

Timone A. Davis. *Intergenerational Catechesis: Revitalizing Faith Through African-American Storytelling*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021. 101 pages. \$63.35.

In *Intergenerational Catechesis: Revitalizing Faith Through African-American Storytelling*, author Timone Davis provides a new catechetical method that can be utilized to engage the youth of today. A Catholic professor, preacher, and religious education instructor, Davis looks to form a new more-effective form of religious engagement within the postmodern context in which young people are religiously detached, technologically over-stimulated, consumer-driven, and molded to a commodification of their lives in which religion is simply one of many options. Instead of offering program ideas for young adult reengagement, she provides a new dialogical method of catechesis that brings faith to all levels of parish life. Stories, as an instrument of religious instruction, spark an intergenerational sharing of how our individual stories link with the overarching Christian narrative. African American storytelling, a historical treasure of the Black community, is a catechetical method that can be utilized as an interpersonal and faith-revitalizing strategy by religious educators and church communities as a whole.

The author, a Black American Catholic woman, presents the African American story as an ancestral gift used by enslaved people in America's history who were robbed of their ability to read and write under colonial law. Storytelling, an intergenerational practice of communication and care for the community, became a way to pool their collective knowledge, link disparate people, and find hope despite dehumanizing circumstances. The author, a Black American Catholic woman, sees the wisdom of her ancestors linked to hope for reviving the dormant faith of a dying church. The author engages the reader in the premise that "effective catechesis/ faith formation begins with each other's stories" (43). Davis focuses on African American storytelling as a tool that could renew religious education by linking the wisdom of the past with the vitality of the present. This powerful narrative method can be utilized across multicultural, multigeneration, and multi-linguistic lines to engage youth in new ways. The methodology provides a seductive hook within the seas of distractions fighting for the attention of youth because it starts with the stories that make up who they are and then intertwines them with ongoing catechism lessons. This authentic life-linking application compels all parishioners, young and old, to take a deeper look at God already active in the day-to-day and to place their story within the larger Christian context.

Pooling from a vast number of resources, the author does a thorough job of addressing the technique of this ancient tool as a means of religious engagement, but she does not stop there. She is a seasoned religious educator who translates her methodology into practical tips for use in any local church setting. She notes the practical needs: layouts of timing, scheduling, optimal locations needed to enact this method, even proper use of the bulletin and website. She addresses everything from the required workshops to prepare catechists to tell their stories and precisely identifies that theology of space that orients to intimacy needs to create an authentic storytelling community. From virtual meetings to in-person retreats and parish meetings to clergy preaching, there is not an area that this author has not considered as a space for the art of storytelling to unfold in effective catechesis. It brings the teaching of faith far beyond the classroom to a unified dynamic that revitalizes, from pastor all the way to parishioner, what it truly means to be and live as an interconnected church community connected by stories.

Ultimately, I believe Davis inspires an innovative new way of living in church that is linked by stories of all those within. Stories are the linking element of a healthy communal dynamic and an invitation to know God more through a deeper understanding of self and the

other. In Davis' vision, catechists are “facilitators of story” who have an expansive opportunity to use a gift from the past to aid the church of today, but this requires communal faith sharing on all levels to truly engage this dialogical approach (49). With this, the author offers an opportunity and a challenge to the church to infuse a new method of religious education that could change the church as we now know it. Our world is linked by stories. There are stories within us, stories around us, and stories within our communal narrative that guide our world today. Stories have power, but their power is linked to our ability to believe in their message. The question then becomes, what stories will we choose to guide us into the future?

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