

Saints *Alive!*

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No Catholic—no person—should ever have to step outside of the confines of the Catholic Church to find either an opportunity or an inviting environment for learning and studying sacred Scripture.

Scripture Training: The Hallmark of Our Formation Process

By Rich Cleveland

The Catholic Church has observed a perplexing problem during the last several decades. Thousands and thousands of our young people and young adults have left the Catholic Church primarily in search of the Bible. Frequently, the initial attraction is an invitation to participate in an effective and informative small-group Bible study. Then falling in love afresh with God's Scripture and the people who make studying it available to them, they unconsciously drift from the Catholic Church into other denominations. This phenomenon highlights a situation that should not exist, and also recommends a key component of evangelization.

I am suggesting that having to leave their Catholic roots to study the Bible is a problem that should not exist, because throughout the history of Christendom it has been the Roman Catholic Church that has preserved sacred Scripture. It is the Catholic Church who allowed the Holy Spirit to lead them through the process of establishing that which constitutes the Canon of Scripture, and who devoutly reveres God's written Word in their worship of the *Logos* of God, Jesus the Living Word. No Catholic—no person—should ever have to step outside of the confines of the Catholic Church to find either an opportunity or an inviting environment for learning and studying sacred Scripture. But unfortunately they sometimes have had to.

The principle of evangelization that is recommended to us by this phenomenon is one we have known for a long time but which we often fail to recognize in practice. Here is how Pope Paul VI puts it: "The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization *if the name,*

the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed"¹—if the written truth, regarding he who is THE TRUTH, is not made understandable to people.

Jesus is the attraction for those seeking to understand life, and his teachings, which are found in the Bible, provide answers for correctly responding to life. As Saint Paul said, sacred Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." The Scriptures do in fact "complete [and] equip [people] for every good work." Consequently, those seeking answers, especially young adults, hunger to know Christ the *Logos* of God by pursuing the recorded truth he inspired men to write, the Bible.

Sometimes we make the mistake of buying into the world's perception of people, without remembering that these perceptions are those of the blind who also need enlightenment. As Pope Paul VI points out, "many psychologists and sociologists express the view that modern man has passed beyond civilization of the word," and "that today he lives in the civilization of the image." He observes that words are "not ineffective and useless" and that the "fatigue produced these days by so much empty talk and the relevance of many other forms of communication *must not however diminish the permanent power of the word, or cause a loss of confidence in it. The word remains ever relevant, especially when it is the bearer of the power of God.*" This is why St. Paul's axiom, 'Faith comes from what is heard,' also retains its relevance: *It is the Word that is heard which leads to belief.*"²

If we really believed that it is the Word that leads to belief, our evangelization would revolve around engaging individuals at all levels of belief and spirituality in the study and dis-

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Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Emmaus Journey's goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the nonreligious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



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Multiple copies of *Saints Alive!* are available upon request.

From the Heart

By Rich Cleveland

Saint Paul and the people who accompanied him on his missionary journey to Thessalonica provide an excellent model for life-on-life evangelization. Here's what I mean by that. When Paul and his team came bringing the gospel, they made friends with the people they were trying to reach. As they dwelled among them, they shared the Word of Truth both verbally and through their manner of life. One translation says they shared their "very souls."

People were attracted to Christ by the intimate sharing of a relationship that Paul and his team *had* with the Word of Life. Consequently, when people decided to embark on a journey of faith in Christ the Thessalonians knew full well what they were getting into. Conversion was not simply an intellectual or emotional decision, or in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "simply sentiment." To believe in Christ was a decision to also embrace the lifestyle they observed in Paul and his team. Similarly we must be willing to invite and bring non-religious people into our homes and expose them to our Christian friendships or we will inevitably communicate incorrectly that Christianity is simply about ideas rather than demonstrate the reality that true conversion is about relationship—relationship with Christ, with his Church, and with his mission.

Popes Paul VI and John Paul II spoke of a conversion that results in "total interior renewal" that is "radical" and "dynamic" and results in "turning away from 'life according to the flesh' to 'life according to the Spirit.'" This was the kind of life Saint Paul and his team lived as they resided among the Thessalonians. They were, in effect, the visual aid of what a Christian really is and of what the Christian life should be like. St. Paul says, "Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and so is God, [of] *how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers*" (1 Thessalonians 2:9,10).

The principle of monkey-see, monkey-do took over and the new Thessalonian converts became like their models.

Their lives were exemplary both in terms of being diligent citizens and in terms of being holy and just individuals. There were no questions in the Thessalonians' minds as to what a Christian was supposed to be like. Half-heartedness, complacency, and a mixture of worldly sophistication and Christianity were not normative or acceptable. The principle of monkey-see, monkey-do took over and the new Thessalonian converts became like their models: "For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and (with) much conviction. *You know what sort of people we were (among) you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 1:5,6a).

I recall mentioning at a seminar in 1982, before it was compulsory for children to wear seatbelts, that our children always buckled their seatbelts even on very long drives. One gentleman said in dismay, "How do you do it? Every time I try it results in such a big battle that I have simply given up." When I asked, "Do you always wear your seat belt?" a rather sheepish, but knowing, smile came over his face as he replied, "No, I don't." He didn't wear his seat belt, and his kids were simply following his example. Contrariwise, from infancy all our children ever saw was that when people get in the car, Mom and Dad included, everyone buckled up. They came to expect it as normative and to this day they and their children wear their seatbelts even when only going a short distance. Monkey-see, monkey-do!

People *catch* their faith and lifestyle as they learn from both our verbal and nonverbal input. This is a key principle not only in training children but also in forming people in a life of faith, and it underscores the need to both allow people into our life and to live an exemplary Christian life in word, attitude, and deed.¹



¹ Adapted from *A Vision for Ministry*

Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini: Missionary Sister

Like so many saints, as a child St. Frances Xavier Cabrini did not enjoy a robust physical constitution, but she made up for it in devotion and intelligence. Early, she developed a heart for missions and for the religious life. But

like so many saints her first attempts to join a religious order were frustrated by not being accepted as a candidate for religious life. Like so many others she had to learn obedience by serving in situations of lesser importance and in more difficult circumstances.

Finally at 30 years of age her bishop closed the orphanage where she was teaching and said, "You want to be a missionary. I know no institute of missionary sisters, so found one yourself."¹ And this she did, founding the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, with several of her former students and no financial means. "However, heroic trust in God was Mother Cabrini's great characteristic, and to the end she lived up to the motto chosen for her congregation: 'I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me'" (Philippians 4:13).²

Knowing of the plight of emigrants to America, especially Italians, Pope Leo XIII asked Mother Cabrini to go to America with some of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart to care for these emigrants. In the face of continuing obstacles, she began a great work among the poor and needy. "She comforted the sick and the infirm in the hospitals and diligently cared for them. She extended a friendly and helping hand especially to immigrants and offered them necessary shelter and relief, for having left their homeland behind, they were wandering about in a foreign land with no place to turn for help. Because of their condition she saw that they were in danger of deserting the practice of Christian virtues and their Catholic faith."³

Mother Cabrini believed Jesus' words, "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was homeless and you took me in. Now I tell you this: When you did these things for the most neglected of my brothers you did them for me." She demonstrated Christ's love in such a way that the gospel was welcomed by hearts made tender through loving care. We need her missionary spirit today.

1 Catholic Information Network

2 Ibid

3 From a homily at the Canonization of Saint Frances Xavier by Pope Pius XII, LOH Vol VI, page 2022

The Bayers: Living Incarnationally

Gary and Judy Bayer have also been moved by the plight of the immigrant community. Though both come primarily from an Anglo suburban community, for more than a decade they have chosen to live in a multi-ethnic inner-city community in Detroit that is predominantly, though not exclusively, Latino. Their decision to live in an economically impoverished community and to relate cross-culturally has been nurtured by more than a simple concern for people's wellbeing, or even a desire to address societal ills. They came desiring to understand and live incarnationally, allowing Jesus, the Son of God, to be holistically present in that community through their lives.

Gary and Judy have been influenced by Philippians 2:5-7, which explains that Jesus "took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form." Gary says, "This passage has challenged us in our relationship to our urban neighbors and friends, those who are like us and those who are ethnically, culturally, or economically quite different. Incarnating Christ in our lives has first required an *attitude* adjustment. Are we living for our own wants and desires, or are we living for Christ and for the advancement of the kingdom of God? Second, are we *humbling* ourselves and putting the needs of others before our own? Lastly, are we *surrendering* our own 'perceived' rights in order to embrace the needs of others and advocate for their right to a decent quality of life?"

Gary and Judy have had to live beyond their own "comfort zone" in order to enter into the life of others, even though that life might be different than their own. It has meant living in a less than safe inner city neighborhood and in close proximity to drug dealers, prostitutes, and gangs. Yet they have used their home as a place in which to build authentic friendships with

neighbors. "We've sought to learn how to make our home a place where our neighbors feel welcome," says Gary.

"By the grace of God, we have continued to learn what it means to be salt and light to the world around us. We endeavor to live out the reality that the good news of the gospel spreads in more ways than mere words, and to learn that 'the Gospel is imparted through our thoughts (attitudes), through our words (from out of the heart flows our words), and through our actions (deeds).'"

May Gary and Judy's life become a motivating example to each of us.



Tools You Can Use

Effective Training for Conscientious Small-Group Leaders



A Facilitator's Guide is a helpful tool provided by Emmaus Journey to enable small-group facilitators to effectively lead Catholic small groups. Life is tough, but leading a small group doesn't have to be. Consequently this particular booklet is designed to make leading small groups more enjoyable by providing practical ideas and tips that will enhance a facilitator's ability to lead small-group discussions and to make both leading and participating a positive experience.

Thirty-five years of experience training small-group leaders has been poured into this booklet, resulting in the selection of proven key ideas about leading small-group discussions. Topics covered include: the importance, nature, and elements of successful small groups; identifying and developing various question and answer formats; creating a learning environment; and identifying and handling discussion group obstacles. This is a resource every small-group discussion leader should be familiar with, and one to which leaders will refer regularly.

A well-trained facilitator is of great value in leading a small group. Thus, Religious Education Directors and Christian Formation Directors will welcome *A Facilitator's Guide* as a vital tool to be used to equip those involved in their ministry.

The facilitator's primary responsibilities are to keep the group focused on the particular topic, to see that each person in the group has an opportunity to participate, and to keep the group discussions moving forward. For this reason we recommend that a trained facilitator should lead every small group. We offer this valuable tool with this need for practical training in mind and a desire that small groups and their facilitators have a enjoyable and successful experience.

A Facilitator's Guide: Practical Training for Leading Lively and Informative Discussions is currently available only from Emmaus Journey.

\$6.95 per single copy

Multiple copy discounts are available online at www.emmausjourney.org.

Scripture Training *continued from front page*

cussion of God's sacred Scripture. Countless young people who have pursued Christ through Scripture studies, often outside of the Catholic Church, provide ample evidence that it does work.

Andre Lesperance, a leader involved in the St. Paul University Catholic Center in Madison, Wisconsin, tells of a young student named Bob. "Bob grew up Catholic but left church behind when he came to college. During his freshman year in the dorms, Bob and his friend decided that it would be fun to get buzzed on alcohol and then attend the Bible study that met on their dorm floor. For mere amusement and mockery, the two of them made this practice a part of their weekly routine. They managed to keep controlled enough for other participants in the small group not to know that they had been drinking, which only added to their amusement. One week, Bob's friend could not make it to Bible study, and Bob didn't want to get drunk on his own. So he decided to go to the small group sober. To his surprise, he still enjoyed it. He found something appealing about the way these students were seeking Jesus Christ together week in and week out. Bob kept going every week, without any alcohol in him. A few months later, Bob attended one of our retreats and made a decision to follow Christ, received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and is now one of our core student leaders."

The U.S. Bishops suggested goals for evangelization, two of which included "to foster an appreciation of God's word in the lives of all Catholics" and "to foster active and personal religious experience through participation in small group and other communal experiences in which the Good News is shared, experienced and applied to daily life." Within these goals they suggested strategies that included: 1) "more frequent individual reading of the Bible among Catholics"; 2) "the further development of scriptural-study and scriptural-sharing programs"; and 3) "opportunities for more thorough scriptural studies on the part of all Catholics."³

If we want our young people and young adults to find the answers they seek at home, we must ramp up the availability of solid Bible studies. If we want fellow Catholics to become mature and complete for every good work, we must make training in sacred Scripture the hallmark of our formation process. This is something we can do. This is something we should do.

1 *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, Pope Paul VI (22), Italics inserted for emphasis

2 *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, Pope Paul VI (42), Italics inserted for emphasis

3 *Go and Make Disciples*, Published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, page 14