

Textbooks vs. Resources

by Kevin Bohli

It is very difficult to provide a list of resources for Directors of Youth Ministry to use in their programs. Many wonderful resources on Youth Ministry are written by Protestant/non-denominational organizations, so there are certain parts of the books that should not be used in a Catholic Youth Ministry program. In addition, in my opinion, few of the Catholic youth ministry resources are particularly beneficial either. They frequently water down the faith, or use ascending Christology as a basis for all teaching.

Ascending Christology is how we learn of Christ in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Christ is first a human being like us in all things but sin, who lives a life of ministry, is crucified, dies, and is resurrected. This is fine, but should never take away from the divine nature of Jesus.

Descending Christology is how we learn of Christ in John's Gospel. John stresses Jesus' heavenly origins and that He is the Word of God made flesh. Once again, care must also be taken that we do not overemphasize the divine without mentioning the human.

In order for a book to be named a "textbook" for Catholic schools and parishes, it must have an imprimatur stating that it is without doctrinal or moral error. In order for that to happen, it must be written from a descending Christology viewpoint. Moral truths come from God above, and not from an interpretation of an experience, a relationship with Jesus, or teaching from humanity. Therefore, textbooks make statements like, "It is true that...", and cannot make statements like, "The Church teaches that..."

Obviously, publishers want their books to have imprimaturs so that they can sell more books to schools and parishes. However, the Church has begun to hold more strictly to the requirements of what constitutes a Catholic textbook. Therefore, some publishers have decided to stop producing "textbooks" because most of what they teach comes from an ascending Christology standpoint, or has other larger problems. Rather than being forced to fix them, they simply market their books as "teacher resources".

With all that said, we are left with:

- Catholic textbooks that are typically difficult to use with young people in a non-classroom setting, and not written with youth ministry in mind.
- Catholic "resources" that have not met any scrutiny from the Church for what is being taught, and don't typically offer a very balanced ecclesiology.
- Protestant/non-denominational books that may have some wonderful chapters, followed by chapters that need to be completely ignored.



That is why my advice is for you to create your own teaching resources. Use Catholic textbooks for the basis of your teaching, but then supplement the information with activities, discussions, or ideas from other Catholic and Protestant youth ministry books and resources. The Combined Resource List in the back of this resource should be a great place to start.

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