, and contemplation
- Cultivate a desire for the Word of God
- Pray
- Foster genuine worship opportunities
- Provide inter-generational experiences