

## How To Teach Religion to Children



### Top Quotes

“God loves you, dear children! This is what I want to tell you.” (*Pope John-Paul II*)

1. “The fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship.” (*Pope Francis*)
2. “Children don’t need explanations so much as someone to open up their gift of wonder. All you have to do is bring God into their sense of wonder.” (*Fr Eamon Devlin*)
3. “The best way to preach with success is to have a great love for Jesus Christ.” (*Blessed John of Avila*)
4. “It is essential that souls should be led gently.” (*St Teresa of Avila*)
5. “Long before we speak of anything else, we must speak about Jesus, the person and the energy that undergirds everything else.” (*Fr Ron Rolheiser*)
6. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (*Jesus*)
7. “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” (*Pope Paul VI, 1975*)

8. "Often we Christians... preach a gospel we do not live. This is the principle reason why people of the world don't believe." (*Mother Teresa*)
9. "Those who listen to us and observe us must be able to see in our actions what they hear from our lips." (*Pope Francis*)
10. "Jesus warns us to 'speak our truth in parables.' Truth is not a sledgehammer; it is an invitation that we must respectfully offer others." (*Fr Ron Rolheiser*)
11. "Scripture is a bit like frozen meat: not much good initially; it has to be thawed, then cooked." (*Fr Ron Rolheiser*)
12. "Before Jesus explained the beatitudes to the crowd, he felt compassion for them and fed them. Only after they were fed did he start to teach them." (*Mother Teresa*)
13. "You can't evangelize without dialogue. It's impossible. Because you must begin from where the person who is to be evangelized comes from." (*Pope Francis*)
14. "The message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth." (*Pope Francis*)
15. "Give preference to... the beauty of the love of God." (*Pope Francis*)
16. "You must strive to be creative in your methods, we can't remain closed in the common place of 'it has always been done like this.'" (*Pope Francis*)
17. "We don't have to protect God from the dangerous questions that the wonderful youngsters might throw at us—God can handle anything." (*Fr Seamus Ahearne*)
18. "A religion is a means to an end. In itself it is not an end, but only of value if it takes us to God, serving as a springboard. It is, however, a very good springboard. And I am speaking now of the true religion which understands the beauty and tenderness of God and helps us to respond to him." (*Sister Wendy Beckett*)
19. "If you like, think of religion as a trellis, a framework, on which the vine of love can grow.... Most of us need the support of religion... For myself this is certainly true. I need the support of religion. With its help I soar free." (*Sister Wendy Beckett*)
20. "Challenge them to live a life modelled on Jesus." (*Gerald Gallagher*)
21. "Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it." (*Vatican II*)
22. "The role of school teacher. This calling requires a constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt." (*Vatican II*)

23. "Above all, let school teachers perform their services as partners of the parents... Let them work strenuously to inspire personal initiative on their students' part." (*Vatican II*)
24. "What is needed is renewal of the vision of parish. Many of our parishes offer very little in terms of outreach to young people." (*Archbishop Diarmuid Martin*)
25. "Every young boy or girl is a child of God who must be helped realise the unique God-given talents they possess and place those talents at the service of the common good." (*Archbishop Diarmuid Martin*)
26. "In spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or a kind of persuasion that would be dishonourable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people." (*Vatican II*)
27. "(Teaching) is a little like being parents, at least spiritually. It is a great responsibility!.... Teaching is a serious commitment that only a mature and well- balanced person can undertake.... I ask you to love the "difficult" students more." (*Pope Francis*)
28. "As Plato said: "Seek truth while you are young, for if you do not, it will later escape your grasp" (Parmenides, 135d). This lofty aspiration is the most precious gift which you can give to your students, personally and by example. It is more important than mere technical know-how, or cold and purely functional data. I urge you, then, never to lose that sense of enthusiasm and concern for truth." (*Pope Benedict XVI*)
29. "Always remember that teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength." (*Pope Benedict XVI*)
30. "We must not draw students to ourselves, but set them on the path toward the truth which we seek together. The Lord will help you in this, for he asks you to be plain and effective like salt, or like the lamp which quietly lights the room (cf. Mt 5:13)." (*Pope Benedict XVI*)
31. "How many times do we act as controllers of faith, instead of becoming facilitators of the faith of the people." (*Pope Francis*)
32. "When you find yourself wanting to turn your children, or pupils, or even your neighbours, into people exactly like yourself remember that God probably never meant them to be that. You and they are different organs, intended to do different things." (*CS Lewis*)
33. "We evangelize not with grand words, or complicated concepts, but with "the joy of the Gospel", which "fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus."" (*Pope Francis*)
34. "A peaceful childhood will enable boys and girls to face the future with confidence. Let no one stifle their joyful enthusiasm and hope." (*Pope John-Paul II*)
35. "Looking for an individual text to prove or disprove a certain point is not a good approach to Scripture. The teachings of Scripture are best gleaned by looking to Scripture as a whole." (*Fr Ron*)

*Rolheiser*)

36. “By stooping down to wash the disciples’s feet, Jesus calls us all to exercise authority humbly, as a service.” (*Jean Vanier*)
37. “Thank you to all teachers: educating is an important mission, which draws young people to what is good, beautiful and true.” (*Pope Francis: tweet*)
38. “Youth movements in Buenos Aires did not work. Why? They would say: we organize a meeting to talk—and in the end the young people get bored. But when pastors found a way to involve young people in small missions... (*Pope Francis*)

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(Full Quotes, and Source)

“God loves you, dear children! This is what I want to tell you.” — *Pope John Paul II* ([Letter of the Pope to Children in the Year of the Family, 13th December 1994](#))

“... always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship.” — *Pope Francis I* in his [Evangelii Gaudium](#) (*The Joy of the Gospel*), Section 128, 2013

“Children don’t need explanations so much as someone to open up their gift of wonder. All you have to do is bring God into their sense of wonder.” — *Fr Eamon Devlin, CM*

“Young people want to learn about life, they want to newly discover life, and they don’t want someone to regurgitate it for them.” — *Pope Benedict, 2005*

“The best way to preach with success is to have a great love for Jesus Christ.” — *Blessed John of Avila* (in *Pope John XXIII’s* autobiography ‘*Journal of a Soul*’, page 437 of the 1980 revised edition published by *Geoffrey Chapman* of London & NY. Note: This quote is under a title of the Pope’s called “*Maxims heard or gleaned from various sources*” and the editors of the book comment, “*We give this list just as it was made by Angelo Roncalli when he was a seminarist, without trying to verify or complete the sources or texts.*”)

“When we point out the way of holiness, people will not look at the direction our finger is pointing in. The first thing they will look at is *us*.” — *Anthony de Mello, SJ*, ‘*Contact with God: Retreat Conferences*’

“It is essential that souls should be led gently.” — *St Teresa of Avila*, as quoted in a letter of hers as quoted on page 119 of “*A Little Book of Teresa of Avila*”, the *Columba Press, Blackrock, County Dublin, 2003*, compiled by *Don Mullan*

“Within Christian spirituality, long before we speak of anything else, we must speak about Jesus, the person and the energy that undergirds everything else; after all, everything else is merely a branch. Jesus is the vine, the blood, the pulse, and the heart.” — *Fr Ron Rolheiser*

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” — *Jesus (Mt 28:19-20)*

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.... Nevertheless this always remains insufficient, because even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified—what Peter called always having “your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have—and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus.” — *Pope Paul VI, 1975, Encyclical ‘On Evangelization in the Modern World’*

“Often we Christians constitute the worse obstacle for those who try to become closer to Christ; we often preach a gospel we do not live. This is the principle reason why people of the world don’t believe.” — *Mother Teresa*

“Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one’s life. Those who listen to us and observe us must be able to see in our actions what they hear from our lips.” — *Pope Francis I, Homily, 14th April 2013, as quoted on [the Vatican website](#)*

“In the silence of prayer Jesus shows us whether we are working well, like good workmen, or whether we may have become more like “employees”; whether we are **open and generous “channels” through which his love, his grace flow in abundance**, or whether we focus on ourselves, and thus instead of being “channels” we become “screens” which do not promote the encounter with the Lord, with the light and the power of the Gospel.” — *Pope Francis I, in his [speech to parish priests](#) 21st June 2014, Cathedral Cassano all’Jonio in the southern Italy region of Calabria*

“There are many lessons that we can learn from the past and that can be of great help in any New Evangelisation. Allow me just to, briefly, mention a few before I finish:

- The importance of “The way of humility” to communicate the Gospel.
- The need of stating “the truth of our limited and imperfect humanity” in everything we say and proclaim, without any trace of Triumphalism.
- The simplicity of the Message we try to communicate, without complications or excessive rationalisations that make it opaque and not understandable.
- Generosity in acknowledging the work of God in the life and history of people, accompanied by sincere admiration, joy and hope whenever we find in others goodness and dedication.
- That the most credible message is the one that comes from our life, totally taken and guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

— *Fr Adolfo Nicolas SJ (Jesuit General) at the Synod of Bishops, 2012, as quoted in the 25th November 2012 Gardiner Street Parish Newsletter, Dublin*

“Like the older brother of the prodigal son, we can be doing everything right and still, somehow, be wrong.... If, instead of our speaking the truth, there are elements of elitism, arrogance, anger, lack of respect, lack of understanding, or worse still, embittered moralising, our truth will not be heard, not

because our truth is wrong but because our energy is.

That is why Jesus warns us to “speak our truth in parables.” Truth is not a sledgehammer; it is an invitation that we must respectfully offer others.

.... We may well have the water of life, the truth that sets people free, and the right cause, but nobody except our own kind will accept to receive it from us if our energy is wrong or our understanding of that truth is wrong.... More often than not, we are not being listened to because we are misguided, elitist, non-empathetic, or flat-out unloving, not because we are warriors for truth or justice.

And so we need to be humble... lest a false energy behind our truth or a misunderstanding of that truth have us so fall out of discipleship that Jesus has to reprimand us with the words: ‘Get behind me, Satan!’”

— *Fr Ron Rolheiser (ronrolheiser.com, published in 60 newspapers worldwide)*(Sept 16, 2012: *The right answer alone is not enough*)

“Christian prayer is different from other prayer as it’s nourished by scripture, most especially in Jesus.... Scripture is a bit like frozen meat: not much good initially; it has to be thawed, then cooked.” — *Fr Ron Rolheiser*

“It is very compelling that before Jesus explained God’s words, before he explained the beatitudes to the crowd, he felt compassion for them and fed them (Mt 5). Only after they were fed did he start to teach them.” — *Mother Teresa*

“You can’t evangelize without dialogue. It’s impossible. Because you must begin from where the person who is to evangelized comes from. And this is so important. ‘But father, we waste so much time because every person has his or her own story, he or she comes with their own ideas...’ And, time is wasted. More time than God wasted when he created the world and He did it well. Dialogue. Spend time with that person because that person is who God wants you to evangelize, it’s more important to give him or her the news about Jesus. But according to who he or she is, not how it should be: how he or she is right now.” — *Pope Francis, in his daily morning Mass of the 8th May 2014, as [documented by the Vatican Radio](#) and [broadcast by Rome Reports](#)*

“Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed. When we adopt a pastoral goal and a missionary style which would actually reach everyone without exception or exclusion, *the message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth*, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing.” — *Pope Francis, in part 35 of his Encyclical ‘The Joy of The Gospel’*

“The goal of all pastoral activity is always oriented to the missionary impulse to reach everyone, without excluding anyone and really taking into consideration each person’s circumstances... You must reach everyone and share the joy of having met Christ... This is not about going as one who imposes a new obligation, as those who merely limit themselves to reproach or complaint before what we consider imperfect or insufficient...”

Know to give preference to, in the first place, that which is essential and most necessary, that is, the beauty of the love of God that speaks to us in Christ’s death and resurrection... For the other part, you must strive to be creative in your methods, we can’t remain closed in the common place of ‘it has

always been done like this.”

— *Pope Francis, in a video message from Rome to pilgrims meeting in Mexico City, 16th November 2013 (above the translation by the [Catholic News Agency](#); slightly better English than the more formal [Vatican](#) website’s translation.)*

“God is always attractive (whatever about the Church). We don’t have to protect God from the dangerous questions that the wonderful youngsters might throw at us—God can handle anything.” — *Fr Seamus Ahearne (in ‘Cast Out into the Deep’)*

“Guard the flame which God has lit in your hearts tonight. Never let it go out, renew it each day, share it with your contemporaries who live in darkness and who are seeking a light for their way.” — *Pope Benedict XVI (World Youth Day celebrations, during the overnight vigil, Madrid, August 2011; as reported in the Irish Catholic, page 14, 28th February 2013)*

“A religion is a means to an end. In itself it is not an end, but only of value if it takes us to God, serving as a springboard. It is, however, a very good springboard. And I am speaking now of the true religion which understands the beauty and tenderness of God and helps us to respond to him. If you like, think of religion as a trellis, a framework, on which the vine of love can grow.... Most of us need the support of religion and it would be presumptuous to discard the structure it can give to our capacity to love God. For myself this is certainly true. I need the support of religion. With its help I soar free.” — *Sister Wendy Beckett in her book ‘Sister Wendy On Prayer’*

“Religions are not a threat, but a resource. They contribute to the development of civilizations, and this is good for everyone. Their freedom and activities should be protected so that the partnership between religious beliefs and societies may enhance the common good.” — *Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, the Vatican’s permanent observer at the United Nations, talking at the United Nations in Geneva about terrorist attacks on Christians (an increase of 309% in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East between 2003 and 2010)(as quoted in ‘The Irish Catholic’, March 15, 2012)*

“Challenge them to live a life modelled on Jesus. Throughout my work with young people over the last ten years, I have found that if young people are invited to reflect and learn about their faith, in small intimate groups, this challenge can be communicated.” — *Gerald Gallagher, World Youth Day Officer (in ‘Cast Out into the Deep’)*

“Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it.... Beautiful and truly solemn is the vocation of all those who assist parents in fulfilling their task, and who represent human society as well, by undertaking the role of school teacher. This calling requires extraordinary qualities of mind and heart, extremely careful preparation, and a constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt....

Transmit to (students) the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances.... The Catholic School aims to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity....

Teachers should be trained with particular care so they may be enriched with both secular and religious knowledge... Bound by charity to one another and to their students, and penetrated by an apostolic spirit, let them give witness to Christ, the unique Teacher, by their lives as well as their teachings. Above all, let them perform their services as partners of the parents... Let them work strenuously to inspire personal initiative on their students’ part.”

— *Vatican II, Declaration on Christian Education, 1965*

“Catholic education is inspired by Jesus Christ. It is person centred, seeking to develop the full potential of each person.... It seeks to enable pupils to act with integrity and justice, in pursuit of the common good in an imperfect world, and to act as stewards of creation.” — *‘Vision 08, A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland’ as in a Pastoral Letter from the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference*

“Our system of religious education— especially at secondary level but also at primary level in urban areas — more and more bypasses our parishes, which should together with the family be the primary focal points for faith formation and membership of a worshipping community. I am not attacking Catholic teachers and Catholic schools; they do tremendous work. What is needed is renewal of the vision of parish. Many of our parishes offer very little in terms of outreach to young people.” — *Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin (quoted in Reality article ‘Has Catholic Education Failed?’ July/August 2010)*

“It is when Catholic education opens the hearts of young people to the knowledge of Jesus as the one who reveals what love means, that it brings its unique contribution to the good of society, especially to society so often trapped in greed, exploitation and superficiality.

The task of Catholic education is to enable us to know the face of God and to share what that experience means in our lives.”

— *Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin, in his homily of a Mass to celebrate the graduation of teachers from Mater Dei Institute, November 2012*

“Many of you will be involved in your future career in religious education. Your formation in the Christian faith and in the social tradition of the Church will have given you some inspiration and motivation towards that special care for the poor and disadvantaged which must be a mark of Catholic education and the belief that every young boy or girl is a child of God who must be helped realise the unique God-given talents they possess and place those talents at the service of the common good.” — *Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin, in his homily of a Mass to celebrate the graduation of teachers from Mater Dei Institute, November 2012*

“Education is about bringing the very best from within young people; it is about challenging them to go beyond themselves and to be able to dream great things and realise great things.

Religious education, education in the faith, is not just about commandments and laws, as the unfortunate Pharisee fell into the trap of thinking. The Pharisee became proud and looked down on others. Education in the faith is about authenticity which is always marked by a certain modesty in life style....

We live in a society in which authenticity and modesty in life style are being undermined by a culture of empty spin and a culture of celebrity. In the media, in advertising, in fashion, in politics — so often we are tempted into accepting a view of life and reality which is created by simply spinning words and images, rather than authentically looking at life with its mixture of challenges and successes, opportunity and failure. A culture of spin, because it is empty, will always end up as a culture of arrogance on the part of those who use it, and of frustration on the part of those who fall for it.

True education is about fostering a culture of mutual interdependence, within which we build up authentic relationships of love and honesty.”

— Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin, in his homily at a parish Mass in St Fergal's, Ballywaltrim, 27th October 2013 ([as posted on the Dublin Diocese website](#))

“Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or the written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or a kind of persuasion that would be dishonourable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such a manner of action would have to be considered an abuse of one's right and a violation of the right of others.” — *The Second Vatican Council (in Dignitatis Humanae, the Declaration on Religious Freedom), 1965*

“The task of a teacher is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full—in short it is about imparting wisdom. And true wisdom is inseparable from knowledge of the Creator..... The life of faith can only be effectively nurtured when the prevailing atmosphere is one of respectful and affectionate trust.” — *Pope Benedict XVI, addressing Teachers and Religious in England, 2010*

“It is a poorly paid job, but it's beautiful because it allows us to see the people who are entrusted to our care grow day after day. It is a little like being parents, at least spiritually. It is a great responsibility!”

Teaching is a serious commitment that only a mature and well- balanced person can undertake. Such a commitment can be intimidating, but remember that no teacher is ever alone: they always share their work with other colleagues and the entire educational community to which they belong.

... As Jesus taught us, the Law and the Prophets are summed up in two commandments: love the Lord your God and love your neighbour (cf. Mt 22:34-40). We can ask ourselves: who is a teacher's neighbour? *Your students are your “neighbour”!* It is with them that you spend your days. It is they who await guidance, direction, a response — and, even before that, good questions!

... the duty of a good teacher — all the more for a Christian teacher — is to love his or her more difficult, weaker, more disadvantaged students with greater intensity....

There are some who make us lose our patience, but we must love them even more! ... *I ask you to love the “difficult” students more.*”

— *Pope Francis in an Address to members of an Italian union for teachers, managers, educators, and trainers on March 14th, 2015 as reported on [the Vatican website](#) and on or the [NCR website](#)*

“Young people need authentic teachers: persons open to the fullness of truth in the various branches of knowledge, persons who listen to and experience in own hearts that interdisciplinary dialogue; persons who, above all, are convinced of our human capacity to advance along the path of truth.

Youth is a privileged time for seeking and encountering truth. As Plato said: “Seek truth while you are young, for if you do not, it will later escape your grasp” (Parmenides, 135d). This lofty aspiration is the most precious gift which you can give to your students, personally and by example. It is more important than mere technical know-how, or cold and purely functional data.

I urge you, then, never to lose that sense of enthusiasm and concern for truth. Always remember that teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.

... We must not draw students to ourselves, but set them on the path toward the truth which we seek together. The Lord will help you in this, for he asks you to be plain and effective like salt, or like the lamp which quietly lights the room (cf. Mt 5:13)."

— *Pope Benedict XVI to young University Professors as part of World Youth Day, Madrid, 19th August 2011*

"Dear teachers in our Catholic schools:... You bring them to a reverence and knowledge of God's word and you explain to them the doctrine of the Church.... As you carry out your important mission in that special community of faith which is the Catholic School, may you have a *deep love for the Church*. May your love for the Church radiate through all your various activities and be reflected in the way you faithfully hand on the sacred deposit of the faith." — *Pope John Paul II, Mass at Pontcanna Fields, Cardiff (First Holy Communion), 2nd June, 1982, as published on page 15 and 16 of "The Pope in Britain: Collected Homilies & Speeches" St Paul Publications, 1982*

"How many times do we act as controllers of faith, instead of becoming facilitators of the faith of the people? There is always the temptation to try and take possession of the Lord." ... So often "we control faith rather than facilitating it", and this is something "which began in Jesus' time with the Apostles". We are tempted to "take over the Lord". — *Pope Francis I, preaching at his daily morning Mass at St Marta's in the Vatican, 25th May 2013 (Two slightly different translations: the first appeared in 'The Irish Catholic' newspaper, 2nd June 2013 in a story entitled 'Open your church doors and do not be faith inspectors, pontiff tells priests' by Gerry O'Connell; the second translation is by the Italian newspaper 'L'Osservatore Romano' as posted on the Vatican website).*

"Christianity thinks of human individuals not as mere members of a group or items in a list, but as organs in a body — different from one another and each contributing what no other could. When you find yourself wanting to turn your children, or pupils, or even your neighbours, into people exactly like yourself remember that God probably never meant them to be that. You and they are different organs, intended to do different things." — *CS Lewis, in his book 'Mere Christianity' (in the chapter 'Two Notes', page 154 of the 1997 edition by Fount Paperbacks, London)*

"We are living in an information-driven society which bombards us indiscriminately with data – all treated as being of equal importance – and which leads to remarkable superficiality in the area of moral discernment. In response, we need to provide an education which teaches **critical thinking** and encourages the development of **mature moral values**." — *Pope Francis I in his Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel) publication, section 64, 2013*

"The word of God must be proclaimed with a sense of joy and beauty." — *Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin*

"We evangelize not with grand words, or complicated concepts, but with "the joy of the Gospel", which "fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. For those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, loneliness, and an isolated conscience" (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 1)." — *Pope Francis in a homily given in the Parque Bicentenario, Quito, Ecuador, July 7th 2015*

"If children are properly helped and loved, they themselves can become peacemakers, builders of a world of fraternity and solidarity. With their enthusiasm and youthful idealism, young people can become "witnesses" and "teachers" of hope and peace to adults. Lest these possibilities be lost,

children should be offered, in a way adapted to their individual needs, every opportunity for a balanced personal growth. A peaceful childhood will enable boys and girls to face the future with confidence. Let no one stifle their joyful enthusiasm and hope.” — *Pope John-Paul II, Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 1996*

“The Curé of Ars dealt with different penitents in different ways....

If someone was troubled by the thought of his own frailty and inconstancy, and fearful of sinning again, the Curé would unveil the mystery of God’s love in these beautiful and touching words: “The good Lord knows everything. Even before you confess, he already knows that you will sin again, yet he still forgives you. How great is the love of our God: he *even forces himself to forget the future*, so that he can grant us his forgiveness!”

But to those who made a lukewarm and rather indifferent confession of sin, he clearly demonstrated by his own tears of pain how “abominable” this attitude was: “I weep because you don’t weep,” he would say. “If only the Lord were not so good! *But he is so good! He would have to be a brute to treat so good a Father this way!*” He awakened repentance in the hearts of the lukewarm by forcing them to see God’s own pain at their sins reflected in the face of the priest who was their confessor.”

— *Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, in a letter proclaiming a year for priests*

“Take Acts 2:42, which tells of the four pillars of the early Christian community:

1. Faithful to the teaching of the apostles; study of religion
2. To the brotherhood: experience of Christ in community, fellowship, caring, charity, etc
3. To the breaking of bread: understanding the Eucharist, good celebration of liturgy
4. To the prayers: in personal prayer, experiences of God’s presence, prayer group, psalms etc.”

— *Fr Silvester O’Flynn OFM Cap, Director of Retreats and Author of ‘The Good News’ Series, (in ‘Cast Out into the Deep’)*

“Good Scripture scholarship has long suggested that looking for an individual text to prove or disprove a certain point is not a good approach to Scripture. The teachings of Scripture are best gleaned by looking to Scripture as a whole.” — *Fr Ron Rolheiser, ‘Our Laughter as Faith’ (www.ronrolheiser.com, 23 Sept 2012)*

“The word ‘authority’ comes from the Latin ‘augere’ (to grow). All authority, whether it be civil, parental, religious, or community, is intended to help people grow towards greater freedom, justice, and truth. Often, however, it is used for the honour, power, privilege, and positive self-image of those who exercise it. By stooping down to wash the disciples’s feet, Jesus calls us all to exercise authority humbly, as a service.

.... Jesus asks his disciples to exercise authority like a child or a servant, where they are vulnerable and open to others. Can this authority ‘from below’, where, out of love, we place ourselves lower than others, still be called authority? Is it not rather love and communion?”

— *Jean Vanier, the founder of l'Arche, an international network of communities for the mentally disabled (also a super author), in Magnificat, July 2012*

“All of us experience tension in our lives: tension in our families, tension in our friendships, tension in our places of work, tension in our churches, tension in our communities, ... And, being good-hearted people, we carry that tension with patience, respect, graciousness, and forbearance – for a while! Then, at a certain point we feel ourselves stretched to the limit, grow weary of doing what is right, feel something snap inside of us, ... and we let go... We let go of patience, respect, graciousness, and forbearance, either by venting and giving back in kind or simply by fleeing the situation with an attitude of good riddance. Either way, we refuse to carry the tension any longer.

But that exact point, when we have to choose between giving up or holding on, carrying tension or letting it go, is a crucial moral site, one that determines character... How much tension can we carry? How great is our patience and forbearance? How much can we put up with? Mature parents put up with a lot of tension in raising their children. **Mature teachers** put up with a lot of tension in trying to open the minds and hearts of their students. .... Men and women are noble of character precisely when they can walk with patience, respect, graciousness, and forbearance amid crushing and unfair tensions, when they never grow weary of doing what is right.

Of course this comes with a caveat: Carrying tension does not mean carrying abuse. Those of noble character and sanctity of soul challenge abuse rather than enable it through well-intentioned acquiescence. Sometimes, in the name of virtue and loyalty, we are encouraged to absorb abuse, but that is antithetical to **what Jesus did**. He loved, challenged, and absorbed tension in a way that took away the sins of the world. We know now, thanks to long bitter experience, that, no matter how noble our intention, when we absorb abuse as opposed to challenging it, we don't take away the sin, we enable it.

But all of this will not be easy. It's the way of long loneliness, with many temptations to let go and slip away. But, if you persevere and never grown weary of doing what is right, at your funeral, those who knew you will be blessed and grateful that you continued to believe in them even when for a time they had stopped believing in themselves.”

— *Fr Ron Rolheiser, in a great article '[Never Grow Weary](#)' from his [weekly columns](#), Oct 21, 2012*

“Thank you to all teachers: educating is an important mission, which draws young people to what is good, beautiful and true.” — *Pope Francis, his [tweet of June 3 2014](#) (@Pontifex)*

“We think of young people today. Young people—at least the experience I had in the other diocese— young people, *youth movements in Buenos Aires did not work*. Why? They would say: *we organize a meeting to talk... and in the end the young people get bored*. But when pastors found a way to involve young people in small missions, to do a mission during vacation time, to give catechesis to people who needed it, in the small villages where there are no priests, *then they adhered*. ” — *Pope Francis, 26th July 2014, in a “casual Q&A with priests of Caserta” as reported in print by [Vatican Radio](#)*