

Our enemy is apathy.

We battle against boredom every day in our classrooms.

If our students are bored in class now, they can become apathetic about their faith later on.

We need to overcome the causes of classroom boredom in order to help our students encounter Christ in class.

On Wednesday, [I shared the three main causes of boredom in my experience](#) as a religious educator:

Monotony - I taught religion just like any other teacher would teach any other subject area.

Irrelevance - I didn't try to make the content relevant to their personal lives. I was more worried about getting through the textbook.

No Autonomy - I rarely let the students use their creativity. Mostly, I was a task-master worried about getting things done.

I couldn't do what I do today if I hadn't failed so frequently in the early years.

Today, I strive to take a different approach and keep my kids engaged in class so that encountering Christ can be the priority.

Let me make something really clear: I'm not an especially charismatic teacher. I know a lot of educators who can capture the attention of their students with great presentations and personality. That just isn't me.

Instead, I have found that by sticking to a few simple strategies that work, I can make a much bigger impact on the kids I serve.

So, here are some of the things that will work well no matter how charismatic you are in class:

Strategy #1: Teach with Testimony

We are Christ's witnesses. That is our primary responsibility as religious educators.

Teaching with testimony means sharing your personal experience of the Christian faith along with the teachings you are passing on to them.

It is the difference between:

"The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord."

vs.

"There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and my life has never been the same since I embraced one of these gifts in my life. The gifts are wisdom, understanding, knowledge,

counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. **Here is how my life changed when I focused more on fortitude in my life . . ."**

You can't tell me the students won't want to hear that story. A personal story gives deeper meaning and significance to the teachings. They will be much more likely to remember the stories related to the gifts rather than the memorized list of vocabulary words.

Show how you are an imperfect example of faith. Be honest with them. You don't have to tell your life story in every class, but make sure you show how you live what they are learning.

[Read more about teaching with testimony here.](#)

Strategy #2: Add Meaning with Meditation

Stories are powerful ways to express ideas. In addition to the witness stories you share, students will be able to resonate and make personal connections to the people in stories from Scripture, the saints, and the lives of contemporary Christian servants.

They could even make personal connections with the lives of fictional characters in books like *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

From a Christian perspective, meditation is the way in which we make personal connections between our lives and the mysteries of the faith.

We can avoid irrelevance by making sure our students know how their personal lives relate to the topic we are teaching.

To use our Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit example even further, it means finding class activities that compel students to ask:

- Which gift of the Holy Spirit do I need the most?
- What gift of the Holy Spirit do I already have the most?
- What would I be able to do if God gave me the gift of _____?
- This approach also gives the students a certain level of autonomy. They get to choose which gift of the Holy Spirit connects to their personal lives rather than just memorizing abstractly what each gift means.

[Read more about the power of story in class here.](#)

Strategy #3: Create Powerful Prayer Experiences

OK, OK, I realize that prayer is already a priority for every one reading this email.

BUT . . . do you see prayer as a critical part of the learning experience?

Or, does it feel like prayer takes too much time away from learning time?

We have a great Catholic phrase in Latin: *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

In basically means:

What we pray = What we believe

Therefore, we can design prayer experiences that express in word and action what we believe in faith.

This would mean designing a prayer experience in which our students actually turn to God in prayer asking for the Holy Spirit to bestow on them certain gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Think about all the Catholic devotions that are so counter-cultural in the world today.

Or, just take the experience of silence as an example. Young people almost never get the chance to sit in silent prayer during their days!

Prayer time is not a waste of time.

Let's ask ourselves at the end of the day, "Did my students have the opportunity to encounter Christ in class today?"

If the answer is know, then adding more opportunities for prayer and meditation at the expense of more traditional learning activities and crafts is most likely the answer.

Try using [this simple format for an in-class prayer service](#) and please do everything you can to give your students the experience of Eucharistic adoration ([read more here](#)).

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