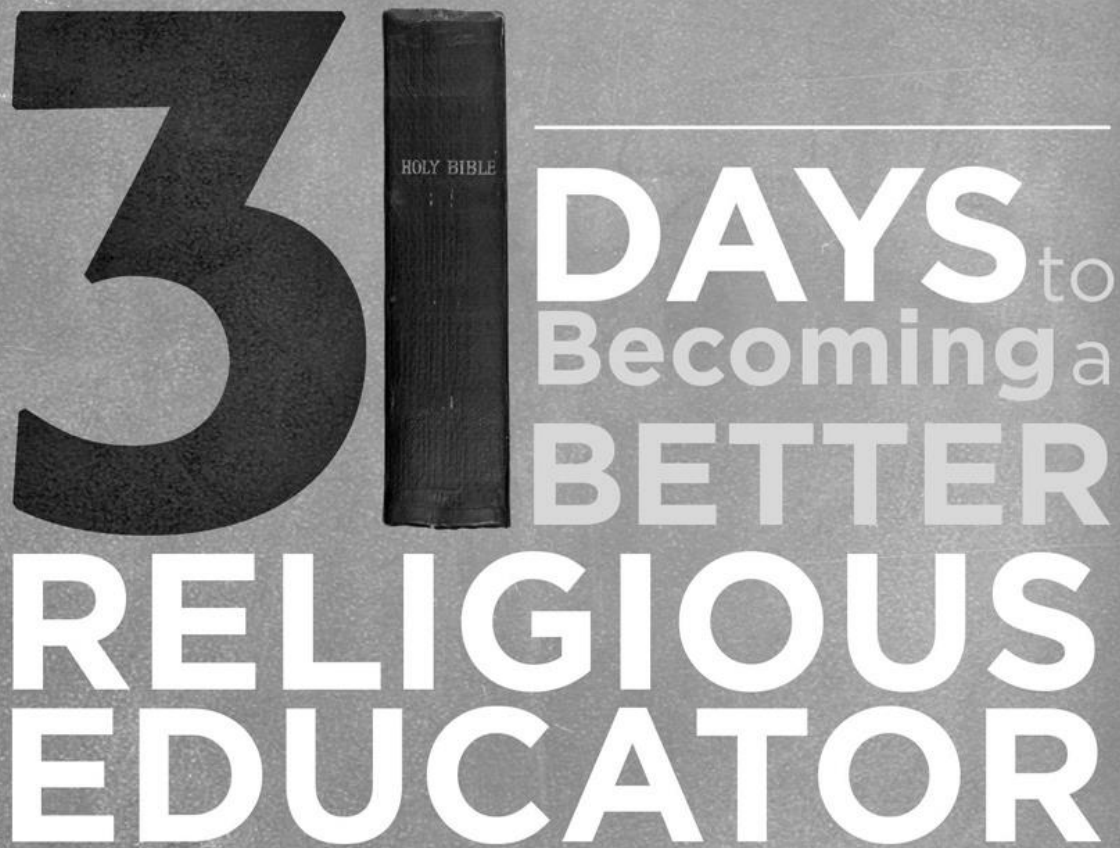


“An exciting and superbly practical field guide
for those who love the Catholic faith.”

Lisa Mladinich

Author of *Be an Amazing Catechist*



31 DAYS to
Becoming a
BETTER
RELIGIOUS
EDUCATOR

Jared Dees

Creator of TheReligionTeacher.com

Foreword by **Joe Paprocki**

Author of *The Catechist's Toolbox*

Webinar Handouts

September 4, 2013

Exercise 1: The Big Why List (Day 1)

“Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world’s greatest need.”

— Frederick Buechner

1. List all of the needs of the Church or of the students you teach below.
2. If I had to choose just **one** lesson about God that my students needed to hear the most, what would it be?
3. What is **one** belief my students struggle with the most?
4. What is **one** spiritual practice my students could benefit from the most?
5. If I could help my students make **one** change in their life, what would it be?
6. What aspect of the faith are kids missing the most in their lives?
7. What are the biggest problems adult Catholics experience in the Church?

****Star or circle the answers that either get you excited or make you angry. If there is only one answer that gets you really excited, then consider this the focal point of your call to teach.**

Exercise 2: Visioning (Day 17)

The Status Quo:

1. What are the common assumptions about your course subject matter?

2. What would a world be without this subject?

The Vision:

1. How can this subject be life-changing? World-changing?

2. What should and could the world be, knowing what we will learn?

Exercise 3: Update Your Classroom Procedures (Day 15)

List the most common questions you get in class, as well as the instructions you find yourself repeating over and over again.

Design New Procedures

What procedures can you create, introduce, and practice with your students so that you don't have to answer those common questions or repeat instructions? Describe the step-by-step procedures in detail below.

Reference pages 77–79 of *31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator* for advice on implementing new procedures.

Exercise 4: Offer Counterintuitive Prayer Practices

Your class may be the only time all day long that your students can encounter God in prayer. Prayer is a unique experience that is completely different from the common experience of their days. Next to the list of common experiences in a teenager's day, list prayer practices that you can introduce in class that they might not try on their own without your influence.

1. Teenagers wear headphones and earbuds constantly throughout the day.	
2. Teenagers text each other in short bursts frequently throughout the day.	
3. Teenagers are constantly worried about rejection and fitting in.	
4. Teenagers feel like nobody understands what they are going through.	
5. Teenagers only do the school work that they have to do to get good grades.	
6. Teenagers are incredibly busy with sports, jobs, homework, and other obligations.	
7. Teenagers think they know everything.	

Exercise 5: Incorporate Music into Your Lesson (Day 27)

Read about the four ways to use music in your classroom described on pages 142–44 of *31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator* (memorization, praise, meditation, and inspiration) and select one to incorporate into your next lesson. Describe how you will use this method in the space below.

Exercise 6: Liberate Students from their Chairs (Day 28)

Survey the activity suggestions on pages 147–48 of *31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator* (centers, games, ice breakers, agree/disagree, praise and worship, pray at the chapel, or go outside) and add one to your next lesson plan. Write the name of the activity below and explain why you think your students will benefit from this activity.

Bodily/Kinesthetic Activity: _____

My students will benefit from this activity because . . .

Exercise 7: Get to Know a Student before or after Class (Day 10)

Assuming you won't see your class today, select one of your students. Write him or her a letter to spark a conversation in class. Ask questions. Tell stories, but only if you think it will help the student open up. Use this sheet of paper for brainstorming or pre-writing.

Exercise 8: Create Relevance by Identifying Student Strengths (Day 9)

<i>Student</i>	<i>Free Time</i>	<i>Observable Strengths</i>	<i>Self-Identified Strengths</i>	<i>Category</i>

Suggested Categories: interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical, mathematical, analytical, visual, verbal, spatial, naturalistic, spiritual

Exercise 9: Create Relevance through Differentiated Instruction (Day 8)

Think of an activity you have done in class in each of the following categories and list them in the boxes below. Star the activities that worked well and consider how you can incorporate more activities that appeal to that same style of learning.

When Students . . .	Class Activities
Listen	
Read	
Write	
Speak	
Solve a Problem	
View a Picture	
Draw a Picture	
View a Video	
Make a Video	
Move	
Listen to Music	
Create Music	
Work Together	
Reflect Internally	

Exercise 10: Write Out Why a Lesson is Important (Day 20)

Examine your next lesson plan or recall your most recent class lesson and answer the questions below.

Why do *I* have to know this information? How has knowing this information benefited *me* as an adult?

Regardless of who is learning this lesson, what are all of the possible benefits to learning about this?

From the list above, which benefits would appeal to my students the most and why?

If I had to share just one reason with my students for learning this lesson, what would it be? (This is your hook, the connection you will make between your students' lives and the lesson you teach.)

Exercise 11: Recognize Your Relationship with Christ (Day 2)

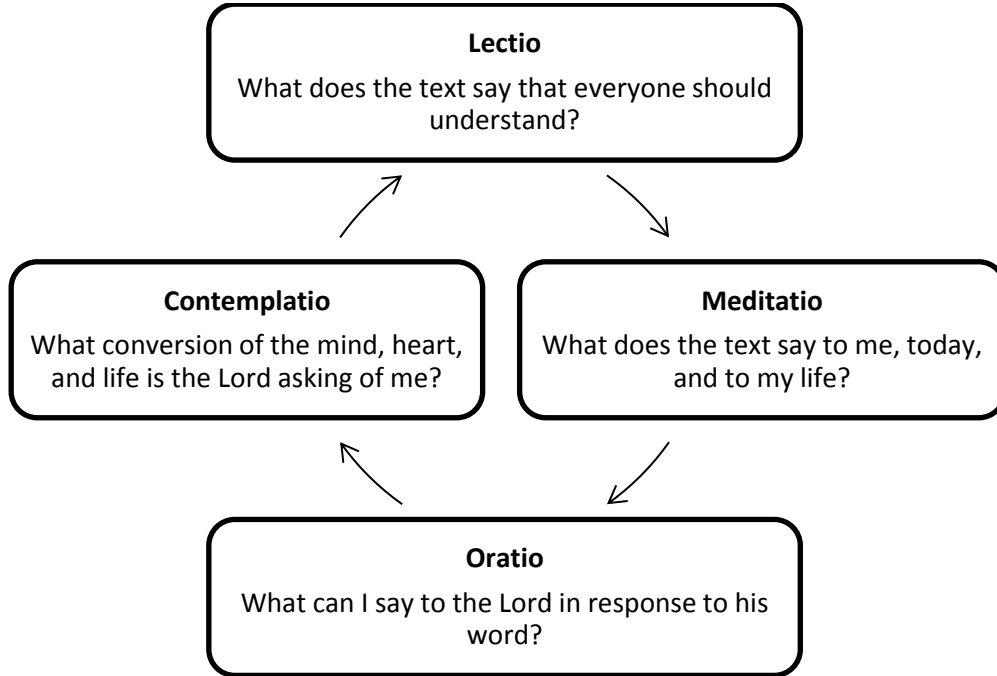
1. How did you meet Jesus Christ? (Who introduced you to him? What are your earliest memories of him?)
2. How has your relationship grown over the years? (How did you come to know him more deeply?)
3. What is your relationship with Christ like today? (How often do you spend time with him in prayer? When and how do you pray? When do you think about Christ the most?)

A Timeline of Your Relationship with Christ
(Turn the paper sideways)



Exercise 12: Read the Bible Practicing *Lectio Divina* (Day 4)

Directions: Select a passage from the Bible and read it a few times. Answer the questions in each box below. Write the responses on this handout or in a journal.



Lectio: _____

Meditatio: _____

Oratio: _____

Contemplatio: _____

Exercise 13: Become a Witness (Day 31)

Think of a religious experience in your life that changed you in some way. Read and answer the questions below (pp. 162–63 of *31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator*).

Conversion Experience: _____

P: Prior Experience – Why did you need to encounter God?

R: Receive Grace – How did you encounter God?

O: Openness to Grace – How were you able to open yourself up to God?

C: Conversion – What changed in your life as a result of this encounter?

ESS: Witness – How can you share this encounter with others?

Exercise 14: Tell Your Story (Day 24)

Divide your conversion story into three parts: the beginning, middle, and end. For the beginning, explain the circumstances of your life when you needed God the most. In the middle, explain how you encountered God. In the end, explain how that encounter changed you and made a lasting impact on your life. Use this sheet as talking points for your testimony.

Beginning

Middle

End