



iFollow Session 2: Our Stories of Faith



Song – Mō Maria

Upon his arrival to Aotearoa in 1837, Bishop Pompallier quickly recognised the importance of word and song (korero and waiata) for the Maori people, for whom an oral tradition is a major aspect of culture.

He learnt Te Reo Maori within months, and soon was able to compose lyrics to a himene to Mary, set to the tune of a hymn that he already knew. By doing this, he was able to make the Catholic faith accessible to people in a way that they were familiar with.

Mō Maria aianeī
o tatou waiata
Kia kaha rā tātou
kia nui te aroha

*For Mary now
our songs.
Let us be strong,
let there be great love.*

Tēnā hoki ngā ahere
e whakahonore ana
ki te ratou rehina
ki a Maria anō rā.

*There also the angels
giving honour
to their queen
to Mary.*

Aroha ki te Atua
aroha ki a Maria
i te rangi
i te whenua
āke tonu, āke tonu. Amene.

*Love God,
love Mary
in heaven
and on earth
forever and ever.*

Scripture – John 1:14

‘The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory...’

Quote

‘In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one’s personal experience of faith?’

#46 in Evangelii Nuntiandi, Pope Paul VI, 1975

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the people who have been part of our faith journey,

Those who have helped form us into who we are, shaped our thoughts and our attitudes, challenged us, affirmed us, loved us, and who have taught us about you.

May their example inspire us to be that person to others, so that we may spread your Good News to everyone we meet.

Amen.

Activity

The oral tradition is important in many cultures around the world, as a way of passing on customs, stories and important lessons from the past. Right from the beginning, the stories of Jesus were passed on through word of mouth. Find ways to tell and celebrate the stories of your faith. You can do this within your group or widen it out to the community.

Within your group, invite people to reflect on a person or situation they associate with the development of their faith. Who/when was it? What can they remember? Why was the person/situation so important to their faith story? How did it affect their faith? They can draw or write notes about this, then share their stories in small groups. Highlight any common themes or threads, and ask what these stories tell us about how our faith grows, and what this means for us as messengers of the faith to others.

To widen out the activity, host an event in your group/community bringing people together to share the stories of their faith. Get everyone to reflect and share with a person near to them, and invite a few people to present in particular – think about selecting people from different cultural groups, of different ages, and different stages in life who will be able to share a range of stories.

Use this event as a chance for your youth group to mix with and learn from others in your parish/community, and vice versa. You could use song, or dance, or other creative arts if you wanted.

Think about: providing refreshments; decorating your venue; taking photos or video so that you can share the stories more widely, or save them for posterity; plan the event to tie in to a relevant anniversary or feast day.

Tool | Storytelling

Stories aren't just for children, and they're not just for fun, either. Stories have a way of telling the truth that can be much more effective than stating that truth directly. Stories grasp our attention, entertain us, engage with our emotions, and help us to remember. Jesus was a master storyteller, and used stories to help explain his teaching in a way that was relevant and that people could understand. He spoke in Aramaic, the language of the streets, and used words and situations that people were familiar with.

When you listen to a good storyteller, they make it seem effortless and simple. There is actually a real art to telling a story, and it requires some preparation and forethought. Make it easy for yourself and use some of these tips and ideas to help you prepare and present your story.

- Writing down your story, even in bullet point format, can help you to work out what to say, and remember what order it goes in. Try to avoid memorising or reading directly from it though; your story will be much more engaging if it appears natural and spontaneous rather than fixed to specific words or pieces of paper. A poor storyteller can ruin the best of stories, so make sure that you're confident to tell your story with passion and confidence.
- Use visual aids such as images only if you need them. Try to find ways to engage your audience using your tone, speed, volume and body language.
- Practice your story out loud. Try telling it to an imaginary audience, and time yourself if you know that you will only have a certain amount of time in which to tell it. This will help you refine how you communicate the key point, and cut out any rambling.

Components of a good story:

Stories always have a beginning, middle and an end. Make sure that you are clear how your story starts, where it goes, and how it gets there

- The story should have an emotional component that should draw people in, so that they don't get bored or feel disconnected. Can you link your story to a common experience, so that everyone is able to empathise?
- The audience should be able to picture the characters – what do they look like, what are they doing, how do they feel?
- Be clear what the point is. Try to make one point well rather than covering lots of points. Is the point obvious to your audience?
- What is it that you want your audience to remember or think about as a result of listening? Is there a question that you want to leave them with, or something that you want them to do?