

Dear Friends

“Don’t look, mind your own business, so *kaypoh*.”

Too often we hear this familiar mantra in the course of our lives. Whether rubbernecking while driving past a road accident, or peeking over the wall to see what all the shouting is about in the house next door, a little voice in our heads never fails to chastise us that here in Singapore no one loves a busybody.

For a society that places great value on privacy, we Singaporeans are conditioned to see any kind of being meddlesome as unwelcome, even rude. There are of course many other justifications we make for staying out of one another’s way.

Sure, we recognize the unfortunate among us, but we seem to believe that these poor disoriented people would fare better without our intervention. They’ll probably figure it out on their own anyway. They’re smart. If not, the government can take care of them. And then there are some folks who are just plain weird - they act strange, look odd, talk funny, and think differently. It’s better we give them their space. Not like they are asking us for help or what.

Kaypoh allergy not only applies to strangers, but our relationships among familiar circles too. Don’t look when our friend berates his domestic worker. Don’t look at the regular bruises that cousin tries to hide. Don’t look at how hard aunty works to look after her mum all by herself. Don’t look, don’t know.

Why am I raising this issue? July is the month we celebrate Bible Sunday, and in order to interpret the Bible well the ‘be shy, don’t pry’ policy doesn’t cut it.

I’m convinced of this thesis: We can only properly implement Jesus’ biblical teaching if we are to a certain degree *kaypoh*.

Imagine what would have happened if Jesus let the Emmaus disciples walk away instead of joining up and transforming their faith? (Lk 24:17) How would the beatitudes of peacemaking and mercy (Mt 5:7-8) be practiced if we stayed clear of relationships with others? Which other story would Jesus have told if the Samaritan made an excuse to ignore the poor beat-up guy on the side of the road? (Lk 10:29-37) What would have become of our Church if the early disciples thought it better to fly solo as Christians? (Acts 2:42-47)

There is ample scriptural illustration for the fact that being concerned for one another is what being in community is about. The commandment to love God through neighbour is incompatible with keeping-to-myself. Yet we unwittingly remove the supports that enable us to understand this fundamental Gospel message, we do so by maintaining an environment that facilitates us leaving one other alone. The signs show we are becoming dangerously comfortable with isolation. Keep on long enough and we may find it no longer relevant - our favorite word is ‘practical’ - to “love your neighbour as yourself.” (Mk 12:33)

In preparation for the Year of Faith, we can appreciate that being *kaypoh* is the first step to charity. I’m not saying to be intrusive, but let’s stop wondering how our neighbours are doing, actually go over to take a good look and ask them ourselves.

Arthur

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The Pedagogy of God in Action

ACCC4 and Primary Curriculum Training



Isabel Ho

The Catechetical Office had a busy second quarter running two major training workshops back-to-back: the Primary Curriculum Training (PCT) weekend and the Archdiocesan Catechetical Coordinators' Course (ACCC4).

The fourth Archdiocesan Catechist Coordinators Course was held at the St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary in Ponggol from 28 May to 2 June, 2012. Catechetical programme and administrative coordinators for various forms of catechesis were invited to this course. Besides coordinators, parishes were encouraged to send members of their Catechetical Core Team, i.e., catechists with leadership qualities who could potentially take up leadership positions in the future. A group of sixteen coordinators and catechists from 10 parishes came together for this stay-in training retreat.

The course introduced participants to the broad

overview of catechetical theory and praxis that the Catechetical Office hopes will govern the way the catechetical ministry is run in the parishes. The participants were given the vision of catechesis as proposed by the official documents of the Magisterium. In addition, catechists spent time reflecting on their own spiritual formation and how they could better support and nurture the catechetical community in their parishes.

Many came away richer from the practical support received and the exchange of views on the challenges in their ministries. As one participant shared, the importance of the liturgy had “finally come home”. There will be a follow-up retreat for ACCC4 participants at the end of this year from 30 November to 2 December.

Catechists had an opportunity to see the catechetical theory in action at the second Primary Curriculum Training held over the



weekend of 9-10 June 2012 at the CAEC. A total of 80 catechists from 15 parishes came for the training, including 7 new parishes that had completed their parish team trainings by March 2012. 11 volunteers and the Primary Catechetical Core Team (PCCT) generously gave of their time as trainers. The PCCT members have been busy writing up and making materials for the catechetical sessions over the past one and a half years.

Catechists were introduced to the different areas of the curriculum – Scripture, Salvation History, Liturgy, Prayers & Celebrations – through lectures and the mode of training for their own parish training of catechists. Many of the catechists appreciated the format of having lectures followed by workshops as it gave them time to learn from the lectures and reflect on the different ways a session may be conducted.

They were introduced to several methods of conducting their catechetical sessions such as story-telling, time-lines, meditations and reflections, and para-liturgies. Generally, many shared similar views that the training had provided clarity to the process and methodology and a deeper appreciation that the spirituality of the catechist is an essential part of the process.

During the workshops, catechists were encouraged to go hands-on and put theory into practice. They would participate as children while the trainers demonstrated the catechetical sessions for each level. The catechists then were given actual sessions to present to one another. This



was beneficial because the catechists were able to exchange views on improving a session and reflect on their personal experiences back in the parish, particularly those who had already started on the new curriculum. Many shared that they felt more confident to use this mode of training in their own parishes since they gained much insight and practical help through the experience.



Rediscovering Friend Jesus

Daphne Leong

One important take away for me after our recent annual office retreat is this: “I cannot give what I do not have”. It seemed simple and logical enough when our retreat directress Sr. Susan Thomas posed it; how can I give to others something that I do not have? Upon deeper reflection, I realized that this is an invitation for me to honestly critique my relationship with God and with others.

In the fifteenth chapter of John’s gospel, Jesus gave us the image of the vine and branches, reminding us to abide in his love and in God’s commandments. He went on to speak about his love for us – the laying down of his life for us. He told all these because we are his friends and not his servants. This was poignant for me.

At my baptism, I said ‘yes’ to this friendship of Jesus but have I taken this friendship for granted? Have I spent enough time to discover this friend who laid down his life for me? Have I truly experienced his unconditional love such that I am able to love others according to his manner?

I realized that this friendship is not static; it is not a one-time event but an ongoing one. I may have a relationship with Christ, but if I do not invest time to deepen it the relationship remains shallow and superficial. And friends can drift apart, my friendship with Jesus can become non-existent after some time. I cannot help others to know a loving and just God if I have not experienced God as such. I can speak about God knowledgeably but I am not able to help others to experience through my words and deeds because I have not received that experience myself. I end up more like a servant doing what the master commanded but not realizing why I am doing what

I am doing. While my role as Christian was made known to me when I accepted the friendship of Christ, I did not take time to deepen that friendship to truly experience this wonderful friend Jesus.

We know that good friends can influence us positively when they tell us honestly what they think of us. And we become better when we accept the honest feedback and make the adjustments to our lives. Similarly, friendship with Christ invites me to honestly take the values of Christ and learn to make adjustments to live those values better if I want to grow to become a better person. This idea of on-going growth and deepening can only happen if I invest time and effort. If I do not, I may make the right sounds but they will be hollow to those around me because I have cut myself off from the true vine – thus I am unable to give to those around me what I do not have.

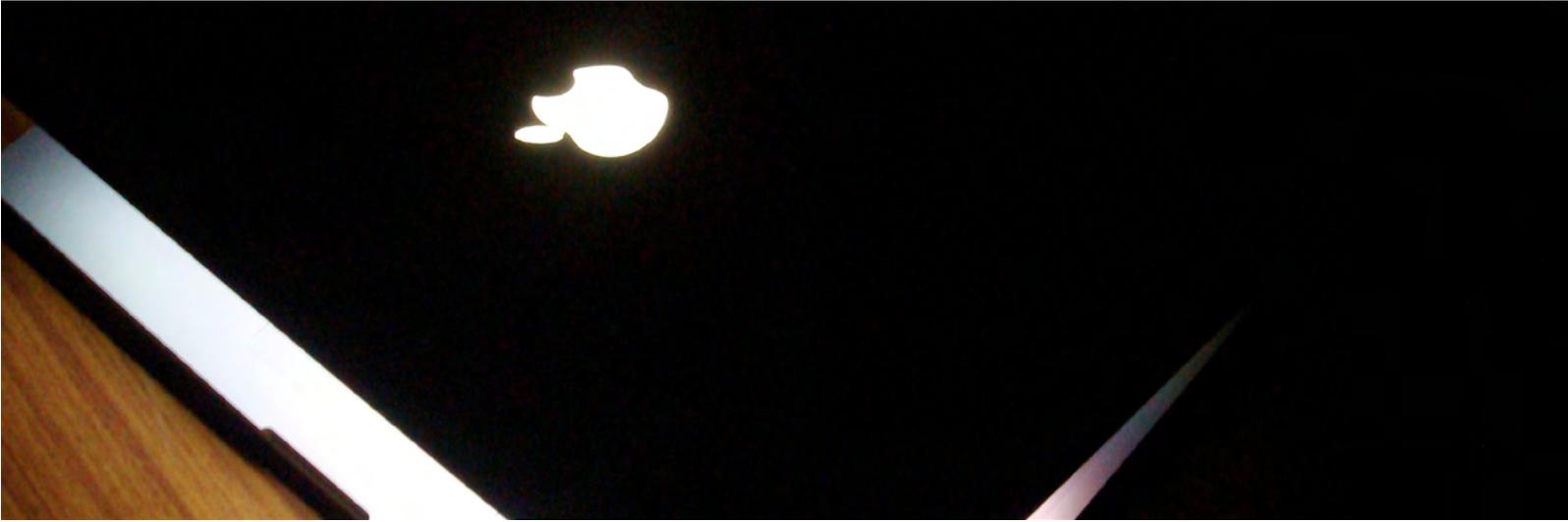
With the opening of the year of faith later this year, I would like to invite you to also take time to rediscover this God that we profess. While we may learn it through studying, more important is the need to step back and reflect so that this friendship with God becomes a part of us that others get to experience through us. An attitude of openness is also great help because I realize that God teaches and guides in ways that I sometimes least expect. Join me in this year of faith walking the journey to rediscover friend Jesus.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization has begun making preparations for the celebration of the Year of Faith which will run from 11 October 2012 to 24 November 2013.

<http://www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en.html>

Apple For You?

An analogy for accompanying someone in the RCIA process.



Amanda Yeo

For many parish RCIA teams in our diocese, July would be a time when Christian initiation journeys are in their Period of Evangelisation and Precatechumenate.

RCIA teams have various ways of handling inquirers ranging from inviting them for Gospel sharing meetings in NCCs to overview-type catechetical sessions on the Catholic faith. One thing in common that all these different sessions aim to do is share the faith of Catholics with those curious about the Catholic Church.

Ministry during this period can be likened to an Apple computer user sharing their experience of using Apple products with someone curious about them. Years ago, when my old PC laptop showed very obvious signs of crashing on me, I was highly stressed-out over what to get as a replacement when the inevitable happened. I knew that my sister did not seem to have problems with her laptop, but I had this preconceived idea that Apple laptops were only for advanced technology-inclined people like her. I decided to ask her about it anyway. My sister, a very satisfied user of a MacBook,

shared her experience with me and even asked me to try it out for myself.

All this time, she knew that I did not require a top end machine to churn out university essays and to get online, but she also knew that I indulge from time to time in some non-hardcore gaming. So she knew which version of the MacBook would suit my needs well (and in fact surpass them). But life is not a bed of roses. She also warned me - albeit briefly - that I may face issues with certain PC programs that I had and would need to install them only on the Windows partition. When the time came for me to make the purchase, a MacBook is what I got. Basically, her 'evangelisation' - sharing her experience of the MacBook - was a kind of 'good news.' Despite the inconveniences I knew I would inevitably face, the positives seemed to outweigh the negatives and I was converted.

I think the following chart shows a parallel between my experience of getting a Macbook and the precatechumenate:

INQUIRER

Seeking a new faith

Various Motivations

Wants to know what is good about the Catholic faith (especially if they have a positive personal encounter with a Catholic)

“What does the Catholic faith offer me?”

RCIA TEAM MEMBER

Shares own faith experience

Has the disposition of a joyful Catholic disciple

Helps dispel erroneous preconceptions of the Catholic faith

Helps ease fears of journeying on a new way of life

AMANDA

Seeking a new laptop

Motivated by impending laptop crash

Wants to know what is good about a Macbook (especially since I had a positive personal encounter with a Macbook user)

“What does a Macbook offer me?”

AMANDA’S SISTER

Shares own experience of using a Macbook

Has the disposition of a joyful Macbook user

Helps dispel erroneous preconceptions of Apple products

Helps ease fears of transiting to a new computer platform

I suppose it was easier for my sister to evangelise me since she knew my needs and how I tend to respond. For Christian Initiation team members for whom the inquirers are quite possibly strangers, it would be challenging but necessary to know their needs: what they are seeking or what their motivations are. Indeed, sometimes the inquirers themselves might not even be fully conscious of their intentions. So even before sharing our faith stories with inquirers, it might be more appropriate to get to know them a little as persons first; find out why they are in your parish and what they are seeking. In terms of our analogy, are they just curious about Apple products or do they think that an Apple product may make their life simpler? Is there a satisfied Apple product user present to affirm what they think before making the purchase?

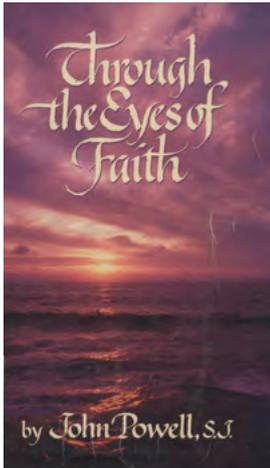
The end of this period of inquiry is marked with the Rite of Acceptance which I see as parallel to my decision in making the purchase of a MacBook. Now as a catechumen, one actually has to try out the new operating system which I quickly found out was different to what I was used to. The one thing my sister did not mention to me was the fact that to close programs on a mac, the red button was on the top-left instead of the familiar “x” on the top-right for my old PC. This caused undue decrease in productivity initially. Furthermore, I had been using the MacBook for some time before I needed to use the CD drive and I could not find it! Pushing the eject key on the keyboard, no tray emerged for me to place my disc in. This was quite easily resolved when I asked my

sister and she told me that the slot on the side of the MacBook was the disc slot and all I had to do was insert the CD there. So there she was being my companion along my journey of discovering the world of Apple, like sponsors accompanying catechumens on their journey of faith.

Clearly she did not know everything there was to know about Apple products, but when it came to MacBooks, what she knew from her experience was enough for her to be able to guide me along. She was in no way an expert and did not know the technicalities of how the disc slot worked, or what would happen if a disc got stuck inside the machine. But that was alright because there are people at the Apple Genius center who know all that stuff. Similarly, sponsors are not expected to be catechists, theologians or canon lawyers; the Church arranges for other people who will take care of catechumens’ more specific needs. What is helpful is that sponsors know where to direct catechumens to find these specialists if needed.

This is where the analogy ends and it would be a stretch to try and liken the conversion to Apple products to Christian conversion. With Christian conversion it is God’s initiative which we respond to, rather than an extremely persuasive friend or salesperson.

Editor’s note: SPI does not endorse Apple products and has no connection with Apple Inc. They make nice stuff though.



Title: Through the Eyes of Faith
Author: John Powell, SJ
Publisher: Tabor Publishing, 1992
Pages: 155

Mary Lim

This book is a collection of articles published in “Extension” magazine from 1985 to 1991. Some of the materials, stories and illustrations have been published in one or another of Fr Powell’s thirteen earlier books.

The essays cover many topics: faith and the virtues, attitudes and the BE-attitudes, Church, worries, memories, habits, forgiveness etc. These short essays are easy to read, understand and relate to. Fr. Powell suggests practical ways through which we can develop in our personal and spiritual growths, and hence, improve our lives.

Faith is the God-connection, based on the Word of God. The power of believe is a gift of God. This gift is to be used. The more we use it, the more it grows. God wants us to love everyone, even those who are not very lovable. Our efforts to be loving persons should be motivated by faith. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord, our God, with everything we’ve got. When we set our lives on this course, then the way is cleared for God to enter our lives and use us as his instruments.

Questions such as ”What must a person do or be in order to be open to the experience of God?” “What are the dispositions needed for religious experience?” are examined. This creates an awareness that we have to prepare ourselves for God to enter our lives. Fr. Powell shares with us how God speaks to us – through the mind, will, imagination, emotions and memory in his essay, “Learning to Converse with God”. This is particularly useful for some of us, laypersons, who

need to be directed to recognize these moments.

“Finding the Will of God” requires one to cultivate a ‘listening’ heart. In the writer’s view, one’s desire to find and do God’s will should be because his will is one’s only chance to be truly and lastingly happy. As Christians in search of growth, we review our way of living, our values, and our actions to make sure they reflect our faith. Fr Powell suggests we take each week of Lent to work on the six life practices to improve and renew our lives. First: “Be a friend to yourself instead of a critic.” Second: “Be an owner and not a blamer.” Third: “Be a sharer not a keeper.” Fourth: “Be a forgiver and not a grudge bearer.” Fifth: “Enjoy life; don’t just endure it.” And, sixth: “Make prayer a central part of your life.” Of course we can begin the process at any time but Lent time seems like a good time to begin.

Perhaps life seems hard for some of us. Fr Powell suggests three benefits that suffering confers on us. Firstly, if we work at developing the right attitude, suffering always deepens our trust in God. Secondly, suffering is a signal that there is something wrong with our lives. And, finally, suffering gives us a sense of who we are and what life is all about. The dark and difficult days in our lives remind us that we must surrender to total trust in God. We may not be enjoying the journey to God’s house, as God wants us to, if we try to do or be what’s unrealistic.

Our attitudes are the control centers of our lives. All change, growth and conversions must begin in our attitudes. If there is a change in attitude, it will affect all aspects of our lives, our emotions, health, relationships, use of talent. If there is no change in attitude, there is no real change at all. Living the BE-attitudes is to imitate Christ, taking his mind, his way of seeing things, his attitudes, and making them our own. This involves a study of the Gospels, reading about the life and mind of Jesus, a life of prayer, a running conversation with the Lord of life through all the days and cycles of life.

Readers are guided through the Christian attitude towards self, others, life, God and the World. We are also reminded of Christian values to uphold as an individual, member of a family and the Church. Forgiveness, gratitude, peace, being gifts of love for one another – these can be practised through Good Friday and Christmas, seasons in the Church’s calendar.

“The signs of God’s love are all around us, but only the eyes of faith find them.”

This book is available for borrowing at the Pastoral Institute Library, call number 248.4 POW.



The Pastoral Institute was established in 1978 to assist the Archbishop in providing faith formation for the Catholic Archdiocese in Singapore. Today, the Institute continues to carry out this responsibility in the catechetical, biblical, and pastoral aspects of Christian ministry. In addition, the Institute looks to the preparation of those who serve the Church in various ministerial capacities, and identifies emerging issues that have pastoral import on the life of the local Church.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

Fr. Ambrose Vaz introduces participants to basic bible-reading skills. Essential for every Catholic, especially those who seek a better grasp of the Christian scriptures.

Tuesdays, 3 & 10 July, CAEC, 2 Highland Road.

9:30am to 11:30am, or 7:45pm to 9:45pm.

Contribution: \$20.00. Contact [Melinda Reyes](#) for registration details.

GOD'S COVENANTAL LOVE THROUGH THE AGES

Join Fr Aloysius Ong to explore God's offer of salvation through the covenants. Recommended for RCIA neophytes.

20 Wednesdays, 4, 18, 25 July, 1, 8, 22, 29 Aug, 5, 12, 19, 26 Sep, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Oct, 7, 14, 21, 28 Nov. 7:45pm to 9:45pm, CAEC 2 Highland Road. Registration \$105. Contact [Melinda Reyes](#) for registration details.

BASIC CATECHISTS COURSE- SCRIPTURE LEVEL I

4 Fridays, 6 to 27 July, CAEC. 7:00pm to 10:00pm. Contribution: \$60.00. Contact [Sylvia Stewart](#) for registration details.

PRIEST & LAITY - AN INTERRELATIONSHIP FOR LIFE

Renowned theologian Fr. Timothy Radcliffe will speak on the roles of the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood of the baptized.

Sunday, 8 July, St. Mary of the Angels, St. Clare Hall, 3:00pm-5:00pm. Registration required. Free. Contact [Melinda Reyes](#) for registration details.

PERSONAL COMPASS: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Fr. David Garcia continues to unfold for participants the Catholic moral tradition.

6 Thursdays, 12, 19, 26 July, 2, 16, 23 Aug. CAEC, 7:30pm to 9:30pm. Contribution: \$80.00. Contact [Janice Ng](#) for registration details.