very often at the end of an interview with an author, you will hear the interviewer ask something like: "If you had one piece of advice you could share, what would it be?" What a giant question! I've been thinking about this question lately regarding religious education.

What is the one, most important lesson for us to keep in mind as religious educators? Before I give my answer, I want to share a quick story and see if you can relate to it.

Do you remember what it was like to learn about our faith as a child? Do you remember your parish religious education days or your time in Catholic school? I'll be honest, I only have vague memories of Sunday school. What I do remember is that they gave me a Bible to take home with me during the week. I went back infrequently and I am embarrassed to say that I never returned the Bible.

I went through RCIA as a fourth grader because I missed my chance to go through First Communion preparation when I was in second grade. I barely knew anything when I started, but I learned a lot during the year. Looking back, I really appreciated the chance to get to take ownership over my faith even as a young kid.

I WANTED to go to RCIA. I wanted to go to communion like everyone else. But, again, my faith kind of fizzled away. It wasn't until I got to high school that it all really clicked.

Here is a brief version of the story . . .

As a freshman in high school I thought the moral teachings of the Church, like the Ten Commandments, were great but I didn't see any real reason to believe in God. At the time I would have considered myself atheist, maybe, or at least agnostic.

Then I went on a youth retreat at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. I could say a lot about that weekend, but I simply can't say enough about my experience during Eucharistic adoration on Saturday night.

For the first time in my life, I knew I had an intimate encounter with Jesus Christ. For the first time in my life, I realized that "faith" was about more than following Church rules and teachings. Faith is having a personal relationship with God. My life was changed.

I got home and found that old Bible I was given in CCD as a kid. I read it . . . a lot.

The Most Important Piece of Advice for Religious Educators

OK, back to that "most important lesson" I mentioned at the start. What does this story have to do with anything?

Up until I was invited to encounter Christ in the Eucharist, everything I did regarding "faith formation" was more focused on the teachings rather than anything else. I knew ABOUT Christ, but I didn't KNOW Christ.
Here is the single, most important lesson for us to keep in mind: Kids must encounter Christ. We must lead them into a relationship with God. Yes, of course we need to pass on Catholic teachings. Yes, of course we want them to learn who God is and what he reveals to us through Sacred Scripture and Tradition. But none of that will make sense unless our students also have opportunities to meet and pray with God.

Maybe you are already aware of this lesson or maybe you just needed a reminder about its importance. We really need to think about how we can refocus our vision on encounters over education. It wasn't until I personally encountered Christ that I became motivated to pursue an education in religion. I wanted to learn everything I could about the Catholic faith! My mindset had shifted. I wanted to learn because I loved God, not because I had something to gain from it.

In a similar way, we are called as catechists and religion teachers to help our students encounter Christ. Out of that constant encounter with Christ, the things they learn will become so much more meaningful. They will become so much more personal.

From Education to Encounter

So, if a relationship with Christ really is our goal, why do we spend so much time as religious educators doing things that do not lead our students into that experience? Why do we perpetuate so many of the teaching practices that just don't make an impact?

I want to break down just a few of the most common practices teachers are using in class and see how we can transform those strategies into opportunities for an encounter with Christ.

Educational Strategy 1: Lecture

Please, please, please limit your lecture time.

Stick to three main ideas and keep in mind that your students have very short attention spans. Lectures aren't all bad. They are efficient ways to get information across to people quickly. But time is limited. Students learn best when they are actively engaged, not just passively listening.

That being said, I can think of a lot of my teachers and professors over the years who gave amazing lectures. I felt like I could listen to them all day. Here's what they did extremely well: The best lecturers tell stories. It is definitely something I missed in my first few years.

I created long outlines of information I just had to get across to the kids in the limited time we had. I lectured and lectured and lectured and . . . the kids were bored out of their minds! Could I blame them? I wasn't giving them something meaningful to connect to the ideas. The anecdotes I told about my life, however, they never forgot! I heard comments during recess and in between classes about stories I told in class. The kids liked to connect with me on a personal level.

Encounter Opportunity #1: Teach with Testimony

So, how can we turn lectures into opportunities for encounters with Christ. Teach with testimony! Share how the ideas that you are teaching directly affect your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ told the Apostles to "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). That is what we must do as well. We must bear witness to our relationship with Christ and how we live differently because of the relationship.

Educational Strategy 2: Worksheets

I really love worksheets, more accurately, I love graphic organizers. They are great ways to help students make connections between ideas. I do not love busy work. Do a Google search and you will find a lot of word searches, maze worksheets, and coloring sheets that do not help students learn. Sure, a maze or a coloring sheet will keep a kid quiet, but will they grow any closer to Christ? Will they learn anything from the experience?

Encounter Opportunity #2: Handouts for the Head and Heart

When looking for or creating worksheets for your students, make sure that the questions include a mix of the mind and the heart activities. Some questions help students summarize and make connections. Their answers are objectively correct or incorrect. Other
questions can be more personalized. For religious educators like us, this is important. We want our students to make personal connections to what they are learning about so that they have a personal connection to who they are learning about (Jesus Christ).

If the worksheet you find is missing meditation questions, then make up a few of your own. Help your students recognize how what they are learning is relevant to their lives and relationship with God

Educational Strategy 3: Tests
When I taught religion in Catholic schools, I was always adamant with the students and parents about the academic rigor that was expected in every subject in the school, including religion class. I didn't grade my religion tests any differently, for example, from my social studies tests. A lot of parents just couldn't understand how their child could get anything lower than an "A" in theology. I still feel this way... but I may have gone too far.

I was so focused on the academic expectations I had for those kids that our in-class prayerful experiences were barely squeezed in to what little time we had. Prayer was mostly an obligation in the early days and not a vital part of the learning experience. Every lesson I planned was determined to get the students to learn and do well on the tests and other assessments I had them do. Of course we prayed and I introduced them to the richness of our Catholic devotional life, but I could have done a better job integrating the learning experiences with the prayer experiences.

Encounter Opportunity #3: Action after Assessment
At the end of a series of lessons or unit on a certain topic, it is customary to give a test to see how much information the kids learned and retained. This really is a great way to assess what students have learned. But what about the heart? Why not ask the students to show how they and others are living what they are learning? At the end of a unit on the Eucharist, why not schedule a special Mass to celebrate together? At the end of a unit on one of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, why not schedule a field trip to the homeless shelter? These do not have to be graded assignments. Your students don't have to prove anything to you. The opportunity, however, is to help them live out what they learned. Help them see how they can take action to apply the lessons in class to their lives outside of class.

How We Can Transform Religious Education?
At the bottom of every email I include The Religion Teacher's Vision: Every Day, Every Class, Every Student, an Encounter with Christ

How can we make sure encounters happen in every class, every day, for every student?

(image from Pixaby.com)


SEVEN POINTS TO CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

STAY CALM... BE CONFIDENT... BE PREPARED...
BE HAPPY... LOVE THEM!!

Peggy Schoenfuss

1. Be Prepared
Be sure to write lesson plans and have your classroom space and supplies ready to go prior to the children arriving. Keep a consistent routine, starting always with prayer. Have extra activities in case a lesson “flops” or your planned lesson runs short. Utilize the suggestions in your teacher’s manual. Lesson Plan Helps from Jared Dees - https://www.thereligionteacher.com/catholic-lesson-plans/.

2. Have Expectations and Enforce Them
Post rules in the classroom. Remind the children of the rules at the beginning of every class time. Establish a signal of silence — a raised hand, dim the lights, or count to five. Give immediate feedback to students by focusing on the behavior, not the individual. For example, “Jimmy, that behavior is disruptive to the class, you need to sit down now, or I’ll need you to stay after class to discuss the lesson with me.” Don’t be afraid to walk the child out to the car after class to explain to the parent what behaviors need to change. Remember that good behavior is learned and consider using an incentive system for long-term good behavior and always use positive reinforcement. Don’t expect a behavior they haven’t learned. Always be consistent when enforcing rules.

Search Catholic Classroom Rules on Pinterest for ideas.
3. Provide a Good Physical Environment
Match the environment to the activity. Have a prayer table or area for children to focus on. Use the liturgical seasons to decorate. Establish a seating arrangement even if children sit on the floor. Keep distractions to a minimum. Search Catholic Classroom Prayer Tables on Pinterest for ideas.

4. Keep Children Engaged
Have a “pre-class” activity ready as children arrive – a coloring sheet or a word game. Use a variety of learning techniques – don’t lecture or read out of the book. Utilize the suggestions in your teacher’s manual. Try small group work, discussions, projects or student lead learning. As a teacher, don’t stay in one place but instead move around the room at all times.

Top Ten Classroom Games - https://www.quizalize.com/blog/2018/03/02/classroom-games/

5. Have Some “Tricks” up Your Sleeve
a. Remain calm and in control (losing your cool will eventually make you lose credibility)

b. Don’t interrupt your lesson (use eye contact, place hand on a shoulder, stand next to the “culprit”...)

c. Keep participants involved (boredom is a call for disruption)

d. Use wait time... count to 5 in your head, or count to 3 out-loud

e. Give choices... is it “A” or will it be “B”?

f. Break up tasks/activities into smaller chunks of time or concentration

g. Build in movement within the lesson or take stretch breaks

h. Explain to children/ youth at the beginning of class what will take place... give them a “heads up” of what is expected of them

Classroom Management Ideas from Jared Dees - https://www.thereligionteacher.com/?s=classroom+management.

6. Build Relationships!
Try One-sentence Interventions...
   a. Think of 10 things about this child/youth you have noticed (not academic or judgmental)
   b. After you have 10 things, you will plug one of those 10 things into the following statement at least once when you’re with the child/youth. - “I noticed ________. I noticed that.”
   c. Then walk away.
   d. Do not respond to responses!
   e. After most of the 10 things are used up, ask the child/youth to do something for you and see what happens – “John, would you put that away for me please? Thanks.
   f. Then walk away.

The more “broken” children are, the more important it is that they love someone. They will do things for people they love, that they won’t for anyone else. (We’re not talking about super hero love here.) Be the first/only positive relationship a child experiences! You could be the one reason the child stays in the faith. You will never know the sum total of your influence with the children you teach.


7. Pray Always!
Pray before writing the lesson plan. Pray while writing the lesson plan. Pray while instructing. Pray while working with the children. Let the children see you pray – not just in wrote, leadership of classroom prayer, but in actually need – “Dear Lord, help me to manage the disruption in this class. Please send your Holy Spirit to be with us in this room to accomplish everything you need us to.” Pray after class. Always invite the Lord into your heart and classroom. He does miraculous things when you do.

Catechist Prayers and Blessings from Jared Dees - https://www.thereligionteacher.com/catechist-blessing/.

Peggy Schoenfuss is the Director of Catholic Formation for the Diocese of Superior. If you’d like your question answered, please contact gbusse@catholicdos.org.
Is “discipleship” just another trendy Catholic catchphrase?

Although there’s a lot more emphasis on discipleship today, some parish leaders admit not having a clear understanding of exactly discipleship is and how this theme can impact catechetical ministry. Some even wonder if it’s just a passing trend. As one parish leader recently said to me, “Discipleship?…Oh, this is just another Catholic buzz word that happens to be in vogue now…It will fade away in a few years….I’m just going to keep doing what I’ve been doing.”

Part of the problem might be the lack of a consistent vision being casted for discipleship. Individual parishes, apostolates, or diocesan leaders each often come up with their own views on discipleship. But given the importance of this theme, imagine if we were all on the same page in offering a picture of discipleship that was truly shaped by God’s Word. What if we were to offer parish leaders a more consistent and more robust picture of discipleship—one grounded in Jesus’ public ministry and rooted in the Church’s teachings on catechesis? As we’ll see, this exciting biblical vision for discipleship would equip pastoral workers with a powerful framework for evangelization and deepening people’s relationship with Christ.

Discipleship: Its Biblical Meaning

In the first-century Jewish world of Jesus, being a disciple was all about one key word: imitation. When a disciple followed a rabbi, the goal wasn’t merely to master the rabbi’s teachings but also to imitate the way he lived: the way he prayed, studied, taught, served the poor, and lived out his relationship with God day-to-day. Jesus himself said when a disciple is fully trained, he “becomes like his teacher” (Lk 6:40). And when St. Paul formed disciples of his own, he exhorted them not just to remember his teachings, but also to follow his way of living: “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Though the word disciple (mathetes) means “learner,” biblical discipleship was very different from modern classroom learning. On a college campus, a professor might give lectures to students in a large hall; the students take notes, and they’re examined on the material later in the semester. But there’s usually not an ongoing personal relationship and sharing of life between professor and student in the university setting today.

To follow a rabbi, however, meant living with the rabbi, sharing meals with him, praying with him, studying with him, and taking part in the rabbi’s daily life. A rabbi’s life was meant to be a living example of someone shaped by God’s Word. Disciples, therefore, studied not just the text of Scripture but also the “text” of the rabbi’s life.

This is why Jesus didn’t simply ask his disciples to listen to his preaching in the synagogues. He said, “Come, follow me” and basically invited them on a three-year camping trip as they journeyed throughout Galilee together during his itinerant ministry. Think about that: day in and day out for three years living with Jesus! How much they would have been influenced by his example! They’d notice the way he woke up early to pray. They’d be struck by his pressing need to go out to the sinners, Gentiles, and outcasts. They’d also observe how he taught the crowds, debated his opponents, called people to repent and offered them mercy. Much of Jesus’ way of living would have “rubbed off” on his disciples.

Our Discipleship Today

So if we’re going to live as disciples of Jesus today, we must aim for a lot more than believing a set of doctrines and following the rules of our faith. All that, of course, is essential, but we must go deeper and consider what’s happening interiorly: are we moving closer to Christ, encountering him anew each day? Do we notice his ongoing call to conversion, his prompting us to give more, love more and surrender more? As disciples we
are aware that Jesus is constantly inviting us to live more like him in all areas of our lives—“to think like him, to judge like him, to act in conformity with his commandments, and to hope as he invites us to.” Being a disciple entails a lot more than saying and believing the right things. It’s a whole way of life—his way of life transforming me.

This theme of discipleship reminds us of how being Catholic is not a stagnant reality: “I identify on this survey as Catholic”…. “I attend Mass on Sundays”…. “I’m orthadox in my beliefs.” All that is very good, but living as a disciple involves something more. Discipleship is something intensely dynamic. It implies movement and transformation as the disciple deepens his friendship with Christ and becomes ever more like him.

Indeed, a disciple recognizes two fundamental truths:

(A) The truth about himself: his many weakness, failures, and areas where he falls short of living like Christ.

(B) The truth about what he’s made for: being conformed to the image of Christ, living like him, thinking like him, loving like him.

A true disciple knows what he’s made for: transformation in Christ (B). But he also knows the many ways he falls short (A). Discipleship is all about moving from A to B.

When our Catholic Tradition speaks of “growing in holiness,” “pursuing sanctity,” and “becoming saints,” it’s basically describing this life-long process of a Christian disciple being ever more transformed by God’s grace—being changed into Christ’s likeness “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:18).

Four Encounter Moments - Acts 2:42

According to one ancient Jewish saying, if you encounter a rabbi, you should “cover yourself in the dust of his feet and drink in his words thirstily.” The expression likely draws on a well-known sight for ancient Jews: disciples were known for walking behind their rabbi, following him so closely that they would become covered with the dust kicked up from his sandals. This would have been a powerful image for what should happen in the disciple’s life spiritually. Disciples were expected to follow their rabbi so closely that it’s as if they would be covered with their master’s way of thinking, living, and acting.

Thousands of years later, we’re called to do the same. Though we walk on roads of pavement and not dust, we are still called to be disciples—to follow our Rabbi Jesus Christ so closely that we are covered with his life, changed, and made new.

But how can we do that today?

In Acts 2:42, the Bible underscores four practices that marked the earliest disciples of Jesus. We can think of these as four key habits of a disciple. The disciples in the early Church devoted themselves to:

1. The teaching of the apostles
2. Fellowship
3. The breaking of bread
4. Prayers

While there are many creative ways one could sum up the various practices of a disciple, following the biblical model is best. For when the Church has summed up the Catholic Faith, it has often turned to these four points in Acts 2:42 to help categorize what it means to follow Jesus. In fact, the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are traditionally seen as being based on these four points.

So if we want a roadmap to make sure we’re on the right track in our relationship with Jesus—if we want to keep the fire of faith growing—think of these four points from Acts 2:42 as logs we add to the fire. These are four foundational “encounter moments” in the life-long journey of a disciple. The more we grow in prayer, fellowship, the sacraments, and forming our minds with the revelation of Christ, the more we encounter Jesus ever anew.

For example, we ponder an aspect of the apostolic faith that stirs us to praise or challenges us to make a sacrifice. This helps us become more like Christ. We sense in prayer God calling us to change, be better in a certain area or trust him more. We experience his love and mercy in the sacraments and long to come back
again. We encounter Jesus in *fellowship* with our neighbor, the poor, the suffering and other Christians who encourage us in the faith and provide many opportunities to grow in the love of Christ by loving the Christ who abides in them.

These four devotions help us encounter Jesus ever anew—to experience his call to conversion, his gentle patience and mercy, his comfort and encouragement, and his healing grace that incrementally changes us into his likeness.

As pastoral workers, we must continually grow as disciples ourselves. We must repeatedly renew our encounter with the Lord especially in these four devotions the Bible singles out for discipleship. For we cannot give what we don’t have. We will only be effective as missionary disciples to the extent that we are disciples first.

**Application to Parish Ministry: Forming Disciples**

In closing, here are just three examples of how we can apply the biblical discipleship model to the work in parish life.

1. **A Top Priority: Evangelizing our Parishioners**

   While, thankfully, there’s a greater awareness today of the need to go out to the peripheries and reach the “nones,” we have a lot of work to do in evangelizing the people coming to our parishes. The discipleship theme makes that clear. It sheds light on the gap oftentimes existing between a more cultural Catholicism and a faith lived out vibrantly in daily life. There may be people who show up at Mass every Sunday, volunteer at the parish, and even sing in the choir, but are they living as disciples who strive to imitate Christ? Have they even had a personal encounter with Christ that has shaped their entire lives? They might go through the outward motions of faith, but have they surrendered their lives to Christ, said “yes” to him, and taken on “a profound Christian outlook”?

   Is the way they think about love, marriage, success, happiness, moral truth, and the meaning of life, for example, shaped more by CNN or by the CCC? As St. John Paul II explained, many of the baptized have “accepted a secular model of thinking and living.”

   Right within our parish walls, God is placing people whom he wants us to evangelize. Do we have an urgency about leading our parishioners to become more than Catholics who go through the motions of faith? Discipleship reminds us to form true disciples who seek to draw closer to Christ and become more like him and avoid settling for their being registered at the parish and making appearances each Sunday.

2. **Programs vs. Discipleship**

   Some parishes view the role of religious education directors as running faith formation programs—offering parishioners a buffet of talks, retreats, small group studies, and faith formation events. The biblical model of discipleship reminds us, however, that the heart of our mission is to help shepherd people through a process of growing as disciples, helping parishioners move from A to B, from where they are now to where Christ wants them to be: transformed into his likeness.

   Various programs and activities certainly can be helpful tools in that process, if they are used in a strategic plan of forming disciples. But as one diocesan leader admitted, faith formation in many parishes follows a Netflix model: each year we feature the latest great program to come out rather than strategically think about how to lead people through the different stages
of faith development and considering what an individual might need to take the next step in their walk as a disciple.

We need to do more than throw a series of programs at people, no matter how good the programs may be. We need to offer an intentional formation that facilitates both initial and ongoing conversion—one that is always inviting people to take that next step in their journey as a disciple. Ideally, we should always have something available for people at different stages in discipleship, whether it’s someone who is a “quasi-catechumen” needing an initial encounter with Christ, or an evangelized Catholic who needs to go deeper in his understanding and practice of the faith, or the well-formed Catholic who needs to be challenged and equipped to evangelize others.

3. Accompaniment: Real Discipleship

St. Paul said to the Christian disciples in Thessalonica, “We gave you not only the Gospel, but our very selves” (1 Thess 2:8). Our mission in parish faith formation is the same. We’re not only called to present the faith but also to accompany the people we serve, and, like Rabbi Jesus, to share life with the disciples in our parishes. Do we enter into the world of our parishioners, know their hopes and dreams, fears and sufferings, questions and doubts? Pope Francis challenges us to avoid the temptation to think the work of evangelization and forming disciples takes place primarily in committee meetings, our offices, or even at the events and programs we offer. We should be so immersed in people’s lives that we “take on the smell of the sheep.”

Investing time with people outside of the Wednesday night Bible study or Thursday morning mom’s group may be just as important as the faith formation activities themselves—and our personal investment in their lives will help those activities themselves bear more fruit. Like Paul, let’s give disciples not only the Gospel but our very selves.

Edward Sri is Professor of Theology at the Augustine Institute and author of Into His Likeness: Be Transformed as a Disciple (Ignatius Press), upon which this article is based.

This article originally appeared on page 10-12 of the printed edition of the April-June 2018 (Vol. 4 No. 2) issue of The Catechetical Review and is also available online at Review.Catechetics.com. It is reprinted here with permission from the publisher Franciscan University of Steubenville. Spanish translation of this article is available at Review.Catechetics.com.

Image: Washing of the Disciples’ Feet by Tintoretto, public domain.

Notes
1 John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae, art. 20.
2 Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, General Directory for Catechesis, arts. 53-54.
3 Cf. Catechesi Tradendae, art. 20.
4 General Directory for Catechesis, art. 58.
5 John Paul II, Crossing the Threshold of Hope, 113.
6 Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, art. 24.
prayer. As I went on, he offered me good advice about prayer, pointed me to helpful scripture verses, and gave me some practical pointers about changing habits.

However, as the conversation went on it became clear to him that I needed something more and he seemed to become increasingly uncomfortable. Finally, he looked me square in the eyes and told me, ‘Chris, you don’t need me to forgive you. Only Jesus can do that.’ Being a good Protestant at that time, I immediately responded, ‘Oh, yeah of course!’ After that we chatted a bit more, finished our breakfasts, prayed together and parted ways.

I left our appointment deeply unsatisfied, which is no knock on my pastor, who was (and is) an excellent and holy man. To put it simply, unbeknownst to me, I was desperate to hear words that he would never utter: “I absolve you of your sins.”

Fast forward a few years: when I came out of my first confession – after about a half hour! – it felt like the weight of the world had finally slipped off of my shoulders. I had been weighed down, but through encountering the merciful love of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation I experienced an incredible gift of peace.

I can honestly say that in my own experience, when I am frequenting the Sacrament of Reconciliation I am more loving to my wife and children, a better employee and friend and just a happier human being.

+ + +

As catechists our job is simple and clear: we are entrusted with the task instructing the faithful in the content and practice of the faith. Many of us feel ill-equipped or somehow lacking in our ability and worthiness for this task. And yet, this role is one that ought to be perfectly natural to all of us as baptized members of the Church.

Sure, we may not all have doctorates in theology and we may not be ready to make articulate defenses of the Church’s teachings on every controversial topic. Nevertheless, if we are committed to daily prayer, to regularly frequenting the sacraments and to humbly accepting and living out the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church then we have everything we need to be successful mentors in the faith to any young person our parishes might entrust to us. No, of course, none of us are saints yet. But if we are genuinely striving, then we can be authentic witnesses – big brothers and big sisters who are saints-in-the-making ready to show our young friends the Way.

Pope Francis tweeted in 2013 that “to be saints is not a privilege for the few, but a vocation for everyone.” We are all called to be saints and our earnest efforts to allow God to mold us, to change and transform us is the most effective witness we will ever give.

Blessed Paul VI wrote that “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

When I teach a class or give a talk on the Sacrament of Reconciliation I love sharing my story briefly shared above about yearning for the grace of the confessional. I obviously talk through the practical details of how to go, what to expect, what the theology of the sacrament is, etc. But for many people none of that matters until they know that the sacrament matters to me – that it makes a difference in my life. And when my class or audience responds affirmingly, it is my story that has made the biggest impact.

There is a common educational motto that, ‘They won’t care what you know until they know that you care.’ The saying might sound cliché, but it rings truer than ever when it comes to imparting the faith. And it all boils down to this simple question:

What difference does living as a disciple of Jesus Christ make in your life – how does your relationship with Him bring you joy, fulfillment and peace?

If we can all answer that question and live and preach our answer, then we’ll set the world on fire!

Christopher Hurtubise is the Associate Director of Catholic Formation for the Diocese of Superior.
St. Augustine

“In my deepest wound I saw your glory, and it dazzled me.”

Born: 354, North Africa
Died: August 28, 430, North Africa
Feast Day: August 28th

“Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.” – Romans 13:13-14

Augustine was born in northern Africa, present day Algeria, in the year 354. His father was a pagan, but his mother, Monica, was a deeply faithful Christian who prayed constantly for her husband’s conversion, and later for her son as well.

Augustine had a brilliant mind and, disregarding the example of his mother, used it to attain a position where he could gratify all his immoral desires. His successful career as a professor and speaker took him to Rome. While he was in Rome he met St. Ambrose, who began to explain to him the Christian faith. At the time, Augustine had already studied and lived several popular philosophies of his day and had found them ultimately wanting.

Although he was willing to listen to St. Ambrose and study the faith academically, Augustine’s heart was closed to any real conversion. He clung to his sinful relationships even after he became convicted of the truth of Christianity.

For Augustine, the turning point came, when, despairing, he cried out to God in prayer. He later described what happened in his autobiographical account, Confessions, “I heard from a neighboring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, “Take up and read; Take up and read.” He goes on to relate that it seemed odd to him that a child would repeat such words, so he picked up a book containing the writings of St. Paul and the first thing that he read was Paul’s letter to the Romans, encouraging them to live a good and moral life.

That day marked the first time Augustine encountered God with an open heart. He was soon baptized by St. Ambrose. After his conversion, Augustine dedicated his time and studies to the work of the Church. He eventually returned to Africa, where he became a bishop.

Today Augustine is known as one of the four original western Doctors of the Church, along with his friend St. Ambrose. He contributed to the long literary tradition of the Church through his books, primarily through his Confessions and City of God.

St. Augustine is the patron saint of the Diocese of Superior and is an amazing example for us of the powerful impact of encountering God. His feast day is August 28th, one day after the feast day of his mother, St. Monica.

St. Augustine of Hippo, pray for us!
**Principal Meetings**

- November 27, 2018, @ St. Mary, Tomahawk
- February 26, 2019, Principal/Pastor/Bishop @ St. Joseph, Rice Lake
- April 30, 2019, @ Our Lady of the Lake, Ashland

**SMDP Principal Meetings**

- November 2, 2018, SMDP Video Conference
- November 26-29, 2018, SMDP Tracking Meeting via phone
- February 4-7, 2019, SMDP Tracking Meeting via phone
- March 1, 2019, SMDP Video Conference
- April 1-4, 2019, SMDP Tracking Meeting via phone
- May 14, 2019, @ Rice Lake

Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss, pschoenfuss@catholicdos.org

**High School Discipleship Training**

- November 9-11, 2018, @ CrossWoods, Mason
- April 5-7, 2019, @ Crescent Lake, Rhinelander

Contact: Christopher Hurtubise, churtubise@catholicdos.org

**Youth Rally**

- February 20, 2019, @ St. Joseph, Rice Lake
- March 13, 2019, @ St. Peter the Fisherman, Eagle River
- April 24, 2019, @ St. Anthony, Superior

Contact: Christopher Hurtubise, churtubise@catholicdos.org

**School MAP Testing Windows**

- January 7-25, 2019
- April 15 - May 10, 2018

Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss, pschoenfuss@catholicdos.org

**March for Life**

- December 6, 2019, Chaperone Meeting
- January 15-20, 2019 @ Washington DC

Contact: Christopher Hurtubise, churtubise@catholicdos.org

**Professional Development Days**

- January 22, 2019 @ St. Joseph Parish Center, Hayward
  “Why Does Jesus Ask So Many Questions”
- April 25, 2019, St. Joseph Parish Center, Hayward
  “Goodness is Contagious”

Contact: Chris Newkirk, cnnewkirk@catholicdos.org

**Catholic Schools Week**

- January 27 – February 2, 2019
- January 29, 2019, North Region School Mass @ Superior
- January 30, West Region School Mass @ River Falls
- January 31, East Region School Mass @ Rhinelander

Contact: Grace Busse, gbusse@catholicdos.org

**Chrism Mass**

- April 9, 2019, Cathedral, Superior

**SUMMIT**

- February 11, 2019, @ St. Anthony, Tony
- May 9, 2019, @ St. Peter, Cameron

Contact: Kay Berg, dreyouth@smctomahawk.com

**Women’s Retreat**

- February 15-16, 2019 @ Crosswoods, Mason

Contact: Grace Busse, gbusse@catholicdos.org

**Men’s Retreat**

- March 22-23, 2019 @ CrossWoods, Mason

Contact: Grace Busse, gbusse@catholicdos.org

**Orientations**

- Teacher
  - November 8, 2018, Online via Go-To-Meeting
  - February 14, 2019, Online via Go-To-Meeting
  - March 14, 2019, Online via Go-To-Meeting
  - April 11, 2019, Online via Go-To-Meeting

- Principal
  - November 8, 2018, Orientation via Go-To-Meeting
  - April 11, 2019, Orientation via Go-To-Meeting
  - March 14, 2019, Orientation via Go-To-Meeting
  - February 14, 2019, Orientation via Go-To-Meeting

Contact: Grace Busse, gbusse@catholicdos.org

**WCRI S Teacher Conference**

- March 8, 2019, @ Ingleside Hotel, Pewaukee

**FED Retreat**

- May 16, 2019, @ St. Joseph, Rice Lake

Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss, pschoenfuss@catholicdos.org

**NCCL Convention**

- May 19-23, 2019, Orange County, CA

Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss, pschoenfuss@catholicdos.org

**NCEA Convention**

- May 19-23, 2019, @ Chicago, IL

Contact: Peggy Schoenfuss, pschoenfuss@catholicdos.org

**Extreme Faith Camp**

- May 5, 2019 Extreme Team Required Training @ Rice Lake
- June 9-14, 2019 Crosswoods, Mason
- June 16-21, 2019 Crescent Lake, Rhinelander

Contact: Christopher Hurtubise, churtubise@catholicdos.org
Diocesan Men and Women’s Retreats

Women: Save the Date!  
February 15-16

Men: Save the Date!  
March 22-24

Weekend retreats for Men and Women ages 25-55 featuring talks, fellowship, Mass, adoration, confession & spiritual direction. Both retreats will be held at CrossWoods Camp in Mason, WI. More information will be coming soon! Please check the diocesan website for details.