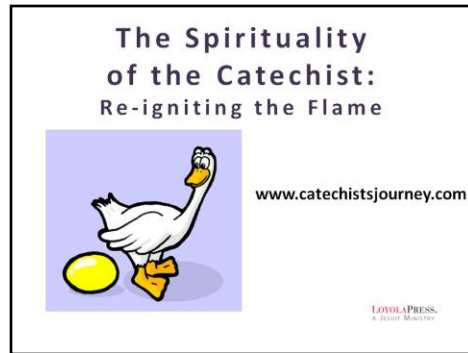




Welcome and introductions



I'm sure you're familiar with the story of the Goose that Laid the golden egg (Aesop's fable)

A couple discovered that the goose they had was laying golden eggs. This became a source of wealth for them. They figured that if a Goose could lay golden eggs, then it must be made of gold on the inside. So they cut open the goose only to find that the goose was normal on the inside. They lost the goose and the ability to continue producing golden eggs.

Moral: you need to take care of the goose!

The goal of this presentation is to pay attention to the "goose" so that we continue to produce golden eggs!

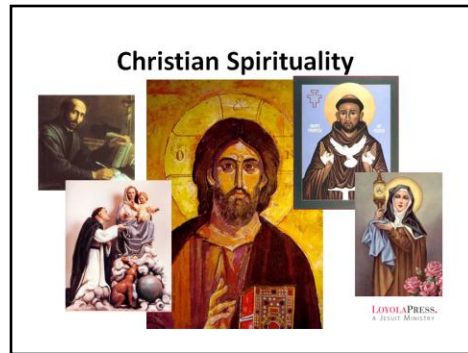
Catechists can get burned out...we need to take care of ourselves spiritually. With that in mind, we will look today at the spirituality of the catechist.



Ronald Rolheiser, who wrote *The Holy Longing*, describes spirituality as “the fire within” and the “energy” or “drive” that all human beings have within. The question is...where will we direct that energy, that drive, that fire?

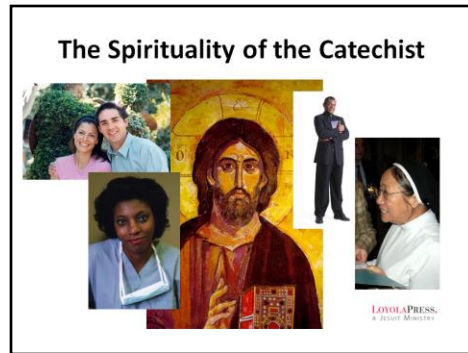
All human beings have spirituality. We believe that our spirituality is intended to be directed to God, from whom our spirit comes in the first place.

Thus, spirituality refers to how we relate to God: it is about a relationship and how we pay attention to that relationship. Spirituality is a path to holiness. Every human being has a spirituality.

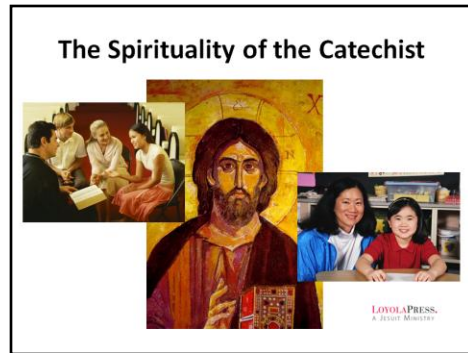


Christian spirituality, of course, relates to God in and through Jesus Christ.

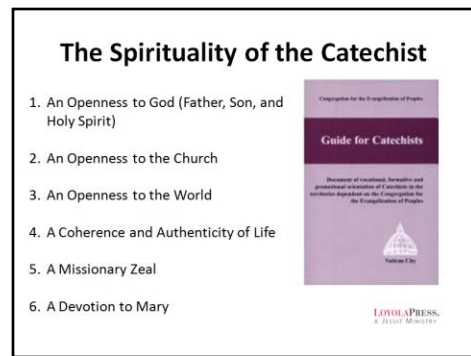
Now, while all Christians share certain characteristics in their spirituality, your spirituality can have some unique qualities depending on your vocation, ministry, ethnic background, and so on. For example, you may have a spirituality that can be described as Ignatian, Dominican, or Franciscan, depending on the extent to which you've been influenced by the spiritual path prescribed by people such as St. Ignatius of Loyola, or St. Dominic, or St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Clare of Assisi.



By the same token, your spirituality is influenced by your vocation or state in life: a married person has a different spirituality than a celibate priest or nun. A single person has a different spirituality when compared to a married person. So, to some extent, every person's spirituality is unique because each of us is a unique human being.



Well, with that in mind, we can talk about the spirituality of the catechist. It makes sense that those of us who have a vocation as a catechist are called to develop a spirituality that's unique to catechists. This means that, as catechists, we relate to God in a unique way. Our relationship with God and how we nurture and care for that relationship can be characterized by certain qualities. This doesn't mean that catechists have a monopoly on these characteristics, it just means that these characteristics are heightened in our lives because of our particular calling as catechists. So, just what is the spirituality of the catechist?



In 1993, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (an office of the Vatican), issued a document titled *Guide for Catechists*. In that document, the bishops of the Church spelled out the spirituality of the catechist. In a nutshell, that spirituality, which is grounded in the spirituality of the laity that flows from baptism, is characterized by the following 6 characteristics:

1. First, an Openness to God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) –
2. The second characteristic is an Openness to the Church –
3. The next characteristic is an Openness to the World –
4. The 4<sup>th</sup> characteristic of the spirituality of catechists is a Coherence and Authenticity of Life –
5. The next characteristic is Missionary Zeal –
6. And finally, the spirituality of the catechist is characterized by a devotion to Mary –



So let's begin.

The first characteristic of the spirituality of the catechist is an openness to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As catechists, we are called to a deep trust in God – an openness to entering into relationship with the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Trust is the foundation of faith.





Two of the most frightening words in the English language are: “trust me.” When someone says, “trust me,” it points to the fact that we are in a situation of doubt. To trust in someone is to place our wellbeing in their hands. It’s to give our heart to another. It is to enter into a relationship. Any relationship – spouse to spouse; child to parent – involves trust.

This is what faith is all about. It is not simply about an intellectual assent to a set of doctrines. It is the opening of our heart to another – in this case, to God. When we say, “We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty....in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life” – we are saying that we give our heart to God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

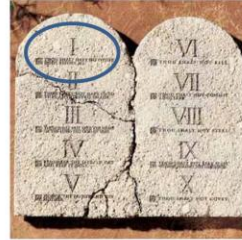


Trust does not come easy for many people. Many of us have experienced the breaking of trust in our relationships. When you give your heart to someone and they break it, it's not easy to trust again. I think it's very hard for our young people to trust. We can see all around us that young people don't place the same kind of trust in authorities and in institutions as previous generations did. So we catechists have our work cut out for us.

I was teaching a class to my 8<sup>th</sup> graders about the concept of placing our trust in God. I asked my students who they trust most, and I got a variety of answers: my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother, my best friend. But one young man very calmly responded: ME. He didn't feel he could trust anyone but himself.

This trust touches us at the deepest core of our lives. It shapes who we are. It shapes our values, our convictions, our decisions, and our behaviors

## An Openness to God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit



I really believe that, as catechists, we are champions of the First Commandment – we are passionate about making sure that God alone is the center of our lives and of the lives of those we teach. We exert great energy attempting to convince those we teach that there are many false gods vying for their attention and allegiance: fame, power, pleasure, possessions, status, comfort, and so on. We see it as our mission to invite those we teach to see that God alone fills the empty spaces within us. And we do this because we ourselves have come to this conclusion..



And yet, we too need to be reminded of this over and over again because temptation is always lurking.

Many things can draw us away from God with the offer of providing us with fulfillment. Money is one thing but there are many: power, pleasure, popularity, etc.

We need to renew our openness to God and continually rediscover for ourselves that God can and should be trusted

Even money is catechetical: In God we trust!

**An Openness to God  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**




LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DUSTY MONASTY

And so in the great Ignatian tradition, I'd like to recommend some exercise...no not this kind of exercise!

**An Openness to God  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,  
my memory, my understanding  
and my entire will.  
All I have and call my own.  
You have given all to me.  
To You, Lord, I return it.  
Everything is yours;  
do with it what you will.  
Give me only your love and your grace.  
That is enough for me.*



[www.loyolapress.com/suscipe](http://www.loyolapress.com/suscipe) LOYOLA PRESS  
A DAVITT MONASTERY

I'm talking about spiritual exercises. The kind that St. Ignatius of Loyola provided so that we can develop our spiritual muscles so to speak. I'd like to suggest a spiritual exercise to help you grow in openness to God which leads us to open ourselves up to possibilities. This, in turn, leads us to live in hope.

This prayer is a prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola, called the Suscipe. It is a way of offering yourself to God each day – praying to be open to God and to place your trust in him.

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,  
my memory, my understanding  
and my entire will.  
All I have and call my own.*

*You have given all to me.  
To You, Lord, I return it.  
Everything is yours;  
do with it what you will.*

*Give me only your love and your grace.  
That is enough for me.*

You can find this prayer at [www.loyolapress.com/suscipe](http://www.loyolapress.com/suscipe)

## An Openness to the Church



LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DAVITT MONASTERY

Let's move on to the second characteristic of the spirituality of the catechist: an openness to the church.

As catechists, we have a profound sense of community. We recognize that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. We are not inviting others to a “me and God” experience. We are inviting them to an “us and God” experience. We take great inspiration from men and women religious who live lives of poverty, chastity, and obedience – exemplifying for us that living in loving relationship with community is key to our salvation. The catechist's spirituality is characterized by an openness to the Church.



This is an apothecary bottle from the old Paprocki Pharmacy that first belonged to my grandfather and then to my dad, both of whom were pharmacists. Now, it's mine. Although, actually, this family heirloom doesn't belong to me. It's been entrusted to me. My job is to protect it, care for it, tell the stories related to it, and pass it on to future generations.

In essence, this is what we do as catechists. We're caretakers of a message – a message that's not ours but that's been entrusted to us by the Church. Our role is to receive that message, to protect it, to faithfully share the story that lies at the heart of that message, and to transmit that message to the next generation. Put another way, as catechists, we are stewards of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



## An Openness to the Church

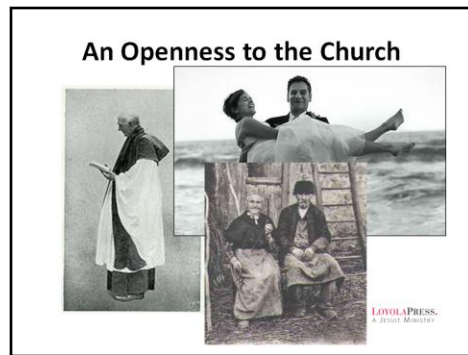


LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DUKU COMPANY

One of the most profound ways that we show openness to the Church is through our ongoing efforts enrich ourselves - to understand and embrace the message that the Church has entrusted to us. When we have difficulty understanding a particular Church teaching, we don't substitute our own message in its place. Rather, we dedicate ourselves to learning more about that particular teaching so as to be able to proclaim it more effectively.

Your presence here at the L.A. congress is a testament to your desire to keep growing.

Don't ever stop!!!!



When I was teaching in the high school seminary in Chicago some years ago, I recall talking to my students about the religious life and explaining the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity, and obedience. After a thorough explanation, I invited the students to ask questions or make comments. One young man pictured the life of a priest or religious as being severely austere and said, “I don’t know about this poverty, chastity, and obedience stuff...that seems pretty challenging. I think I’d rather get married.”

Right. Go for the “easy life!” His impression of the married life was that it would be a piece of cake compared to priestly or religious life.

I didn’t have the heart to tell him that this is how it really turns out (last pic)

I did explain that all of the baptized are called to practice the spirit of these counsels: poverty, chastity, and obedience and that those in religious life dedicate their lives to a heightened practice of what we are all called to live. I explained that in a marriage, we practice the spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience.



**poverty** (a detachment from possessions – e.g. parents share all of their possessions – home, furniture, cars, stereos, money, food - with their children);

What used to be yours alone, is now shared with a community: your family.

The Spirit of poverty is not about walking around looking poor. It is about detachment from material goods. A religious can drive a fancy car but that's only because the order purchased one and he or she has to sign it out to use it....he or she does not own it and can't take it with them.

Just recently, I received a TAX REFUND! Back in the day, it meant a nice little spending spree. As a member of a family – a community – that money went the very next day to pay for college tuition!

## An Openness to the Church



LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DASH MINISTRY

As members of a family, we promise to be faithful to our relationships. The spirit of Chastity is all about this – It is a faithfulness to one's sexuality ie. Primary relationships

Married people are celibate to the whole world except for one person. – their spouse

Relationships are at the heart of community.



Finally, in a married relationship, we practice the spirit of Obedience – This is not about one says jump and the other says how high?

But about accountability – we do not operate in families as lone rangers, but are accountable to one another

Here we see a couple working together on their household finances. I suppose it would have been nice if I did our taxes and kept that refund a secret. But in a family, it becomes public knowledge! That's the spirit of obedience – accountability to the community.

## An Openness to the Church



In other words, these 3 counsels remind us that we are members of a community and as catechists, we have a heightened sense of this call...are called to live with an openness to the Church.

This can be difficult at times. Especially in the wake of the sex abuse scandal which was a breach of trust. Many of us are still smarting from this, wondering if we can indeed trust the Church. This is not unlike any family or relationship in which trust is broken. We must pray for the help we need to trust again – to truly believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

## An Openness to the Church



LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DUNN MONASTERY

Here's the spiritual exercise I suggest for strengthening your openness to the Church:

Look at where your faith came from

Think about your oldest Church-related possession. Is it your First Communion prayer book and Rosary? Is it a scapular? Is it your baptismal gown? Locate this special heirloom that represents your relationship to the Church. Place this treasured heirloom in the space where you pray for the coming week as a reminder of your relationship with the Church. Read and reflect on John 17, Jesus' prayer for the Church.



We turn our attention now to the third characteristic of the spirituality of the catechist which is an openness to the world.

To be a catechist is not to become a member of the Essenes – the community that sought to escape from the world by withdrawing from to the desert.

Rather, we are called to venture forth into the world, proclaiming God's Word which will transform this world into the Kingdom of God.





So, let me ask you a question: do you Tweet?

Years ago, if someone asked you to tweet, you might consider chirping like a bird. Of course, nowadays, to Tweet means to send a message on a social networking service. For many of us, however, it's like speaking a new language. Not that long ago, if someone asked you if you've been Googled or Tweeted, you might've punched them in the mouth. The times – they are a'changin'. What does this have to do with being a catechist?



In the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church* from the Second Vatican Council, we read the following:

*The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.*

What does this mean for us as catechists? It means that we are to recognize and be familiar with the signs of the times. It does NOT mean that we allow the world and the present culture to set the agenda for catechesis. Nor does it mean that we have to adapt to the world and become something that we are not.

But it does mean that we are to be in touch with this ever-changing world, looking for entry points into the lives of those we teach.



Just look at the images that Jesus used to teach

These images came from his world!

*Sheep, fishing nets, pearls, coins, buried treasures, wine, wineskins, yeast, mustard seeds, fig trees, vineyards, tenants, banquets, etc.*

These are just a few of the images that Jesus used when he taught. They are images that were familiar to Jesus' audience. Jesus spoke in such a way that he was able to capture the imagination of the crowds – speaking to their everyday experiences to help them find God in all things.

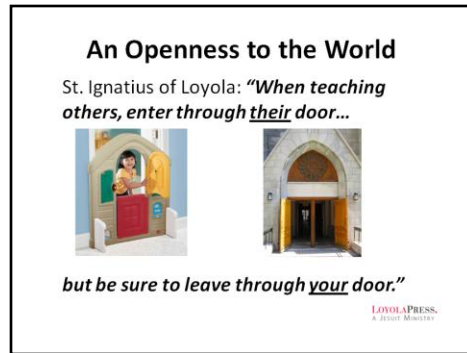


And so, we need to draw from our current world to teach effectively

*Ipod, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, The Black Eyed Peas, The Twilight Saga, gigabytes, texting, webinars, bandwidth, Bluetooth, download, DVD, Blu-Ray, eBay, Google, GPS, MP3, etc.*

Do any of the above words mean anything to you? For many of us, these words may seem like a foreign language. To the young people we teach, however, they are part of their everyday vocabulary!

No doubt, if Jesus were preaching to crowds today, telling them parables, he would draw from images that are current, everyday images. As catechists, we are called to teach as Jesus did. This means that, just as Jesus had an openness to the world in which he lived, we too are called to have a spirituality that is characterized by an openness to the world.



St. Ignatius of Loyola called this “entering through their door, but being sure to leave through your door.” Our task is to identify these entry points and then introduce the light of Christ into this corner of the world so that the light of Christ will shine on that which is good and expose that which needs to be transformed.

To enter through their door means to have an openness to the world.

That same commission comes to us. As catechists, we are sent forth into the world. Or, perhaps I should say, the world comes to us! Each time we teach, we are called to enter into the world of those we teach. We may not fully understand “their world.” We may not approve of everything that is happening in “their world.” However, we must not think that somehow God is more present in “our world.” Our task is to enter into their world and to help them uncover and recognize the God who is already there.

### An Openness to the World



LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DAVITT MURPHY

We may not fully understand “their world.” when we enter their world, we may react like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz: “I have a feeling we’re not in Kansas any more.” We may not approve of everything that is happening in “their world.” However, we must not think that somehow God is more present in “our world.” Our task is to enter into their world and to help them uncover and recognize the God who is already there.



Here is the Spiritual exercise I'd like to offer to help us to be more open to the world:

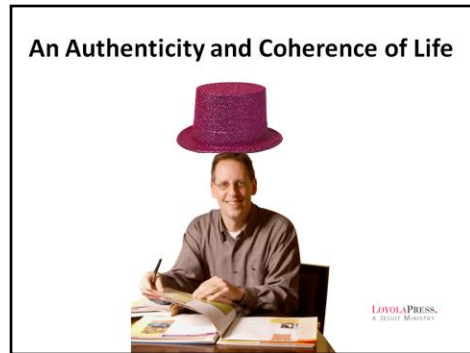
The early disciples of Christ prayed for the courage to venture into new territories – lands they had never before visited – in order to bring the Word of God to others. Pray for the courage to enter into new “territories” – perhaps you can venture into some new technology that your learners are familiar with. Take some time to explore “places” like Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, and other popular social networking sites. Pray for the courage to better understand these new places, not in order to become proficient in using them, but to simply be aware of what your learners are finding there.



We move on now to the next characteristic of the spirituality of the catechist which is an authenticity and coherence of life. In 2008, Time Magazine featured an article titled “[10 Ideas that are Changing the World](#),” and listed at number 7 was *authenticity*. Marketing experts are telling us that, in today’s economy, consumers are craving *authenticity*. They want the real McCoy!

African-American Inventor, Master Mechanic, and Engineer Elijah McCoy worked as a train fireman and oilman for the Michigan Central Railroad. He created a device that allowed an engine to remain in motion as the device regulated oil flow into machine parts that needed constant lubrication. Patented in 1872, this invention was a revolution for the steam engine. It was in such demand that railroad men ordering the part insisted that they receive Elijah McCoy’s invention and not an inferior substitute. It is said that buyers began asking for “the real McCoy,” popularizing the expression, which eventually came to refer to anything of undisputed quality that is neither imitation nor substitute.





As catechists, we are called to be truly authentic. Being a catechist is not a “hat” to be put on and taken off. Likewise, it’s not like being a tutor who shares his or her talent for one specific topic or skill set. Being a catechist is a way of life.

As catechists, we strive to authentically know Jesus, his message, and the Catholic way of life that leads to him. Before *doing* the work of a catechist, we must first of all *be* catechists.

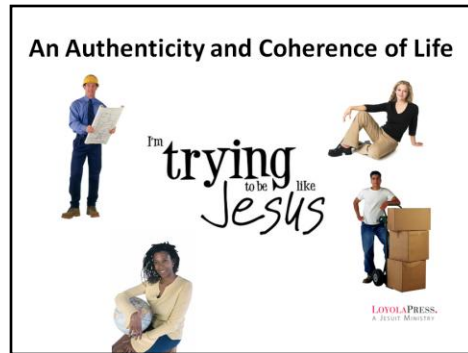
## An Authenticity and Coherence of Life



LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DAVIS PUBLISHER

The fact is, those we teach are watching us closely for signs of authenticity and coherence of life (consistency). They are seeking a consistency between:

- our words in class and our actions outside of class (do we practice what we preach?)
- between our words and our facial expression/body language (do we look like we are proclaiming Good News?)
- between the words we teach and the way we speak to them and deal with them (do we preach love, patience, and forgiveness, and then speak or act harshly toward them?)



To have an authenticity and a coherence of life is not to be confused with being perfect! In fact, paradoxically, the first step to articulating authenticity and coherence of life is to humbly admit that we are sinners – we have, at times, been inauthentic and inconsistent and we earnestly seek forgiveness so that we may become more authentic followers of Jesus.

## An Authenticity and Coherence of Life



LOYOLAPRESS.  
A DAVITT MONASTERY

In striving to present ourselves as authentic, we must avoid allowing ourselves to become like the Pharisee who prayed, “God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.” (Lk 18:11-12) To prevent our quest for authenticity and coherence of life from turning into self-righteousness, we must practice humility as did the tax collector who prayed: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” (Lk 18:13)



I'd like to offer the following Spiritual exercise to help us to grow in authenticity and coherence of life:

Practice what St. Ignatius of Loyola called the *Daily Examen* – a way to prayerfully review your day to see in what experiences you have been authentic and consistent as a follower of Jesus and in what experiences you have not. It's like pressing the rewind button on a VCR or DVD player to take another look at something.

The Daily Examen only takes 10-20 minutes near the end of your day, and follow these simple steps:

### An Authenticity and Coherence of Life



1. Quiet yourself and recall God's presence
2. Review your day and give thanks for God's gifts
3. Review again – identify moments when you were most authentic as well as moments you were not
4. Ask forgiveness
5. Ask for grace

LOYOLAPRESS.  
A Jesuit Ministry

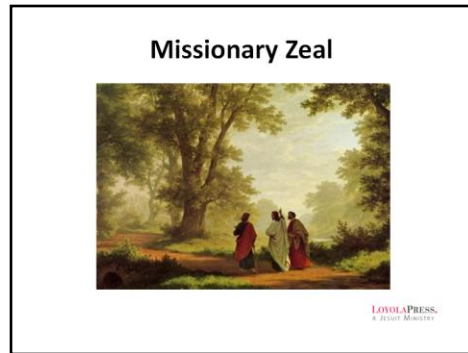
- o Quiet yourself and recall God's presence
- o Review your day and give thanks for God's gifts
- o Review your day again and identify those moments you were most authentic as a follower of Jesus and those moments when you may have been inconsistent/inauthentic.
- o Ask forgiveness for the times you were inconsistent/inauthentic.
- o Ask for the grace you need to have an authenticity and coherence of life in the day to come.



The next characteristic of the spirituality of the catechist is something we call Missionary Zeal. I like the word zeal...it is an energetic word. But what does it mean for us as catechists?

It doesn't mean we have to act like the cuckoo bird (remember from the Cocoa Puffs commercials?) or like Billy Mays, the late TV pitch man who used to shout at the customer. We need to be ourselves, but we need to be driven and enthusiastic.

We're called to show *zeal* – not OVERzealousness. Zeal is defined as “fervor; eager desire; enthusiastic diligence.” The missionary zeal that is part of our spirituality as catechists It means that we are called to clearly express passion for what we are saying and that we show our eagerness to proclaim the Gospel (and that we do so in a way that is *authentic*...remember the previous topic?).

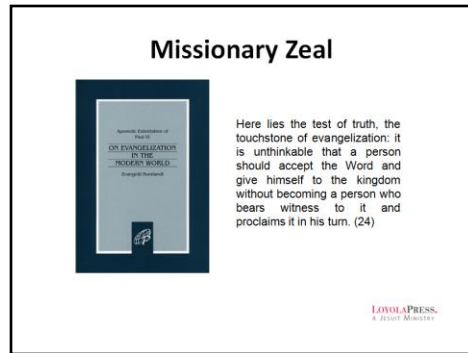


It reminds me of the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus. They later said to one another, “were not our hearts burning within us?”

I call this the good kind of heart burn! We don’t want this kind of heart burn to go away. We don’t want a spiritual antacid to relieve this kind of heart burn...we want it to stay.

Jeremiah said: “I said to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.”





In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World) Pope Paul VI offered these words that sum up very well the notion of missionary zeal:

Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn. (24)



This missionary zeal is what brings us back year after year (ask some of the folks who are participating in this online retreat and, in their introductions, revealed that they've been a catechist for 30, 40, even 50 years!). It is this missionary zeal which brings us back one week after we vowed "never again" because of a difficult class. It is this missionary zeal that drives us to put some time into our planning to come up with an engaging and effective lesson so that those we teach will truly experience the transforming power of God's Word. It is this same missionary zeal that drives us to go to seminars, workshops, conferences, and classes to continue our own formation and deepen our understanding of the Catholic faith.

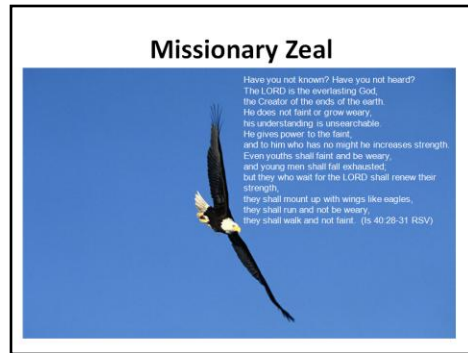
## Missionary Zeal



Let us therefore preserve our fervor of spirit. Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us - as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers all through the Church's history - an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world. (81)

LOYOLA PRESS,  
A DAUGHTER OF THE

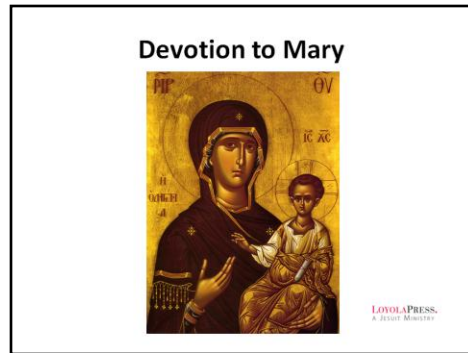
We can once again look to the words of Pope Paul VI: Let us therefore preserve our fervor of spirit. Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us - as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers all through the Church's history - an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world. (81)



I suggest the following spiritual exercise to grow in missionary zeal:

Each day this week, choose a line from the following Scripture passage and use it as your “mantra” for the day, recalling it often, repeating it silently as well as out loud, praying for a renewed missionary zeal:

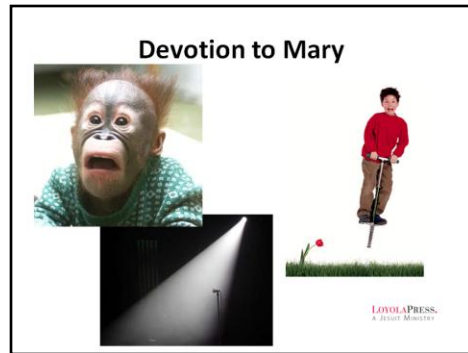
Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary,  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
and to him who has no might he increases strength.  
Even youths shall faint and be weary,  
and young men shall fall exhausted;  
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their  
strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint. (Is 40:28-31 RSV)



And finally, we look at the final characteristic of the spirituality of the catechist which is a devotion to Mary.

In the May/June issue of [Catechetical Leader Magazine](#), Fr. Joseph Pellegrino talks about how Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is often depicted by artists as holding up the child Jesus “for him to bless the world, to bless us.”

He goes on to say, “Just as Mary was resolved to make God present in the world through her faith and obedience, as catechists, we are called to make God present to the world. We need to resolve to present Jesus, the Lord, to the world.”



When we were asked to be a catechist, our reaction was probably like this...who me?

Not to show any disrespect for Mary, but the fact is that Mary herself was somewhat taken aback by her calling: "How can this be?" Like Mary, we may not consider ourselves worthy of such a calling. This humility is healthy. It means that we do not seek the spotlight. We are not drawing attention to ourselves, but to glorify God. We can continually strive to say "Yes" to God's call to embody his Son Jesus and to bring him to others. And we do so with the humility that Mary showed: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word."

As soon as Mary found out about her calling to be the Mother of Jesus, she moved into action. In Luke 1:38, the angel departs from her. In the very next verse, she sets out to visit her cousin Elizabeth! We can imitate Mary by eagerly springing into action (missionary zeal!), bringing the Good News of Jesus to others and stirring the life that is within them as Mary's greeting stirred the baby in Elizabeth's womb.



Let's look at some of the ways we can imitate Mary:

Several times in Scripture, we hear that Mary “ponders” things in her heart. She does so after the shepherds visited (Luke 2:19). She does so again in Luke 2:51 after finding the child Jesus in the Temple. No doubt, Mary pondered many experiences in her heart throughout her life. We can imitate Mary by being contemplative in this same manner. When events happen in our lives, we can ponder them in our heart – reviewing them to more readily recognize the hand of God in our everyday lives. We can then teach our students to do the same.

At the Wedding Feast at Cana, Mary plays a significant role in cooperating with the revelation of Jesus' divinity. Traditionally, Christians have described the visit of the Magi, Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, and the wedding feast at Cana as a three-fold “epiphany” or revealing. Mary is intimately involved in 2 of these 3 events. In the Wedding Feast at Cana, Mary prods Jesus to come to the aid of the hosts who have run out of wine. She utters the last words recorded in Scripture that are attributed to her: “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5) We can imitate Mary by making sure that our catechesis is always an “epiphany” – a revealing of Jesus' true identity. We can also imitate Mary by telling those we teach to “do whatever he tells you.”



Mary is found at the foot of the Cross at the moment of her son's death. She is part of what is known as the "[Little Company of Mary](#)" – the small band of faithful disciples who stood at the foot of the Cross throughout Jesus' suffering and death. We can imitate Mary by being present to the suffering that is taking place in the lives of those we teach and in the community around us.

The Acts of the Apostles (1:14) tells us that the early Christian community gathered united around Mary. In Acts 2:1, we hear that "when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." Christian tradition, therefore, places Mary at the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Mary paid close attention to the promptings of the Holy Spirit throughout her life and it makes perfect sense that on the day of Pentecost, she, with all the disciples of Jesus, was filled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in order to go forth and proclaim the Good News. We can imitate Mary by being Spirit-filled – by praying for the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit so that we may effectively proclaim the Good News.

Finally, we can look to Mary's Assumption as a sign of hope. When Mary's time on earth was completed, she was assumed body and soul into heaven – a precursor, so to speak, of the Resurrection of the Body that all of us look forward to. Our ministry, as catechists, is grounded in hope. Mary's Assumption is a sign of hope – a confident waiting for that day when we shall see God face to face, united body and soul, for all eternity





Finally, I suggest the following Spiritual exercise to grow in devotion to Mary:

Learn to pray the *Angelus*, a prayer that celebrates in Incarnation of Jesus and Mary's role in saying "Yes" to God's invitation (based on Luke 1:26-27). Catholics traditionally pray the *Angelus* at 6 am, noon, and 6 pm.

This picture is of a famous painting depicting a husband and wife on their farm pausing at the sound of the church bells to pray the *Angelus*.

### Devotion to Mary

V. The angel of the Lord announced unto Mary.  
R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit. *Hail Mary...*

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.  
R. Be it unto me according to your Word. *Hail Mary...*

V. And the Word was made flesh.  
R. And dwelt among us. *Hail Mary...*

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.  
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: We beseech you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts, that as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



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A DAUGHTER OF MARY

Here is how we pray this prayer:

V. The angel of the Lord announced unto Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

*Hail Mary...* V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to your Word.

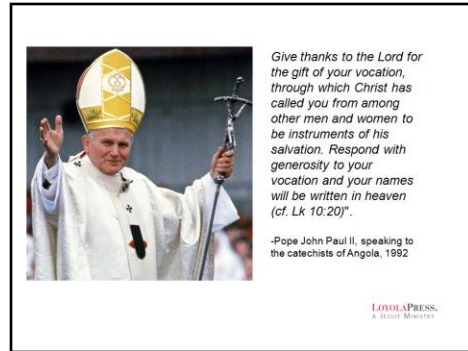
*Hail Mary...* V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

*Hail Mary...* V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: We beseech you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts, that as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



Finally, I'd like to close with words from Pope John Paul II that he spoke to catechists during his 1992 visit to Angola:

*Give thanks to the Lord for the gift of your vocation, through which Christ has called you from among other men and women to be instruments of his salvation. Respond with generosity to your vocation and your names will be written in heaven (cf. Lk 10:20)".*

-Pope John Paul II, speaking to the catechists of Angola, 1992

# LET'S CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION...



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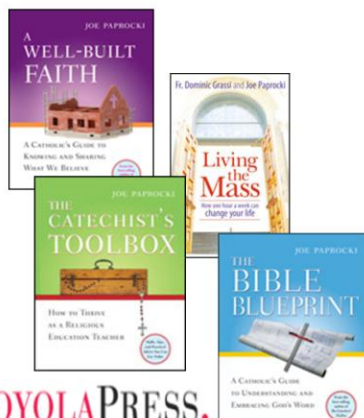
Let's continue this discussion on my blog:  
[www.catechistsjourney.com](http://www.catechistsjourney.com).

## Book Signing...



Table J (11:30 – noon)

## My Books...



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Exhibit 520