



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#79 - July 2017

Quotes Worth Thinking About: Insights that spark some reflections on adult faith formation

This issue provides some reflection for our summertime days. Looking at various thoughts and insights from current books and periodicals, we wonder: does this quotation have something to say about the ministry of adult faith formation today?

These quotes – from numerous sources – are grouped into three categories: Looking at Ourselves; Looking at our Community; and Looking at the World. In many ways, these three categories are related to the three goals of adult faith formation found in *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us*:

- 1) Invite and Enable Ongoing Conversion to Jesus in Holiness of Life (#68)
- 2) Promote and Support Active Membership in the Christian Community (#70)
- 3) Call and Prepare Adults to Act as Disciples in Mission to the World (#72)

Take time to ponder, to share ideas with your colleagues, to incorporate new practices into your adult faith formation efforts. Enjoy.

Looking at Ourselves



Creativity: a Path to our Spirituality

“Creativity takes courage—courage to explore one's deepest self and to let in the depths of the world's struggles and joys, torments and agony.... Artists need encouragement, the building up of courage that community can lend us. The artist in each of us needs and deserves attention in order to build up the heart.”

- *Creativity* by Matthew Fox (Tarcher, 2004)

A GEMS Suggestion: There are probably many parishioners who use their creativity in their spiritual journey: poetry, painting, photography, sculpture, drawing, etc. Hold a Parish Faith Fair. Invite parishioners to exhibit their own creative endeavors which illustrate faith, relationship with God and God's family, spirituality.



A Positive Approach

“Across the board, we seem wired to focus on the negative. A group of psychologists reviewed over two hundred articles and concluded that, for a wide range of human behavior and perception, a general principle holds true: “bad is stronger than good.”

Exhibit A: people who were shown photos of bad and good events spent longer viewing the bad ones.

Exhibit B: when people learn bad stuff about someone else, it's stickier than good stuff. People pay closer attention to the bad stuff, reflect on it more, remember it longer, and weigh it more heavily in assessing the person overall.

Exhibit C: A researcher reviewed seventeen studies about how people interpret and explain events in their lives. People were more likely to spontaneously bring up (and attempt to explain) negative events than positive ones?”

- *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* by Chip Heath & Dan Heath. (Thorndike Press, 2010)

A GEMS Wondering

It would seem that our Catholic Christian tradition calls us to the opposite: we are graced people made in the image and likeness of God. Are there ways we can assist people in recognizing the positive in themselves, others, the world (while, at the same time, working toward the eradication of the failings, the sinfulness)?

Looking at our Community



The Search of Millennials

“Millennials aren’t looking for a hipper Christianity. We’re looking for a truer Christianity, a more authentic Christianity. Like every generation before ours and every generation after, we’re looking for Jesus - the same Jesus who can be found in the strange places he’s always been found: in bread, in wine, in baptism, in the Word, in suffering, in community, and among the least of these.”

- *Searching for Sunday* by Rachel Held Evans
(Nelson Books, 2015)

GEMS Wonderings

- As we plan for adult faith formation, are we listening and really hearing what millennials are saying?
- What kinds of opportunities do we create for listening?
- What topics and experiences in adult faith formation would explore an authentic Christianity?



Our Connection to One Another

“A tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate. ...

Tribes need leadership. Sometimes one person leads, sometimes more. People want connection and growth and something new. They want change. ...

Human beings can’t help it: we need to belong. One of the most powerful of our survival mechanisms is to be part of a tribe, to contribute to (and take from) a group of like-minded people. We are drawn to leaders and their ideas, and we can’t resist the rush of belonging and the thrill of the new. ...

We want to belong not to just one tribe, it turns out, but to many. And if you give us tools and make it easy, we’ll keep joining. Tribes make our lives better. And leading a tribe is the best life of all.

- *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us* by Seth Godin
(Penguin Group, 2008)

A GEMS Suggestion: To continue exploring our relationships with one another, you might want to review the GEMS issues on hospitality found under Best Practices at www.janetschaeffler.com.

GEMS Wonderings

- What tools does our parish and/or (arch)diocese offer for people to connect to one another?
- How does our parish, our adult faith formation opportunities help people to develop their skills for leadership within the parish, their workplace, the community?



Looking at our World

Respectful Conversations

“The world right now needs the most vivid, transformative universe of words that you and I can muster. And we can begin immediately to start having the conversations we want to be hearing, and telling the story of our time anew.”

“...the discussion about a large meaty, theological subject began by framing it as a question, and then asking everyone around the table to begin to answer that question through the story of their lives: Who is God? What is prayer? How to approach the problem of evil? What is the content of Christian hope? I can disagree with your opinion, it turns out, but I can’t disagree with your experience. And once I have a sense of your experience, you and I are in relationship, acknowledging the complexity in each other’s position, listening less guardedly. The difference in our opinions will probably remain intact, but it no longer defines what is possible between us.”

- *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living* by Krista Tippett (Penguin Press, 2016)

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

GEMS Wonderings

- How do we provide a safe atmosphere for a conversation which involves different opinions?
- What skills are needed for facilitators to guide respectful conversations?
- What kinds of questions are helpful to initiate conversations? (You might want to use <https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/critical-thinking-skills-cheatsheet-infographic>.)



Relationships

“...the tribe is no longer the local community but the global community, which can be accessed immediately via television, internet, satellite communication and travel... No longer is the human person content with the subjective, reflective critical awareness of the first axial period. Now one is in need of relatedness.”

- *Christ in Evolution* by Ilija Delio (Orbis Press, 2008)

GEMS Wonderings

- Is our parish bulletin just about our parish or does it provide information/formation about issues and concerns beyond ourselves?
- Do the General Intercessions at liturgy reflect the global community and its needs?
- Are our adult faith formation opportunities just about ourselves, our needs, our spirituality or does formation link us to the issues of the world?



Golden Nuggets from You

“Another great edition (**GEMS** #58) filled with great ideas. Rob Moss is good! Thanks!”

- *Cris Villapando, Director of Faith Formation Programs,
Diocese of Charlotte, North Carolina*

“Thanks for this issue, Janet (**GEMS** #60). Very interesting. I like that you reproduced the flyer they used for week 1. Very attractive. I also think that the push from the pastor and the bishop are key elements. Thanks for sharing.”

- *Mary Lemire-Campion, Pastoral Associate,
St. John Chrysostom Parish, West Roxbury, MA*

“I love the recent **GEMS** (#64-66)! There is so little out there for grandparents and many times they are the ones behind the children who show up for sacraments or even taking on the responsibilities for the faith formation of their grandchildren. They are a great resource and support for overly busy parents. I am hoping to link it to our Family Faith formation web page if you approve.”

- *Cathy Marbury, Associate Director of Religious Education
Archdiocese of Atlanta, GA*



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived
at www.janetschaeffler.com.

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>