

The Bishop's Learning Series: Evangelism as Storytelling

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If you are interested, please contact Anita Lisk alisk@thediocese.net. Classes will begin in early May. All classes will be virtual. There will be a clergy class and a laity class.

We are our story. Stories are how we make meaning. When people asked Jesus complex questions, he answered with stories. The writer John Shea says, “We turn our pain into narrative so we can bear it. We turn our ecstasy into narrative so we can prolong it. We tell our stories to live.” Let’s remember that at the center of our worship is the reenactment of a story. “On the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread and broke it.” We tell that story in order to enter into The Story of the mystery of faith.

What has happened in our country is that our common stories are too small and too tribal. Richard Rohr says that to have a coherent universe, we must connect three domes of meaning: My Story, Our Story, The Story. My individual story is connected to a community story is connected to the never-ending pattern story of birth/death/resurrection. Our task as Christians is to make that connection explicit, by sharing our stories.

In addition, sharing stories is a way to heal the divisions in our country as well as deepen our sense of the Church as community. When we speak our truth to one another, not only can we discover or rediscover our connection, but we rediscover the connection with the source of all stories.

To that end, evangelism is about storytelling. We are commissioned to go and tell the good news which is different from selling the product of our parish. The good news is the story of what God has done, is doing, and has promised to do in us and with us and through us.

This class will focus on sharing our stories with one another in a safe container. Each session will have a particular theme: such as Wonder, Repentance, Waiting, Surrender, Longing, Home, Exile, Calling, Conversion. I will present the theological dimension of the theme and offer an example story from my own life. Then we will break into two’s or three’s and share a story from our own lives around that theme. Participants will know ahead of time what the theme is. We will close with a plenary. At the end of the course, I will also suggest how this method might be incorporated into a parish’s life in ways that draw people into a similar activity and offer examples of parishes who have implemented such practices. At the least, our faith will be deepened as well as capacity to spread the Good News. My firm belief is that if parishes are alive in their faith and their connection to God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, they will grow. Energy and depth draw people.