

Grace Notes in Miniature

For Friday, May 15, 2020

Dear friends:

One of the experiences I miss right now is walking into a local bakery and just being able to enjoy the smell of bread baking – or even the aroma of yeast rising in a bowl. Bread making is hard work, which is why so many of our grandparents who made their own bread and things like pizza dough had such well-developed upper body strength. One starts with leaven such as yeast which has to be fed, often with sugar, and left to develop; only when it is ready, do we add the other ingredients to make our bread. It may need to be left to “rest” and then kneaded firmly;



the dough at this point is quite firm and takes a fair amount of work, energy and strength. This process may have to be repeated more than once – the dough punched down and let rise again – before it is baked or fired. You may enjoy white bread with a crisp crust, whole wheat bread, sourdough, soda bread, baguettes, challah, pita, Turkish pide, naan, cornbread,

or any of a number of delicious offerings which we would recognise under the umbrella of bread, as some form of dough is usually a staple in the diet. You can enjoy warm bread as it comes out of the oven or add a complementary topping. We tend to think of cinnamon buns, for instance, as being incomplete without icing or cream cheese.

In many ways, breadmaking is a wonderful allegory for Catholic education: the leaven with which we start is our faith which needs sweetness to develop. Jewish children used to be given apples and honey when they first started studying the Torah – even a drop of honey on the slate from which they were learning to read the Hebrew letters – to help them understand that the study of their relationship with God is sweet. And we are what we eat: we are the Body of Christ, who comes



to us in bread. If we ever get to the point where we are trying to make the bread without the leaven of faith, and sugar-coat it with a dusting of icing on top of a stodgy cake, we shall have given up on our vocation. And remember, if children learn faith from teachers, it is because they are witnesses.....





The Papal document, *Catechesi Tradendae*, (*Catechesis in our Time*) published as an Apostolic Exhortation by Pope St John Paul II in 1979, is a document which should be read by every Catholic parent and educator. It is as relevant today as it was forty years ago. It stresses the responsibility of parents as “Family catechesis... precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis.” And then encourages us as educators in Catholic schools to assist parents in that responsibility. It's not a long document to read but has much food for thought and used to be required reading for all education graduates aspiring to be Catholic teachers. You can read it at:

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html

As a Religious Education Consultant in the 1990's, I remember seeing the Kindergarten Religious Education Programme, “In God's Image” and being very excited because it was set up to be a comprehensive educational approach with every other subject arising out of the catechetical foundation. It is unfortunate that so often the demands of the so-called “hard subjects” take precedence over the life lessons of our faith. But even the heavy weight of curriculum need not ever prevent us from starting every lesson with prayer – not just a rote prayer rattled off, but a sincere prayer of the heart. Christian Meditation has been a very hopeful support to the leaven in our classrooms; we must be careful to never let the sharing of our faith be reduced to an afterthought, to the ‘icing’ on the cake after the ‘real stuff’ is done.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgoIWAyC3iw>

Renewing the Promise reminds us that we are called to accompany the children in our schools in such a way that everyone has an authentic encounter with Christ. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, we may be the only Jesus our children encounter. There are many short monographs which make for good reflective reading which accompany the foundational document.

<https://iceont.ca/renewing-the-promise/>

I was taught as a child: “act in haste, repent at leisure”, and realised after I sent out yesterday's edition that I had inadvertently sent the wrong link for one of the two samples of Gabriel's Oboe; the one I intended was this one by the 2CELLOS Luka Sulic and Stjepan Hauser: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dxxg6NenmBQ>. My apologies! I hope you enjoy this one.

Wishing you a wonderful long weekend!

Gillian



Renewing The Promise
A Pastoral Letter
for Catholic Education