

Adolescent Confirmation: A Shared Christian Praxis Approach

“We must ever tell the *Christian Story* and propose its *Vision* in such a way (young) people are likely to personally recognize its great truths and wisdom and take it to heart with personal conviction.”

A Shared Christian Praxis
Thomas H. Groome

Catechetical education must enable people to integrate life and faith into *lived* faith—this is the foundational conviction echoed throughout the *General Directory for Catechesis* and the guiding principle of the sacramental preparation for adolescent Confirmation described throughout this *Source Book*. Indeed, the Parish Model presented here supports the belief that parish ministers and religious educators should present the Catholic faith in a way which is relevant to and affirms the individual faith experiences of young people leading them to make a personal commitment to know and follow Jesus by serving others.

One methodology for doing this is Thomas H. Groome’s *Shared Christian Praxis Approach*—five movements designed to encourage young people to personalize their Catholic faith by integrating past experiences with Church teachings and traditions and put their faith into action. Groome condenses this down to: “**bringing life to faith and faith to life.**” The term “life” here is synonymous with the term “praxis” and “faith” with the “Christian Story and Vision”—all that has been handed down through Scripture and Tradition. The Word “shared” calls for real integration so that the Catholic faith people profess, by God’s grace, becomes the core commitment of their lives, the identity by which they live (*For A Shared Christian Praxis Approach*, Groome, 2006).

The hope is young people will integrate their lives and their faith so they live by their own willed commitment rather than depending on an authority figure telling them what to do. This, too, is what we are hoping to instill in our young disciples as they prepare for Confirmation; we want them—as Groome says: to know well the convictions of their Christian faith, form them in their Catholic identity and dispose them to live the values

and virtues that constitute Catholic morality and ethics. In a nutshell? **We want them to know what is expected of them as Catholics.** *A Shared Christian Praxis Approach* encourages young people, within a Christian community, to come to see for themselves the wisdom and truth of the Catholic faith and to embrace it with personal conviction so as to “make the faith their own” and “choose to live it daily,” (*For A Shared Christian Praxis Approach*, Groome, 2006).

GROOME’S A SHARED CHRISTIAN PRAXIS APPROACH: FIVE MOVEMENTS

First Movement: Present Action—young people express their knowledge and awareness regarding the topic of study. The role of the educator is to elicit the awareness of a religious concept (i.e., prayer, sin, etc.) a young person already possesses without judgment. The question being posed is: What is your understanding of this concept?

Second Movement: Stories and Visions—young people articulate their stories and visions concerning the concept being presented. Each is invited to share the genesis of their insights and faith experiences (i.e., teachings from home, school, television, worship, etc.) and how they have internalized what they have heard and witnessed. The question being posed is: How do you know what you know?

Third Movement: Catholic Tradition—young people learn about the Catholic Church’s teachings and traditions concerning the concept being presented. The intention: To share what Catholic tradition professes about the topic.

Fourth Movement: Creating a New Story and Vision—young people integrate their previous awareness with the teachings of the Church—noting similarities and differences—to formulate and articulate a new understanding. The intention: to help young people express and understand the concept in their own terms.

Fifth Movement: Living the Story and Vision—young people apply their new knowledge through service to others. The goal is a faith response which prompts them to take what has been learned and apply it—to act—to promote the Kingdom of God. The intention: to help them move from “I should” to “I will.”

* For a more thorough presentation, see *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* by Thomas H. Groome, Jossey-Bass publishers, 1999.