



“Enabling others to learn information and skills that help them reach their full spiritual and personal potential”

Teaching Story

By way of background to this testimony, I was a primary school teacher for 25 years. I have to admit that latterly I did not really enjoy the job I was paid to do. I do not think at the time I was a particularly good teacher. I never felt energised by doing it and I often felt discouraged by the expectations others had of me. It was effectively a job to keep a roof over my head! I did however really enjoy the opportunity I had to teach RE with my pupils. It was at these lessons I felt most energised and at ease. I was teaching from the heart and not from a text book! I was not being forced to reach targets and deadlines. Sometimes I was asked to cover RE lessons in other classes since class teachers did not feel confident teaching RE in a Catholic school. They seemed to recognise that I enjoyed doing this for them. Some of the parents frequently commented that their children enjoyed the lessons and were keen to pass on what they had learnt.

I also became a catechist in my home parish for children not attending Catholic School. It was at this time that I began to enjoy teaching young children outside of the school environment. A few years later I was asked to lead the RCIA group in our parish - a daunting task since I had only ever taught children before. But much to my surprise I really enjoyed the task and discovered that I was getting really good feedback from participants. This was also at a time when my own personal faith was growing more deeply. I think I had started to become an intentional disciple!

I eventually discerned that I wanted to become a Dominican sister, somewhat late in life at the age of 45. It was after I became a sister that I really discerned that

teaching was my charism. I became engaged in catechetical work in local parishes with children, preparing them for First Communion. I felt really happy doing this - looking forward to being with the children each week and helping the parents to grow in the own faith by providing sessions for them as well.

After I made my final profession in 2005 I came to realise that I was much happier and became more alive when I was working with adults, especially on our days of reflection which the sisters held from time to time. I received some very encouraging feedback from participants afterwards, saying how they liked my style of teaching - and that for a Dominican I was easy to understand!! I was often asked back into parishes on a regular basis (Somehow Dominicans have a reputation of being academics. I was certainly not an academic!!) I just loved my faith and wanted to share the joy it brought to me with others.

I definitely had a sense of coming alive and felt empowered by the Holy Spirit to move away from my prepared talk and share in a way that I can only describe as being “not me”. I considered myself to be a somewhat shy and quiet person. But once I was in a teaching environment as a sister I seemed to thrive and was almost bouncing with joy (as several people have commented to me!) It was as if the inner person was coming out to play.

I have really enjoyed using my charism for the Called and Gifted team and have had very positive and encouraging feedback from participants and my fellow team members. An interesting thing that I have discovered is that however tired or however much I feel I am lacking zeal to get myself to a teaching weekend, I discover that as soon as I start teaching I feel rejuvenated and ready to fire on all four pistons! I may be completely zonked out afterwards but feel a great sense of joy to have been a part of the teaching team.

Recently, after a Called and Gifted Workshop, I received a personal invitation from the Parish priest to come back to the parish to lead a day of reflection during advent. I received much encouragement from the participants and really felt that they had received something from my input during the day.

I am also working with the Formation for Mission teaching team in the diocese helping to form adults. This has involved me becoming an associate member of staff at the Maryvale Institute - a far cry from unwillingly teaching primary school children. The Further Education Director at Maryvale has encouraged me and has



constantly commented on my teaching ability, saying that I have an ability to put things over in a way that people remember and respond to.

I now work in schools again, but in a different capacity to a teacher. I work with children age 6-11 in an afterschool club where we help them to grow in their faith. I am ever amazed at the response from these children. We started off with about 15 children and now , several years later, we have 43 registered in our club. Each week we unpack the Sunday Gospel together and, even though I have no lesson plan prepared, it just seems to happen. The parents have told me how the children are now passing on what they have learned at the club and using it within their own family.

I have questioned myself as to what has changed, especially in the last two years, and I realised I have become more conscious of teaching out of a charism rather than in my own strength; more and more I know that my teaching comes through the power of the Holy Spirit.



CALLED
&**GIFTED**

Teaching Charism