

Power Trip

by

Rose Marie Doyle

You Turns

89840 Hwy 101

Warrenton, OR 97146

503 738-6065

youturnsPTL@msn.com , www.youturns.org

Reviewed

by

Rev Richard J Huneger

May 18, 2009

Back in the early 1990's Archbishop William Levada, Portland, Oregon, asked me to head up a task force to study the possibility of a two-year Confirmation preparation process. It was his hope that a formula could be found that could be uniformly used throughout the archdiocese. All youth would be confirmed by the time they were out of high school (the Vatican has since approved a national "age" for Confirmation in the United States, actually, an "age range" from 7-16). For a variety of reasons related to debates over confirmation age, logistics and numbers of students, the relation between youth ministry and sacramental preparation programs, the scheduling of Confirmations (how often, single- or multiple-parish celebrations, and the like), our efforts came to grief.

Had *Power Trip* been available, it might well have done the trick. Its target age group is 6th Grade (Heritage Bowl based on *The Picture Bible*), then 7th and above (*Power Trip, Part A and Part B*, each part containing 20 90-minute lessons). Further developing the successful youth catechesis program begun by Deacon Francis Potts at St Mary, Corvallis, Oregon, *Power Trip* as published now provides an accessible user-friendly format for the busy catechist or youth minister even in a small or rural parish, where numbers often make other programs impractical. In just a few hours of study of both Parts A and B, I already felt as if I had mastered the process and could easily use the program myself. Here it is in a nutshell:

Friends 10	Fun 25 – Adoration 10 – Faith 35			Forward 10
Socializing, snacks, etc.	Fun * Get Started: - recite memory verses - report CCC lookups verses	Adoration	Faith * Scripture * Assign - memory	Intercessory prayer, resolve, mission, application.
(whole group)	* Game/Drama/Saint lookups (whole group)	(whole group)	- catechism (small groups)	(whole group)

Power Trip is not "linear" (like a physics text), nor is it narrowly grade-level "stratified" (as scope and sequence series tend to be). Rather, it takes faith as a "seamless garment" and introduces a mixed-age group, after social bonding, to a "thread" in the garment. The thread is explored as far as time permits by means of a scripture passage read aloud, then discussed reflectively verse-by-verse (lead questions and suggested responses provided for instructor). Students, using primary source material directly (the Bible), learn to identify themselves and the divine challenge to their life in that Word. During reflective discussion separation into groups

based on maturity level (not necessarily age, per se) can enhance the process. The introductory game or dramatization (humorous, of the scripture, of a saint's story, etc.) leads into a time of prayerful adoration (before the Blessed Sacrament as possible) to ready the students for the "faith" component. Each week offers a scriptural lesson in "synderesis" (what "do good, avoid evil" means in terms of "seeking life, avoiding death" in one's own day-to-day existence). Over time the existential stance of "faith" (and its blessings) versus "sin" (and its curses) stands out more clearly, in a very practical way. And the concluding segment of each session ("Forward") involves prayer and encouragement by and for each other to cooperate with divine grace, for life, as they move forward on their journey with God.

Each week scriptural one-liner "memory verses" are assigned toward the end of class, from a list of verses related to the week's "thread," one to each student, for reflection and memorization, and then for recitation at the next class (little rewards, points for one's team, and the like can mean that this simple little assignment motivates better attendance). Most weeks one-liner *Catechism of the Catholic Church* "lookup questions" are assigned as well, with the identifying CCC paragraph indicated (the student is again expected to consult a primary source, here, the CCC). At the beginning of each class students get to recite or report the fruits of their "homework," effectively providing their own review of the previous week with a "thousand points of light." This non-linear style allows each student in a mixed-age-level group to connect the dots at the granularity level of understanding that works. Nothing, of course, stops anyone seeking an "answer" from reading "further." Issues are not treated extensively in philosophical style, but may be explored by a given individual more extensively, as the Word prompts one to do so in the reflective-discussion process where students learn "attention to detail" presented by the heard Word.

One might expect from using *Power Trip* that students will experience "conversion" and "coherence" of conviction about faith, more secure in delving into primary sources, gradually bringing the picture given by faith for life into greater clarity, as if focusing a camera manually on some great subject of pristine beauty. The process is highly interactive and formative of moral vision and commitment with explicit openness to divine grace. But there is nothing ponderous about it. One caveat: the instructor must be willing to allow the students to be inspired and to become desirous of exploring the themes directly from a context of friendship, contemplation, and the data of primary sources. This means allowing direction and coherence, with eventual clarity, without premature linear systematic definitions and distinctions overlaid in advance. Once the "gestalt" becomes real, faith can become life.

NOTE: Because the curriculum of *Power Trip* was developed in collaboration with, and reviewed by, Rev Armand Nigro SJ, a well-known Jesuit educator, this review has restricted itself to a consideration of the specific parameters of catechetical process characteristic of the published program. Its adoption may, of course, require supplementation in given circumstances, as to content, activities, liturgical participation, and the like, based on local church policies, as, for instance, in sacramental preparation programs. It might also be noted that *Power Trip* does not require exotic and complex preparation and expensive sets and gimmicks in order to be delivered as designed.