

Engaging Young People in God Talk!

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Principles:

- God communicates through the ordinary experiences of our lives
- God is bigger than any words that we use. Religion provides a language to talk about that which is beyond language (Catholicism: the language of Tradition, ritual, symbols, story, music, art ... sacrament, sacramentals, and sacramentality)
- Young people are experience rich and language poor, especially in their experience of God (they need words to describe their experiences)
- The Jesus Pedagogy: move from *life* to *faith* to *life*. Faith makes the most sense when it is connected to their lived experiences.

Contrasting Images:

My faith is more like:

A pillow	or	a rock
Planting a garden	or	mining for gold
Climbing a mountain	or	skiing or snowboarding
A question	or	an answer
A challenge	or	a comfort

Jesus is more like:

Near me	or	far from me
A cheerleader	or	a coach
A friend	or	a teacher
One who knows suffering	or	one who knows peace
Divine	or	human

Prayer for me is more like:

Talking	or	listening
Words	or	actions
Personal	or	communal (group)
Regular	or	occasional
Spontaneous	or	set prayers (memorized)

I experience God most:

In my room	or	in Church
In people	or	in creation
In happy times	or	in sad times

Metaphors (“like” and “as”)

In scripture, The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, a pearl, a treasure ... because ...

Pick an item from the world of young people (their room, their desk, their wallet, their CDs ...)

God is like a _____ because _____

Prayer is like a _____ because _____

Faith is like a _____ because _____

Name your five favorite CDs or songs ... Faith is like _____ because _____

This activity could work as well with colors (Faith is blue because ... red because ...), geological formations (mountains, oceans, volcanoes ...), sports ... phone app ...

On a scale of 1 to 10 ... (and what makes it a)

- How is your prayer life?
- How is your relationship with God?
- How important is faith to you?
- How important is your parish to you?
- How important is going to Mass to you?
- How certain are you that God really exists?

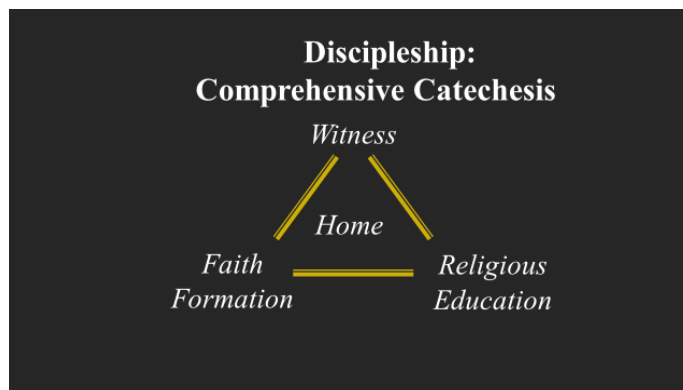
Open ended Questions:

- About being Catholic, I feel ...
- The best thing about being Catholic is ...
- My faith is most challenged when ...
- Where do you most experience the presence of God? Where do you pray best? When do you pray?
- What is the best part of belonging to our parish? What is the one thing you would change about our parish?
- Have you ever had an experience where your faith was really tested? Have you ever had an experience where your faith was really helpful to you?
- What most confuses you about faith and God? What Church teaching most confuses you?
- How is your faith different now from when you were in grade school?
- What experiences, places, or persons have really fostered your growth in faith?
- How many teenagers go to Church or are involved in Church activities? What do teenagers like about their Church? What don't teenagers like about their Church? What changes would Church have to make in order to attract teenagers? When parents were teenagers, did they go to Church? Why or why not?
- How would teenagers describe God? Where do teenagers pray best? Where do teenagers most experience God's presence? What do teenagers think about Jesus?
- When parents were teenagers, how did they describe God? When did they pray? When do they pray now? How important is faith today?

Faith Skills

- That deepen our relationship with God (how to pray, develop gratitude and wonder, use scripture, practice Sabbath ...)
- That connect young people with the faith community (participate in Mass, appreciate Tradition, practice welcome and hospitality ...)
- That enable young people to live as disciples in the world (practice forgiveness, compassion, critical reflection ...)

Comprehensive Catechesis



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***Faith Talk: Having Conversations That Matter with Youth*, Saint Mary's Press (smp.org)**