



UNPACKING YOUR S.T.O.R.Y. OF FAITH

“Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.”

Pope Francis (Evangelii Gaudium)

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

Pope Paul VI (Evangelii Nuntiandi)

“The witness of Christians, whose lives are filled with the hope of Christ, opens the hearts and minds of those around them to Christ.”

USCCB, Disciples Called to Witness

“Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

Pope Benedict XVI

You are having coffee with a non-practicing or unbelieving friend whom you have known for years. Your friend has been going through a tough time and is beginning to wrestle with spiritual questions. Your friend says:

I admire your life, and your deep faith. There's just something about you — a peace and a joy. I want what you have. How did you get that way?

What do you say?

There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very testimony of their Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have the power to draw men to belief and to God; for the Lord says, "Even so let your light shine before men in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life. "For the charity of Christ impels us" (2 Cor. 5:14). The words of the Apostle should echo in all hearts, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 6

S.T.O.R.Y.

SHARING
TRIAL
OPENNESS
REDEMPTION & RENEWAL
YOUR YES

SHARING

God loves me unconditionally and has created me for relationship with Him.

List three reasons why you love Jesus:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Name two moments from your life where you clearly felt God's love for you.

- 1.
- 2.

Which of these moments do you think others would relate to most? Why?

TRIAL

I have broken my relationship with God by my sin.

Focusing on the “trial” aspect of your story, what pattern of sin did you fall into during your time of trial?

Describe a time when you had an ache or hurt you wanted to be free of — a pain in your heart you couldn’t overcome on your own.

What was something you had to let go of in order to be truly happy?

OPENNESS

Jesus restores my relationship with God through his life, death, and resurrection.

At some point during your experience, darkness turned to light and you began to be more open to and accepting of the healing power of God's love in your life.

Identify the turning point in your story. What happened?

When did you realize that Christ could take your pain or hurt from you?

What quote or story from Scripture most exemplifies or speaks to your experience?

REDEMPTION & RENEWAL

Jesus invites me to trust him, to turn from sin and to give my life to Him.

During every time in our lives, whether it be good or bad, there comes a time when we have been redeemed and renewed. Identify the moment when you finally felt at peace about your experience/trial. How did this peace come?

What did handing your pain, suffering, hurt over to Christ look like for you?

What obstacles did you have to handing your life over to Him? What hopes did you have?

In what areas of your life have you seen healing, growth, and resurrection since you decided to follow Jesus?

YOUR YES

Jesus has poured the Holy Spirit into my heart to bring me to new life in His Church and to send that Church on mission so others can experience that new life.

Who or what helped you become more open to Christ?

How has the life of the Church (celebration of the sacraments, saint stories, devotions, specific people from your parish community) been present in your story?

What gifts has the Holy Spirit given you to share with others?

Where have you seen other people experience new life through your thoughts and actions?

In what ways do you have a sense that the Holy Spirit is calling you to share your story and share in the Church's mission?

CALL TO ACTION

When you share your story, be sure to end with a specific call to action--an intentional invitation for the listener to consider following Christ or to take the next step in his/her relationship with Christ. Too often, we bring people to the decision point, but never explicitly ask the question--denying them the opportunity to make that choice for Christ. These invitations don't need to be sweeping rhetorical flourishes. Simply asking "would you like to experience more of this Jesus" or "would you like to come to know Him?" are direct and powerful ways to offer someone the gift of Christ.

Adapted from *The Catechist's Backpack: Spiritual Essentials for the Journey*
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PROCESSING YOUR S.T.O.R.Y. EXPERIENCE

Please take a few moments to reflect on your experience of walking the Unpacking Your S.T.O.R.Y. guide. When you're finished, please drop just this last page in the basket at the registration table.

In general, what was your experience like going through this reflection?

Where there any sections (or questions) of this process that were more difficult to answer than others? What were they?

Are there more questions or concerns you have that this reflection has revealed?

If you would like someone to follow up with you regarding your questions or concerns, please provide your name and the best way to contact you.