



The periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 4 (August 2015)

EDITORIAL

This is the fourth issue of *Roots & Wings*. Again we offer a variety of articles, newsbites and resources as an invitation to reflect on classroom practice and to try out new approaches. The two main articles - on page 7 and page 11 offer us new ways of engaging children and young people in the classroom. In the first, a continuation of the article in the previous issue on Friedrich Froebel and St Benedict, the author describes the key emotional requirements of distressed children in school and proposes a Benedictine spirituality for the teacher in this context. The second, by Adrian Gellert of the University of Malta, shows how popular music can be used as a classroom resource in Religious Education.

There is an expanded news section in this issue reporting on a number of important events in September and October both locally and internationally.

We hope you enjoy the issue.
PAUL FALLER

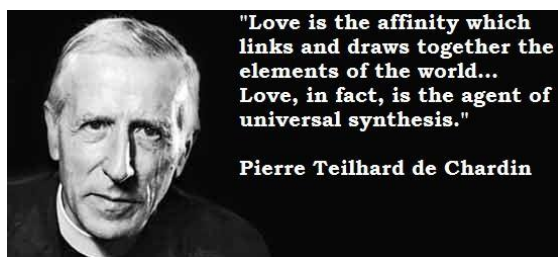
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REFLECTION

A Eucharistic Prayer over an Awakening World

(Ron Rolheiser)



On the Feast of the Transfiguration in 1923, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin found himself alone at sunrise in the Ordos desert in China, watching the sun spread its orange and red light across the horizon. He was deeply moved, humanly and religiously. What he most wanted to do in response was to celebrate mass, to somehow consecrate the whole world to God. But he had no altar, no bread, and no wine. So he resolved to make the world itself his altar and what was happening in the world the bread and the wine for his mass. Here, in paraphrase, is the prayer he prayed over the world, awakening to the sun that morning in China.

O God, since I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols and make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer to you all the labors and sufferings of the world.

As the rising sun moves as a sheet of fire across the horizon the earth wakes, trembles, and begins its daily tasks. I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labor. Into my chalice I will pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits. My paten and my chalice are the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit.

Grant me, Lord, to remember and make mystically present all those whom the light is now awakening to this new day. As I call these to mind, I remember first those who have shared life with me: family, community, friends, and colleagues. And I remember as well, more vaguely but all-inclusively, the whole of humanity, living and dead, and, not least, the physical earth itself, as I stand before you, O God, as a piece of this earth, as that place where the earth opens and closes to you.

And so, O God, over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day, I say again the words: "This is my body." And over every death-force which waits in readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, I speak again your words which express the supreme mystery of faith: "This is my blood." On my paten, I hold all who will live this day in vitality, the young, the strong, the healthy, the joy-filled; and in my chalice, I hold all that will be crushed and broken today as that vitality draws its life. I offer you on this all-embracing altar everything that is in our world, everything that is rising and everything that is dying, and ask you to bless it.

And our communion with you will not be complete, will not be Christian, if, together with the gains which this new day brings, we do not also accept, in our own name and in the name of the world, those processes, hidden or manifest, of enfeeblement, of aging, and of death, which unceasingly consume the universe, to its salvation or its condemnation. Lord, God, we deliver ourselves up with abandon to those fearful forces of dissolution which, we blindly believe, will this cause our narrow egos to be replaced by your divine presence. We gather into a

single prayer both our delight in what we have and our thirst for what we lack.

Lord, lock us into the deepest depths of your heart; and then, holding us there, burn us, purify us, set us on fire, sublimete us, till we become utterly what you would have us to be, through the annihilation of all selfishness inside us. Amen.

For Teilhard this, of course, was not to be confused with the celebration of the Eucharist in a church, rather he saw it as a “prolongation” or “extension” of the Eucharist, where the Body and Blood of Christ becomes incarnate in a wider bread and wine, namely, in the entire physical world which manifests the mystery of God’s flesh shining through all that is.

Teilhard was an ordained, Roman Catholic, priest, covenanted by his ordination to say mass for the world, to place bread on a paten and wine in a chalice and offer them to God for the world. We too, all of us Christians, by our baptism, are made priests and, like Teilhard, are covenanted to say mass for the world, that is, to offer up on our own metaphorical patens and chalices, bread and wine for the world, in whatever form this might take on a given day. There are many ways of doing this, but you might want to try this: Some morning as the sun is lighting-up the horizon, let its red and golden fire enflame your heart and your empathy so as to make you stretch out your hands and pray Teilhard’s Eucharistic prayer over an awakening world.

REFLECTION

A Spirituality of Parenting

(Ron Rolheiser)

Christian theology has generally been weak in its treatise on marriage. Somehow the earthiness of the incarnation, so evident elsewhere, has been slow to spill over into our thinking about marriage, sex, and family.

There are reasons for this of course, among them the fact that often those writing the books on marriage are themselves not married, but celibate monks and nuns. There are other issues as well. In the early church, the influence of Manicheanism made the church somewhat reticent to genuinely celebrate the goodness of sex and marriage and, later on, the monastic ideal (of celibate life outside of marriage) came to be so identified with holiness that marriage, sex, and parenting were not seen as having within them the same inherent, privileged path to sanctity as celibacy and the monastic life. Monastic life was seen as a “higher

state”, an elite path to holiness not available to

anyone married. Granted, there was always a theology that taught that one’s duties of state, such as the demands inherent in parenting, were a certain conscriptive path to holiness, but, in the end, this didn’t add up to a full, wholesome theology of marriage, sex, and parenting.

Recently at a conference in Collegeville, I heard a talk given by Dr. Wendy Wright, a mother and theologian. She spoke wonderfully of a spirituality of parenting. In essence, she suggested that raising children, being a mum or a dad, is a privileged means to holiness and [my addition] a more natural path to maturity than is monasticism. Simply put, very few other experiences, perhaps none, are as naturally geared to break the casings of



our inherent selfishness as is the experience of child-raising. To see your own child is to feel what God must feel when God looks at us. Parenting, in the end, is the most natural path to holiness and maturity, the conscriptive martyr's belt around us that takes us where we would rather not go. Becoming a parent, submits Dr. Wright, reshapes the heart in a unique way, molding it more and more to be compassionate as God is compassionate. Here are some of her thoughts:

Being a mother or a father stretches the heart, just as the womb is stretched in pregnancy. This is because, among all loves, parental love is perhaps the one that most pulls your heart out of its self-love. Parenting reshapes the core of your being to help you to love more like God loves. Seeing your own child's fragility and morality, works to create in you feelings of inexpressible tenderness that help you feel what God must feel when God looks at us. To be a parent is to be formed in a school of love.

One of the first lessons this school teaches you is welcome: To be a parent is to have to permanently open your heart, life, and plans so as to create a unique space in them for someone else, your child. To be a mother or a father is to let your dreams and agenda be forever altered.

The next lesson this school of love teaches is flexibility: To be a parent is to nurture a child as he or she passes through very different stages of growth (infancy, toddler, kindergarten, elementary school, a teen with raging hormones and a raging attitude, a young adult, an adult with his or her own responsibilities and unique sorrows). Moreover, if you have more than one child, each has a very unique personality that you must adapt your love towards. All of this demands that you constantly grow, re-adjust, adapt, let go, learn to love in a new way.

A flexible heart is a discerning heart, it picks up each moment and discerns the true and the false voices within it. It asks, in each moment, "Where does love

lie for my child in all this?" This is a demanding task for a parent, one within which (as Wright so well puts it) "looking good is not the point!"

Finally, being a parent should naturally lead you to shape your heart for reconciliation. Love is all about forgiving, again and again and again. Families survive only if this is happening. A parent is meant to be the compassion of God, the father and mother of the prodigal son and bitter brother who embraces the child not because the child is worthy, but in spite of all unworthiness. A parent must ever say in word and attitude: "Return as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way."

All of these things can, of course, be done by anyone, not just biological parents. However for a mum or a dad, there is a certain naturalness in it, a conscriptive rhythm written by nature itself. To be a parent is to find oneself enrolled in an elite school of love, a true monastery that is every bit as ascetical and grace-producing as any monastery ever praised by the great spiritual writers.



WEBSITE

Learning Bytes

Catholic Education - Archdiocese of Brisbane

<http://www.rec.bne.catholic.edu.au/Pages/Learning-Bytes-Dashboard.aspx>

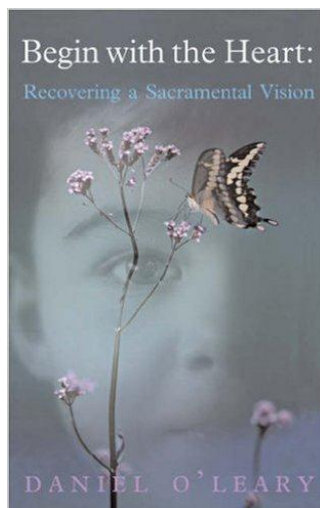


Learning Bytes are resources specifically designed to support the Religion Curriculum P-12 (i.e. the classroom learning and teaching of religion) from which teachers might develop a unit of work. They are not units of work in themselves but include many of the elements that a teacher would need to consider when planning for teaching, learning and assessing (e.g. year level description, achievement standard, content descriptions, success criteria, inquiry learning, fertile questions, teacher background, connections with the Religious Life of the School P-12). There should be alignment between planning in Religion and planning in other learning areas of the Australian Curriculum.

NOTE THAT WHILE THE SITE REFERS PARTICULARLY TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM, THERE IS A WEALTH OF RESOURCES HERE THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR ANY OTHER.

BOOK REVIEW

Begin with the Heart: Recovering a Sacramental Vision



In this book, Daniel O'Leary develops two themes that are central to the Catholic Education Service(CES) of the religious education programme document of the Bishops of England and Wales. These are: "the Catholic imagination" and "the sacramental vision". The book is inspired by "On the Way to Life", an interpretive essay commissioned by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and written by Frs. James Hanvey, SJ and Tony Carroll, SJ. It provides an evaluative commentary on contemporary culture and social trends, secularisation and modernity and the part both play in the field of catechesis, religious education and formation.

183pp. The Columba Press. To purchase this book online, go to www.columba.ie.

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Reclaiming Imagination: The Forgotten Dimension

Restoring the Sacramental Vision: 'Something prevented them from recognising him'

Liturgical Horizon: The Mountain behind the Mountain

PART TWO: WELCOMING THEOLOGY

Theology of Humanity: A Ground to Stand On

Nature and Grace: Thresholds of Transformation

Sacrament Revisited: Prisms of Revelation

PART THREE: THE ART OR EDUCATION

Damaged Beauty: New Dialogue of Life

The Poetry of Education: Working the Vision

Begin with the Heart: You Teach Who You Are


PART FOUR: ENGAGING THE WORLD

Postmodern and Multicultural: Befriending the Enemy

Endword: Catechising as Humanising

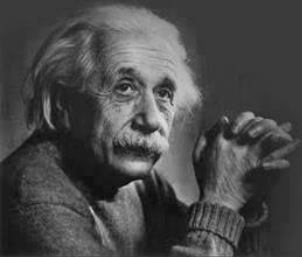
HUMOUR?

The Day That Albert Einstein Feared Has Arrived!



Having coffee with frens *A day in a beach* *Cheering your team*

Out on an intimate date *Enjoying the sights* *Having dinner*



"I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots"
Albert Einstein

ARTICLE

The Wisdom of Friedrich Froebel and St Benedict (Part 2)

A Support for Teachers of Distressed Children Today

(Carmel Scanlon)

(Continued from Vol 1 No 4, August 2015)

Respect

The first requirement of these children is a sense of being respected as people in their own right. Froebel believed that his educational ideas 'grew out of the universal truth that a child is an essential member of humanity and as such needs the adults' respect, attention and care.' Indeed, from accounts of his own teaching career we can imagine how he would treat with wholesome dignity a suffering child. An inspector who called to assess Froebel's school in Keilhau, Germany, having heard rumours that it was undisciplined, wrote the following inspiring report at the end of his inspection.

I found here, what is never and nowhere shown in practical life, a truly and closely united family of some sixty members, living in quiet harmony, all showing that they gladly perform the duties of their various positions.

A family which is held together because of its strong bonds of mutual confidence and because every member sees the good of the whole, everything - as of itself - thrives in happiness and love.

With great respect and hearty affection all turn to the Principal. The little five-year old children cling to his knees, while his friends and colleagues hear and honour his advice, with the confidence which his insight and experience and his indefatigable zeal for the good of the whole, deserve.

While he has bound himself in brotherliness and friendship to his fellow-workers as the support of his life's work, which to him is truly holy work, that this union - this brotherhood - so to speak, among the teachers must have the most salutary influence on the instruction and training and on the pupils themselves is self-evident. The love and respect in which the pupils hold all their teachers find expression in an attention, and an obedience, which render unnecessary almost all disciplinary severity (Hanschmann 1875:136)

This account of Froebel's school shows that, if the child is respected, everybody gains - including the teacher. Joachim Liebschner, an authority on the work of Froebel, goes on to say that, for Froebel, the children were treated with the same courtesy as everybody else in the community. He also remarks that in all of Froebel's writings, there is not one article on punishment. Modern educational psychology supports Froebel in this regard. For example, child-specialist, Jan Hunt points to the futility of negative correction when she says:

Punishment teaches a child nothing about how to handle similar situations in the future. Loving support is the only way to learn true moral behaviour based on strong inner values rather than superficially 'good' behaviour based only on fear.

This respect goes even deeper. There is no room for idle, vacuous gossip in the staff room at the expense of these children. It is only too easy to become patronizing, righteous and

judgemental. Teachers would be well advised to ponder the words of Bradshaw a leading authority in the field of recovery, dysfunctional families, and inner child work - 'Neither cocaine nor heroin nor any other drug can touch the adrenaline rush of righteousness.'

Acceptance

To feel safe, children need to feel accepted as they are. They need to know that in the classroom everybody belongs and that there are no outsiders. To quote Froebel once more: 'Possessing an immortal soul, [the child] should be cared for as a manifestation of . . . God's presence, love and grace, as a gift of God.' This acceptance can be reinforced when the child's behaviour needs to be challenged. He can say to himself, for example, 'She likes me but she does not like what I am doing.' In this way, correction does not lower the children's self-esteem, but supports them in developing good behavioural patterns.

Liebschner gives us a very moving account of an event that happened the Sunday before Froebel died in 1852:

On the Sunday before Froebel's death, one of the children brought some flowers. Froebel greeted the small messenger with great joy. And though he already found it difficult to lift his hand, he held the child's hand and put it to his lips. Froebel now asked us to 'look after the flowers and spare my weeds. I have learned much from both of them,'

Flowers and weeds, when carefully observed, provided equally important information and were, therefore of equal importance to Froebel, just as intelligent and slow-learning children, conformist and non-conformist children demanded respect. Froebel's belief that beneath every human fault lies a crushed human virtue led him to accept even the least intelligent and most difficult children as essential and important members of the community.

This illustrates Froebel's utter acceptance of each child. It is little wonder that they felt so happy and secure in his presence. A task of educators is to bring to light the crushed human virtues, referred to by Froebel. This task will include, particularly in relation to these children who are the subject of this article, a sacred respect for their privacy and personal defences in dealing with their suffering. Any prying, intrusion or interrogation would create major obstacles in trying to make authentic connection with them possible. They are invited to be open and are offered support. However, if they choose not to accept what is on offer, this is respected also. In a paradoxical way, this very sensitivity often results in greater openness. Trust cannot be purchased by coercion nor confidentiality by intrusion.

Inclusion

When the children are involved in the process of making classroom rules they feel in a very real way that it is *their* class, their community. In Froebel's schools children were 'encouraged to work together, to help each other and to devise strategies for solving problems corporately.' Asking children to spend their childhood years being good by blindly doing what they are told, and then expecting them to make responsible adult decisions later in life, is setting them up for failure. Learning from an early age to take responsibility and make decisions prepares children to become well-adjusted adults.

When pupils see their class as a community and these rules as a protection of their safety and well-being rather than as imposed from above, they are far more likely to be cooperative and at peace. 'Consensual decision-making in which all can win and none need lose' is more likely to lead to the desirable outcome.

In the homes of many of these children there is commonly a disorder of power in the family dynamic. The relationships are often based on domination and submission rather than on intimacy and respect. Such children need to experience a classroom where each pupil is a valued member and 'each child has a particular gift which will become visible if circumstances are right and freedom for expression of the same is given.' In this way the children experience being respected and are more likely to respect others as a consequence. For example, one little girl who felt she did not have anything to offer the class, on being encouraged by the teacher to be part of the group, responded in surprise, 'You think I exist.'

Froebelian schools were run on these principles of mutual support and acceptance. In this environment of co-operation 'children learned to help and respect each other. In Froebel's kindergartens, children grew into well-balanced people and parents noticed changes in their improved behaviour especially towards other children.' They had experienced first-hand cooperation and inclusion rather than competition.

Awareness

'We teach who we are' is an axiom which educators are wise to bear in mind. Teachers with an awareness of their own feelings are far less likely to transfer their 'disowned shadow' to their students. Such teachers are open to the possibility that when a clash occurs between themselves and a particular child the source of the dissonance may be within the teacher and not necessarily something which is caused by the child.

It is also important to have a certain sensitivity in the classroom so as to actively include children who set themselves up for rejection with antisocial behaviour. Educators need to be aware that a child who behaves in a taciturn manner may not, in fact, intend to be offensive. They may have good reason, as Quaker educator Parker Palmer claims, to fear those in power. Experience has taught them that there is safety in not speaking in an 'adult world where they feel alien and disempowered.' He goes on to say that, 'Students' signals are usually signals of fear, not disdain.'

Teachers also need to be aware of the suffering behind the children's behaviour. When they respond in this way with strength and kindness the children feel accepted. Much of the disruptive behaviour often diminishes as a result. Reading the non-verbal signals of these distressed children correctly, therefore, is essential. To enable teachers to so respond it is imperative that they get in touch with their own inner self for as Alice Miller says, 'Our capacity to understand the language of mimicry, of gestures, of behaviour depends on the degree to which we can hear the child within us'

Strength

These children need to feel that teachers are strong enough to contain their tumultuous feelings without reacting negatively. At the same time, the teacher needs to be gentle, to be kind and sensitive to them as people, to be affirming yet real, acknowledging their own mistakes while being forgiving of the children's. Educators, using moral authority rather than aggressive domination, need to love their students allowing them to be themselves. To quote Palmer again: 'The highest form of love is a love that allows for intimacy without the annihilation of difference.' This calls for honesty, clarity and integrity so that the children feel utterly secure.

Teachers are there to direct, guide and facilitate the children's education, not to win their approval. They are not the children's therapists, parents or social workers, even though, at times, they may find themselves called upon to exercise some of these roles. There is no

room when dealing with these distressed children for indulgent sentimentality. The last thing they need is another weak adult with unclear vacillating values. They require of their teachers strength of character, leadership and loving kindness. As one very challenging boy put it: 'I love being in this class. At last I have found someone who is able for me.' For disruptive children to be disliked, criticised, rejected and labelled is a very lonely place. They need, metaphorically speaking, to be 'lovingly held in a safe place' where classroom boundaries are clear, predictable, and consistent.

Profile of a 'Benedictine' Teacher

A high ideal of the role of the teacher has been advocated above. Having the insights of Froebel alone might not be sufficient to attain this ideal. Teachers can only acquire this depth, strength and wisdom through possession of a solidly grounded spirituality. One example, already mentioned, which has stood the test of time within the Christian tradition, is the Benedictine Way. Conceived in the sixth century by St Benedict and refined over the centuries by his many followers, this Rule or way of life consists of nine key themes. These themes are listening, moderation, balance, authority, prayer, community, work and leisure, stability and sacredness of the ordinary. They can be of great relevance to teachers. While it is not possible to explore in detail these nine themes here it may be useful to ponder how they manifest themselves in the profile of insightfully aware teachers motivated and nourished by Benedict's spirit.

'Benedictine' teachers are educators who, with regular meditation and prayer, have become more and more centred and grounded in Christ, especially, like Benedict, through the Blessed Eucharist which is the source and summit of their lives. From this secure footing they are enabled to live a balanced life of moderation and regularity - allowing time for leisure, work, friendships, study and rest. They have the tenacity to see a job or commitment through to its conclusion and are not afraid to speak out in courage when necessary. Not being one of the 'lemmings of life' they cannot be bought by any system, image, promotion or accolade. They seek only to promote the image of Jesus Christ as they dedicate themselves to the wellbeing of their students.

Imbued, like Froebel, with an attitude of warmth towards children, there is a buzz of shared learning, an atmosphere of kindness, peace and empathy in their classroom. Discipline problems are minimized because the children feel accepted and safe. They know that the teacher is in control and is not spending time fighting to gain and maintain order. Having been taught to be aware of their responsibilities as well as their rights, the children now have time for fun, humour and banter with their teacher. For these children, education becomes a loving experience and 'it is only in this love that they at last become real.'

Through working on their own integrative processes, these teachers are deepening their knowledge of who they are and so have no need to control other people's lives in order to avoid facing their own shadow, i.e. 'the discarded, devalued and 'unacceptable' aspects of soul and self' which need to be befriended and brought into God's light. Indeed, their authority comes from within, from an inner integrity and honesty which uses leadership and strength to serve rather than oppress, to facilitate rather than manipulate. This moral authority is reached through ongoing submission to the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Through living out the Rule of Benedict they can listen in the silence both to what others may never be able to articulate and to their inner selves without censoring or criticising. This very acceptance leads them to have a major moral impact on those they encounter and those they serve. They see that Jesus is to be found in the ordinary, everyday, humdrum details of life. They develop an acceptance of their humanity. As a result their spir-

ituality is humane, grounded, real, and relevant.

Because these teachers dedicate their day to God, they recognise it as grace-filled and they themselves have something to offer the children they teach. They are not often fazed by setbacks or disappointments in the classroom because they know there is only one Saviour; and it is not they. They allow Providence to work through them and leave the results to God. They have cured themselves of 'the affliction of caring how they appear before others. They concern themselves only with how they appear before God.'

Achieving connection and success with distressed children, as many teachers have found, is not an unrealistic pipe dream. This approach has proved over time that it can succeed. It does, however, require very hard work, patience, endurance and committed dedication. It can be very emotionally demanding but is also most rewarding. The alternative to expending oneself on behalf of these children is to allow them to slip through the system and become a burden to themselves and to society in the future.

The Benedictine Way and the insights and wisdom of Froebel help educators to rediscover the energizing exhilaration of teaching, the joy of learning, the magic of discovery and the sense of connectedness with children as individuals. By bringing them the love of Jesus Christ, the warmth of acceptance and the safety of a teacher's strength, little faces that were stony and frozen begin to open up and radiate trust. For teachers, it is now no longer just a job, nor an endurance. They discover their true vocation at last and, inspired by Benedict, 'find again the meaning of existence,' 'in this truly holy work.'

ARTICLE

Popular Music as a resource for the Religious Education classroom: A study through Lady Gaga's Judas (abridged)

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Abstract

This paper discusses the potentiality of popular music as a resource in the R.E. classroom. It is argued that popular music has the potential of developing students' symbolic repertoire and thereafter act as a symbolic resource, especially when students are faced with challenges, or in their construction of Self. The music video Judas by Lady Gaga is used as an example of how the R.E. teacher may engage students in a process that may lead to symbol acquisition and critical analysis of the way fundamental human experiences are dealt with.

Introduction

It is not uncommon to find religious symbols or narratives reused in commercials, movies and hit songs. Thus, in secular Europe one can watch George Clooney at the gates of heaven negotiating mortal life for a coffee product with Saint Peter (John Malkovich), while in America, spectators of the 2011 Super Bowl witnessed Adam's indifference towards the apple offered by Eve because he preferred tortillas. While, in these commercials, the use of religious narratives and beliefs may be superficial, this is not always the case in movie

and/or music productions. There are various popular films and songs that explore religious and spiritual issues and narratives, such as for instance Bruce Almighty (2003), Avatar (2009) and the forthcoming Paramount's movie Noah (2014). Likewise, Kate Perry's *Who am I living For?* (2010), Carolina Liar's *Show me what I am looking for* (2008), and the video, but not the lyrics, of Robbie Williams' *Sin Sin Sin* (2005) are a few of the many popular lyrics and videos that directly tackle religious and spiritual themes.

In what way is this phenomenon relevant, if at all, to Religious Education? Should such material be used in the R.E. classroom? Would using such material be just a lure and a way for the teacher to show him/herself off as the cool teacher who is into pop culture?

Pop Culture and Symbol Literacy

To use cultural commodities simply because they are the in thing of the moment would be naïve and, in the long term, counterproductive. Nonetheless, it is still legitimate to use a hit song or a video clip from a popular movie as an introduction to a learning activity in order to attract the students' attention and then tie the content of the song with the theme of the lesson. However such a technique would only ascertain the students' extrinsic motivation. The teacher would still need to work hard in order to motivate students intrinsically and to achieve the desired outcomes. Rather than simply using popular culture as a means of extrinsically motivating students, films and hit songs may be useful tools to facilitate the education of symbolic and religious literacy. Lövheim (2012) reported that media is already one of the major informants about religion for Swedish young people. In a Swedish context, where only 24% of the research participants claim to be believers, 70% of respondents claimed that they encountered faith or religious issues through TV. Given the importance of media for adolescents and the amount of religious information (and even disinformation) present in it, media could be used to spur students to learn more or better religious narratives and beliefs.

Yet, while acknowledging the legitimacy of the type of religious literacy that is mainly cultural in its approach, as for instance advocated by Moore (2007), the type of symbol and religious literacy approach advocated for here recognises the power that symbols and symbol systems may have on individuals and communities. Indeed, if, for example, we were to teach Italian as a secondary language, we would not only expect students to be able to know the meaning of words but also expect them to be able to form sentences and to reason through that language. This type of literacy does not necessarily make them Italian but it does aim at equipping students with a particular lens through which to relate to reality. Similarly, one needs to move beyond a "teach about" approach and help students to learn from specific symbols and symbol systems. Such approach does not only respect and accept the potential power of symbols and symbol systems but it also respects students' holistic development.

To be committed to a holistic understanding of education means to believe that the human person is a complex, unique, non fragmented reality where the different dimensions of each individual are intricately interconnected. It is this way of conceptualising the person that leads us to understand religion and spirituality as profoundly related with all facets of daily life. Consequently, the belief that humans have a transcendental and spiritual dimension should lead us to move beyond facile dichotomies and should prompt us to seek how the spiritual dimension is hidden and how it shapes what is seemingly all but spiritual. Although pop culture is the product of a secular and capitalistic culture, it still draws from religious themes and still deals with fundamental human experiences.

A possible method that is aware of this dynamic and works in this direction is the one suggested by Reinhartz (1999). In this case, pop culture is used (i) to point to the manner the

Bible, or any other religious artefact, is depicted or used or to the meaning given to it, (ii) point to the way sacred texts are used and also, (iii) to critically engage students with the issues present in movies or songs. Students may, for example, be encouraged to discuss the issues and examine the way a movie and/or song has reinterpreted a religious narrative and/or belief.

Although still arguing for an approach that encourages higher order thinking skills, the method proposed by this paper takes a slightly different perspective. Rather than taking religious and spiritual themes and narratives present in pop culture as the starting point, it takes into consideration that (i) humans continuously use symbols to explore and construct meaning as well as identity, and (ii) that symbols are pervasively present in and through language and cultural products. Consequently, the value of popular culture in the R.E. classroom lies in its being a means of empowering students through symbolic literacy, critical and analytical skills as well as by engaging them with fundamental human experiences and concerns.

Symbolic Repertoire, Symbolic Resources and Adolescents

Whilst acknowledging the pervasiveness of symbols in various cultural products, this paper will focus on the symbolic repertoire and symbolic potential of popular music. Lewis (1982) noted that music is imbued with meaning and symbols. He pointed out that the subjective and communitarian aspects of symbols lead to the forming and consolidation of subculture groups, such as rock, punk or rap. Furthermore, he also noted that the same music form may change its symbolic meaning in a different cultural and/or social system.

Yet, without denying the communal significance of symbolic resource, Zittoun (2007a, 2007b) pointed to a more subjective personal importance of the symbols present in lyrics and/or visuals. Through her research, Zittoun (2007 a, 2007b) demonstrated the symbolic resource potential of cultural objects (music, image, film, symbol system...), that is, the ability for a cultural object to be used beyond its here and now element. Thus, a song's immediateness lies in its entertainment element but it becomes a symbolic resource when it is used by the individual or the community to create an atmosphere of serenity, or as an aid to giving solace, or when it is used in search of meaning. Furthermore, she noted that songs and music have the potential of becoming symbolic resources to young people especially during periods of change and transition, empowering the individual to transform oneself. Thus, for instance, an adolescent who has just left her boyfriend may use Taylor Swift's *We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together* (2012) as a means of consolidating her decision, or conversely, an adolescent left by his girlfriend may use Kyla's *It's Over Now* (2007) to deal with his emotional distress.

Indeed, besides its undeniable entertainment dimension, adolescents relate with popular culture present in the media for coping with issues, to identify with a youth culture, to experience high sensations and for their personal identity formation (Arnett, 1995). Larson (1995) highlights this point further by arguing that popular music is used by adolescents as a tool to experiment with and construct their identity. Larson also notes that it is precisely during this period of adolescence that the consumption of popular music is at its height.

The producer and consumer of popular music are not disengaged from each other. Specific personal and community issues are explored through music. Whilst acknowledging that a small, yet considerable, amount of pop music directly tackles or uses religious symbols and languages, popular culture is nonetheless a language where spiritual and meaning making discourse is inevitable. Thus, for instance, although not using religious language, the video, but not the lyrics of Britney Spears' *Dance till the world ends* (2011) suggests aliena-

tion through dance and sensuality as a means of dealing with or avoiding the end of the world and waking up to a new creation.

Beaudoin (1998) argued that American Generation X (roughly those who were born between 1965 and 1985) reflected upon theological issues and produced their own theology through pop culture. Among other examples, he cites REM's *Losing My Religion* (1991) as the expression of hesitation and uncertainty towards religion, and Madonna's *Like a Prayer* (1989) as the means for Generation X to introduce a sensual element in the spiritual and to discuss issues of liberation and freedom. Yet, it is here being argued that in order to access and fully benefit from this music as a symbolic resource, adolescents need both symbolic literacy and critical analytical skills. In this case, symbolic literacy would be needed because as Zittoun et al. (2003) noted, some symbolic elements are regulated by symbolic networks with specific bounders. Thus, for instance, it would be difficult to understand the meaning of a crown of thorns unless one is aware of the narrative, beliefs and meanings attached to it within a Christian context. However, apart from the specific meanings and interpretations attached to religious and/or spiritual symbols, adolescents would also need to analyze, evaluate, appropriate and reconstruct the way symbols are reused within the lyrical and visual context.

Using Popular Music in the R.E. classroom

A symbolic literacy that not only provides the meaning of religious and spiritual symbols, but also equips students with the grammar to deal with issues and to construct meaning, whilst encouraging them to engage in higher order thinking skills would be achieving a number of learning outcomes with implications for both the immediate and future holistic development. This would be more so if the conceptual theory of symbolic resource as understood by Zittoun (2007a, 2007b) is integrated in the notion of symbolic literacy.

From a concrete immediate perspective, the power of popular music in the R.E. classroom lies in its ability to provide meaning for analysing society, understanding history, and music (Cooper 1975, 1991, 1999, Martinez 1994). Popular culture has the potential of offering a means of analysing contemporary frameworks and ways of constructing personal and community meaning. Hess (2004), Parker (2006), and Scholtz (2004) agree that if used well, popular culture provides a vast array of material that can help Religious Educators to empower and equip students to become critically engaged and to reflect and construct meaning.

In the light of the definition given by Zittoun, it is fair to assume that when music is used in the R.E. classroom, it will not automatically become a symbolic resource but will become part of the symbolic repertoire of students. Accordingly, to equip students with symbolic literacy in R.E. means to widen students' symbolic repertoire, to help them become more critical and to enrich and empower them when they themselves will need to access their own symbolic repertoire for symbolic resources.

The conduction of a music forum as suggested by Lasconi, Quaglini & Cibien (1990) could be a possible basis for a technique that could help in the development of symbol literacy. The authors suggested the following procedure,

- i. Listen to the music.
- ii. Read the text of the lyrics and highlight stanzas that have an impact.
- iii. Share feelings and eventually discuss the message.
- iv. Synthesis discussion.
- v. Re-express the message through various creative forms.

The above technique is intended to help students to move from a knowledge base to higher order thinking by introducing them to the song, engage with meaning-making and later encourage them to construct their own meaning. While the basic structure of the above technique is still valid, one needs to take into account the different sources that help in consolidating and interpreting symbols.

The lyrics are not the only key to interpret the song. The accompanying video with all its theatrical re-enactment and dance provides ample symbols that shed light on the meaning of the lyrics. Beaudoin (1998) noted that videos are used by young people to interpret lyrics. This appears to be clearly the case when one goes through the comments left in specialised blogs or websites. Thus, it is desirable that in addition to the song and video, if the latter is available, the Religious Educator should get as much information on how the lyrics are being interpreted by young people. This could be easily done by going through comments posted on YouTube, but also on such specialised sites as metrolyrics.com or songmeanings.net. Additionally, one could also ask the students to research the subject themselves in order to enhance the discussion.

Lady Gaga as a test case

Lady Gaga's Judas (2012) is here being proposed as a test case for the music forum technique as suggested above. The interest of the Religious Educator in Lady Gaga should not be so much because of the continuous reference to religion in her shows, interviews, music and videos, but mainly because she exemplifies the possibilities that contemporary popular music and artists offer to meaning making. She definitely reflects the current prevailing secular, yet re-enchanted worldview prevalent in the western world. Her mastery in bringing together different facets of culture, media and technology not only give her an advantageous exposure over other artists in the music industry, but also enables her to merge the medium and the message into one product.

If you would like access to the whole article, please contact the author.

STORY

Do you know what happened to the little girl in this famous photo?



<http://www.aleteia.org/en/world/article/do-you-know-what-happened-to-the-little-girl-in-this-photo-5274947962273792>

The testimony of a little girl from Saigon that became a symbol of war's horrors and a call to love. On June 8, 1972, a plane bombed the village of Trang Bang in South Vietnam, after the pilot mistook a group of civilians for enemy troops. The bombs

contained Napalm, a highly flammable substance which killed and badly burned the people on the ground.

The famous black and white photo of children fleeing the burning village won the Pulitzer Prize and was chosen as the "World Press Photo of the Year" in 1972. It became the symbol of the horrors of the Vietnam war, and of every war's cruelty to children and civilians.

The main figure in the photo is a 9-year-old girl running naked and desperate down the street after her clothes caught fire. Her name is Kim Phuc Phan Thi, and at the time she was participating with her family in a religious ceremony at a pagoda.

Recently Kim Phuc Phan Thi was interviewed on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the bombing. She said that after the photos were taken she collapsed to the ground and was rescued by photographer Nick Ut who brought her to the hospital. She was hospitalized for 14 months and underwent 17 surgeries.

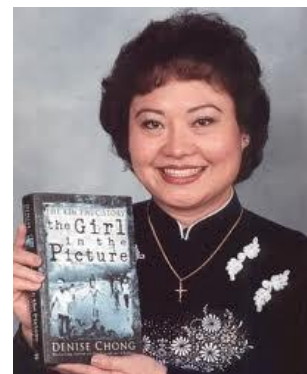
I wanted to die that day, together with my family," she said. "It was hard for me to carry all that hatred, that anger."

Despite the deep scars left on her body, she studied medicine and in her second year of university in Saigon she discovered the New Testament in the university library. She started reading. Thereafter she committed herself to following Jesus Christ and realized that God had a plan for her life. In 1997, together with her husband who is also Vietnamese, Kim Phuc Phan Thi founded the first International Kim Foundation in the United States, with the aim of providing medical and psychological assistance to children who are victims of war. The project spread and other centers were set up.

Her conversion to Christianity has especially given her the power and strength to forgive. Today Kim Phuc Phan Thi is 50 years old. She lives near Toronto, Canada, with her husband and two sons, Thomas and Stephen. She has dedicated her life to promoting peace by providing medical and psychological support to victims of the war in Uganda, East Timor, Romania, Tajikistan, Kenya, Ghana and Afghanistan.

"Forgiveness freed me from hatred," she wrote in her biography, entitled *The Girl in the Picture*. "I still have many scars on my body and severe pain on most days, but my heart is purified. Napalm is very powerful, but faith, forgiveness and love are much stronger. There would be no more war if everyone were to learn to live with true love, hope, and forgiveness.

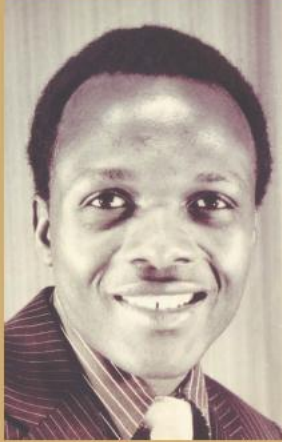
"If the little girl in the photo could do it, ask yourself, Can I?"



LOCAL NEWS

Beatification of Benedict Daswa

BENEDICT DASWA
BEATIFICATION



DATE:
Sunday 13 September 2015

TIME:
7.30am Opening Ceremony
9.00am Prayer of the Church
10.00am Beatification Mass

PLACE:
Tshitani,
Parish of Thohoyandou
Diocese of Tzaneen
GPS : S 22° 54'15.18",
E 30° 33' 33.69"

DIRECTIONS:
See: <http://benedictdaswa.org.za>

Martyr & Family Man

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
The Promoter: Email bendaswa@mweb.co.za Cell: 076 570 8843
Fr S'milo Mngadi: Email SMngadi@sacbc.org.za Cell 072 110 8613

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Meditation Seminars

Teaching Meditation to Children

Booking for these events is now open. Please consult your local CIE or Catholic Schools Office.



The Catholic Institute of Education brings to South Africa two leaders in the field of teaching meditation to children. Dr Cathy Day and Ernie Christie have earned international acclaim for their pioneering work of introducing meditation to children and teachers in countries as diverse as Australia, the USA & Canada, Poland and Singapore. They will base the seminar on their experience of implementing Christian meditation in 31 schools in Townsville, Australia.

DATE	DAY	PLACE	VENUE	TIME
21 September	Monday	Durban	Glenmore Pastoral Centre, 10 Donlene Crescent, Glenmore	12:00 -15:00
23 September	Wednesday	Pretoria	Denis Adami Hall, Woodlands Drive, Queenswood	13:00 -16:00
25 September	Friday	Johannesburg	St Charles Catholic Church, Road No 3, Victory Park	18:00 -21:00
26 September	Saturday	Johannesburg	Paulines Cultural Centre, cnr Queen St & Cumberland Rd, Kensington	09:00 -12:00
28 September	Monday	Bloemfontein	St Joseph's Christian Brothers College, Waverley Road, Bayswater	18:00 -21:00
29 September	Tuesday	Johannesburg	St Augustine College, Ley Road, Victory Park	14:30 -16:30
30 September	Wednesday	Cape Town	Christian Brothers' Centre, Paradyskloof Road, Stellenbosch.	13:00 -15:00
30 September	Wednesday	Cape Town	Church of the Resurrection, 43 Janssens Avenue, Tableview	19:00 -21:00
1 October	Thursday	Cape Town	St Joseph's Marist College, Belmont Road, Rondebosch	13:00 -15:00

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE VENUE FOR THE FIRST SEMINAR IN THE CAPE TOWN AREA ON 30 SEPTEMBER (13:00 - 15:00) HAS CHANGED. IT WILL NOW TAKE PLACE AT THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS' CENTRE IN STELLENBOSCH.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

Pope's Letter for Institution of World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

Below is the text of the letter Pope Francis sent today to Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, establishing the "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation" to be celebrated every year on September 1:

To my Venerable Brothers
Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah TURKSON
 President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
Cardinal Kurt KOCH
 President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity

Sharing the concern of my beloved brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for the future of creation (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 7-9), and at the suggestion of his representative, Metropolitan Ioannis of Pergamum, who took part in the presentation of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on care for our common home, I wish to inform you that I have decided to institute in the Catholic Church the "World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation" which, beginning this year, is to be celebrated on 1 September, as has been the custom in the Orthodox Church for some time.

As Christians we wish to contribute to resolving the ecological crisis which humanity is presently experiencing. In doing so, we must first rediscover in our own rich spiritual patrimony the deepest motivations for our concern for the care of creation. We need always to keep in mind that, for believers in Jesus Christ, the Word of God who became man for our sake, “the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us” (*Laudato Si'*, 216). The ecological crisis thus summons us to a profound spiritual conversion: Christians are called to “an ecological conversion whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them” (ibid., 217). For “living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (ibid.).

The annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will offer individual believers and communities a fitting opportunity to reaffirm their personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live. The celebration of this Day, on the same date as the Orthodox Church, will be a valuable opportunity to bear witness to our growing communion with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. We live at a time when all Christians are faced with the same decisive challenges, to which we must respond together, in order to be more credible and effective. It is my hope that this Day will in some way also involve other Churches and ecclesial Communities, and be celebrated in union with similar initiatives of the World Council of Churches.

I ask you, Cardinal Turkson, as President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, to inform the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Bishops’ Conferences, as well as the national and international organizations involved in environmental issues, of the establishment of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, so that, with due regard for local needs and situations, it can be properly celebrated with the participation of the entire People of God: priests, men and women religious and the lay faithful. For this reason, it will be the task of your Council, in cooperation with the various Episcopal Conferences, to arrange suitable ways of publicizing and celebrating the Day, so that this annual event will become a significant occasion for prayer, reflection, conversion and the adoption of appropriate lifestyles.

I ask you, Cardinal Koch, as President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, to make the necessary contacts with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and with other ecumenical organizations so that this World Day can serve as a sign of a common journey in which all believers in Christ take part. It will also be your Council’s responsibility to ensure that it is coordinated with similar initiatives undertaken by the World Council of Churches.

In expressing my hope that, as a result of wide cooperation, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation will be inaugurated and develop in the best way possible, I invoke upon this initiative the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, and of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose *Canticle of the Creatures* inspires so many men and women of goodwill to live in praise of the Creator and with respect for creation. As a pledge of spiritual fruitfulness, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, Eminent Brothers, and to all those who share in your ministry.

From the Vatican, 6 August 2015

Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

FRANCISCUS

Synod on the Family (4-25 October)

2014-2015 Synods of Bishops on the Family

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/2014-2015-synods-of-bishops-on-the-family.cfm>



On October 8, 2013, Pope Francis announced that in October 2014 there would be an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on topics related to the family and evangelization. Subsequent communications made clear that the Extraordinary General Assembly would be fol-

lowed by an Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015, on the same topics.

Basic Information about the Synod of Bishops

What is the Synod of Bishops?

The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution of the Catholic Church. It was established by Pope Paul VI in 1965, shortly after the close of the Second Vatican Council, to continue the spirit of collegiality and communion that was present at the Council. The Synod is an assembly of bishops from around the world who assist the Holy Father by providing counsel on important questions facing the Church in a manner that preserves the Church's teaching and strengthens her internal discipline.

When does the Synod of Bishops meet?

The Synod of Bishops meets at the request of the Holy Father, when he considers it necessary or opportune to consult with the world's bishops.

What are the meetings of the Synod of Bishops called?

The Synod of Bishops can meet in a *General Assembly* (or *Session*) on topics that pertain to the entire Church; these kinds of sessions can be either *Ordinary* or *Extraordinary*. The Synod of Bishops can also meet in a *Special Assembly* (or *Session*) on topics that pertain to a limited geographical area. For example, Special Assemblies have been held in recent years on topics concerning the Middle East and Africa.

What is an Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

A General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is called "Ordinary" if its topic is "for the good of the universal Church" and seems to require the "learning, prudence and counsel" of all the world's bishops.

What is an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

A General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is called "Extraordinary" when it is convened to deal with matters "which require a speedy solution" and which demand "immediate attention for the good of the entire Church".

Who are the heads of the Synod of Bishops?

The President of the Synod is the current Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Synod also has a General Secretary, who is currently Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri.

III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family (2014)

This Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was the third ever held; previous Extraordinary General Assemblies were held in 1969 and 1985.

What was the theme of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

"The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization"

What were the dates of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

October 5-19, 2014

Where did the III Extraordinary Synod take place?

Vatican City

What was the purpose of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

The *Preparatory Document* described the purpose of the III Extraordinary General Assembly as "to define the '*status quaestionis*' [current situation] and to collect the bishops' experiences and proposals in proclaiming and living the Gospel of the Family in a credible manner." The *Instrumentum Laboris* said that the III Extraordinary General Assembly "will thoroughly examine and analyze the information, testimonies and recommendations received from the particular Churches in order to respond to the new challenges of the family."

What documents were released in advance of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

- **November 2013:** The [Preparatory Document](#) outlined the purpose of both the Extraordinary and Ordinary General Assemblies, provided a basic catechesis on the Gospel of the Family, and requested input from the world's bishops on nine questions about the current state of pastoral care for marriages and families.
- **June 2014:** The [Instrumentum Laboris](#) contained the results of the consultation achieved via the *Preparatory Document's* questionnaire. This document provides a substantive reflection on the major challenges facing the family today, and outlines the topics that will be discussed at the Extraordinary General Assembly.

Addresses, Homilies and Documents from the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops:

- **October 5, 2014:** [Homily](#) by Pope Francis at the Mass for the Opening of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family
- **October 6, 2014:** [Video presentation](#) by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz (USCCB President) on expectations for the Synod
- **October 7, 2014:** [Testimony](#) by U.S. married couple Jeff and Alice Heinzen, "Marriage, a Life Journey of Authentic Love"
- **October 18, 2014:** [Address](#) by Pope Francis for the Conclusion of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
- **October 18, 2014:** [Message](#) of the Synod Fathers, Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
- **October 19, 2014:** [Homily](#) by Pope Francis at the Closing Mass of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family and Beatification of the Servant of God Paul VI
- **October 19, 2014:** [Relatio Synodi](#) (final report) of the Extraordinary Synod

XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family (2015)

The most recent Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held in 2012 (XIII Ordinary General Assembly on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith)

What are the dates of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?
October 4-25, 2015. This Synod will mark the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops.

What is the theme of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?
"The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world"

What is the purpose of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?
The XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will continue the work of the III Extraordinary General Assembly by "reflect[ing] further on the points discussed so as to formulate appropriate pastoral guidelines" for the pastoral care of the person and the family (*Instrumentum Laboris*, III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops).

Where will the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops take place?
Vatican City

What documents were released in advance of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

- **December 2014:** The *Lineamenta*, "[The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World](#)" contained the *Relatio Synodi* (final report) of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, together with an explanatory preface and a series of questions "aimed at knowing how the document is received and to generate an in-depth examination of the work initiated during the Extraordinary Assembly" (from the preface). As the *Lineamenta* explains, the results of the consultation based on the questions contained therein "will serve as the basis for the *Instrumentum Laboris*" for the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015.
- **June 2015:** The *Instrumentum Laboris* "[The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World](#)" serves as the "working document" for the Ordinary Synod. It contains the *Relatio Synodi* text from the conclusion of the III Extraordinary Synod, along with a summary of the responses to the questions in the *Lineamenta* (see above). As explained by Cardinal Baldisseri in the Presentation, the three sections of the *Instrumentum Laboris* "illustrate the continuity between the two Assemblies": the first part, "Considering the Challenges of the Family" draws more directly from the Extraordinary Synod, the first phase of the Synodal process, while the second and third parts, "the Discernment of the Vocation of the Family" and "The Mission of the Family Today" introduce the topic of the Ordinary Synod, which has the "intention of offering to the Church and the contemporary world pastoral incentives to spur renewed efforts in evangelization."

Other Questions

What is the relationship between the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops?

The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the III Extraordinary General Assembly notes that the work of the Synod of Bishops "is to take place in two stages, forming a single organic unity." The Extraordinary General Assembly could be understood in a certain sense as a preparatory step for the Ordinary General Assembly. At the Extraordinary General Assembly, the bishops will define the current state of the family and challenges that face it; at the Ordinary General Assembly, the bishops will formulate pastoral guidelines to respond to those challenges.

Will there be a document issued after the two Synods of Bishops?

After an Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, it is common for the Holy Father to issue a substantive document, called a post-synodal apostolic exhortation, which takes up the themes of the Synod and deepens them further. It is also expected that after the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, one or more documents will be issued in preparation for the Ordinary General Assembly.

When was the last time a Synod of Bishops discussed marriage and the family?

The most recent Synod of Bishops on the theme of the family took place in 1980 (V Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops). Pope St. John Paul II's 1981 apostolic exhortation [**Familiaris Consortio**](#), on the role of the Christian family in the modern world, was written at the request of that Synod's Fathers.

How Can I Support the Synods of Bishops?

How can we support the Synods of Bishops on the Family?

Pray: In a [**letter to all families**](#), Pope Francis invited them to pray for the Synods of Bishops, as well as for the [**2015 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia**](#), saying: "May we all, then, pray together so that through these events the Church will undertake a true journey of discernment and adopt the necessary pastoral means to help families face their present challenges with the light and strength that comes from the gospel."

Pope Francis provided this prayer for the Synod of Bishops on the Family in his [**Angelus address on the Feast of the Holy Family**](#) (Dec. 29, 2013):

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendor of true love,
to you we turn with trust.
Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic Churches.
Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again
experience violence, rejection and division:
may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.
Holy Family of Nazareth,
may the approaching Synod of Bishops
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's plan.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer.

2015 PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS SALT LAKE • OCT 15-19

<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/parliamentofreligions>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_World's_Religions

What: The 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions

When: October 15 - 19, 2015

Where: Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

The Parliament is the oldest, the largest, and the most inclusive gathering of people of all faiths and traditions.

The first Parliament took place in 1893. Since, this historic event has taken place in Chicago, USA (1893, 1993) • Cape Town, South Africa (1999) • Barcelona, Spain (2004) • Melbourne, Australia (2009) - and now in Salt Lake City, Utah!



Who Should Attend?

If you care for religions and nations working together in harmony with each other for the good of humanity, you should attend.

You must attend...

- ...if you are concerned about wars, terrorism, and hate,
- ...if you care for creation or are worried about climate change,
- ...if you are troubled by the widening wealth gap and wasteful consumption

...Because there will be Nobel Laureates, experts, religious leaders, master trainers and activists at the Parliament who will share their opinions with you in panels, workshops, and plenaries on these issues.

You will also find:

- Trainings in dialogue, interfaith activism, fundraising, and organizing
- World-class religious music, films, exhibits and performances
- And shop ethnic, international, religious books & things



Professional Society of Religious Educators