

Fr. Joe Chapter 6 ~ Grade School Instructions In his own words...

Catechism classes for the children posed a problem. There were few children since there were a small number of families. None of the children attended Catholic schools. What I decided to do was a set up CCD classes on Saturday and Sunday mornings in some missions for the children who lived close to the churches. Parents would bring them to the instructions and two Ursuline sisters and two Glenmary sisters from a nearby convent would do the teaching. The real problem was to reach the few children who were scattered in the distant parts of our territory.

Monday afternoons at 2:30, I would stop at the high school and pick up two high school girls, Carol and Mary Lou. As we drove to the outer limits, we would pick up children along the way. We would gather at our home and divide the children into three groups. Then we would alternate between the three groups every 20 minutes. Carol would teach liturgy and prayer, Mary Lou would teach Bible history, and I would teach the Creed, the Commandments and the Sacraments. Then after a little Kool-Aid and cookies, we would take everyone home.

One Monday it was raining all day. After having class, we ran into water on the road as we were going home. I decided to turn around and the car stalled. There we sat, it was raining, water was rising up all around us, and it was getting dark. The children in the back seat became frightened and began to cry. Carol tried to calm them down by praying the rosary. Mary Lou went to a nearby farmhouse to ask to use the phone. The inhabitants turned out the lights and would not answer the door. Finally, we saw a Jeep approaching and it was a local farmer helping stranded people. He led us to the main highway and we were happy to be on our way home.

Suddenly my car stalled again. We took the car to the side of the road and sat there without lights. As cars soon passed, we thought surely some of our people from town would help to stop to help us. Finally, a car coming from the opposite direction passed us, then turned around and pulled up behind us. Two young men got out and said that they were on their way to the Nazarene church. They asked us what our trouble was and how could they help us. We explained our problem and one of them went to call Mary Lou's dad and the parents of the children. The other went back into his car, pulled up behind us with his lights flashing to protect us. He gave us dry clothes to keep us warm.

When the parents arrived to pick up their children, and Mary Lou's dad arrived with his truck, he towed my car to a trailer lot and took us home.

The following day he came back for me to get my car and the young man did this without asking further questions or asking for anything in return. They just drove off. I thought they are the Good Samaritans of our modern day.

When children were scattered throughout a large area and they did not have transportation, I would pick them up and bring them to the place of instruction, usually somebody's home. When I picked up the children, I would always have the two biggest children sit in the front and put all of the other children in the back.

One day I had about eight children in the back seat when a highway patrolman stopped me. He asked me what was going on. I said, "Well, officer, I sold a load of wheat and now I'm taking them to Milford to get them new pairs of shoes." He looked at me and smiled and said, "Be careful." I am always thankful that he was a nice guy, but I don't think he understood.

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When teaching children, we knew we had to be different. In Catholic schools they have Catechism class five times a week. In the missions, we had one session a week and we did not have children memorize questions and answers or memorize the prayers such as the Act of Contrition. We would take the truth, and form it into the frame of life. We would put a beautiful picture into it with Jesus as the focal point and challenge them on how they could vision putting themselves in the picture today.

When I would quiz them about their knowledge of the faith, I was amazed at how much they knew. When I would ask them how they remembered all of that, they would tell me that they always remembered the pictures of the face that I use to paint for them in teaching with words.