

# 'New Evangelization' is teaching the art of living

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For most of my life, what I knew about God came, for the most part, from my CCD teachers and the Baltimore Catechism.

That question-and-answer primer on the Catholic faith contained as many as 1,400 factual questions, depending upon the edition. The answers were memorized. I memorized "facts" about God and my faith, just like I memorized multiplication tables and Spanish vocabulary words. God was a "fact," and I related to God as a "fact."

Now, decades later, I am told that I am supposed to have a "relationship" with God. No one taught me how to do that.

How can teachers teach their students to have a relationship with God? That's what evangelization is all about—teaching peo-

ple to have a relationship with God. It's more than teaching people about the faith; it's also teaching people to live it.

Our new Pope, Benedict XVI, spoke to religion teachers in 2000 in an address called "The New Evangelization—Building the Civilization of Love." He asked, "How does one learn the art of living?" His answer: through evangelization. To evangelize, he said, means to show this path toward happiness, to teach the art of living. It is teaching and living the Gospel message of love.

Teachers, whether in a public, private or parochial school, must teach that message, and must teach it through actions. After all, Jesus was considered the model teacher because he lived what he taught. The future pope explained that the art of living can only be communicated by one who has life: "he who is the Gospel personified. ... God cannot be made known

with words alone."

As teachers head back to school this fall (and each morning), consider the following examination of conscience:

◆ Do I teach with love, kindness, compassion and patience?

◆ Do I take my burdens to the classroom and allow them to negatively affect my teaching or do I put my students and teaching before myself?

◆ Does my style of teaching encourage my students to draw near to me?

◆ What do my students see when I interact with my co-workers? Do they see Jesus?

◆ Do I treat each student with a welcoming attitude?

◆ Do I help my students love each other and themselves?

◆ Is my classroom a place of joy?

◆ How is my relationship with God today?

◆ Did I talk to God this morning or was I too busy?

To teach someone how to have a relationship with God, we must first have a relationship with God. We are all teachers, even if we are not privileged to hold that title. When people look at you, do they see Jesus, the Gospel message personified? What will you teach people today, that God is an abstract fact you memorized as a child or that God plays a vibrant role in your daily life? Have you shown anyone the path toward happiness lately? Have you found it yourself yet?

Embrace evangelization! Find joy as you teach others to do the same. Help build the civilization of love.

*Weaver is a member of the archdiocesan evangelization committee. To read the pope's address, visit [ewtn.com/new\\_evangelization/Ratzinger.htm](http://ewtn.com/new_evangelization/Ratzinger.htm)*

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