

The Power of ONE



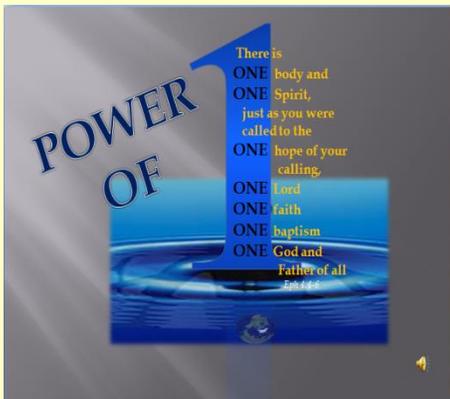
Cheryl Smith

Diocese of Syracuse
Director of Faith Formation
St. John the Evangelist Church
New Hartford, NY
and
National Presenter
on using technology in catechesis

A unique approach to the faith formation of teens.

***Empowering teens to make a difference in
their community.***

***Engaging them on-line and in-person to make
faith relevant in their lives.***



How can you *really* reach teens? Do they even *care* about what you are trying to teach them? Will they retain anything about their Catholic faith? Will they apply it to their life...will they know how to? In other words...*do they 'get it'*? If not, how can you reach them? How can you make the faith formation 'program' relevant to *their* life? How can you help them become disciples of Jesus?

DRAWBACKS OF THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM

Busy schedules, lack of interest, peer pressure, being tired or bored...these are all problems that we face when trying to teach the teens in our programs. We also have the lack of parental support from the parents who just drop off their child for us to 'teach religion'. This all makes truly reaching these young people very difficult.

How does the catechist know if students even 'get' what she/he is trying to teach them. The students just 'sit there' and don't feel comfortable speaking in front of their peers. They might be afraid to speak up due to fear of saying the 'wrong thing'.

“POWER OF ONE” PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Involvement of parents and parish community are very important benefits to this program.

- 1) Meet the students where they are...on-line.
- 2) Involve the parents.
- 3) Involve the parish community
- 4) Have the students realize what gifts/talents they have and to use them to make a difference in their world.
- 5) Work with the busy schedules of the students and parents.
- 6) Help to make the teachings of the Catholic faith interesting and relevant to the life of the students.
- 7) Help the teens have moments of conversion.
- 8) Help the teens to become disciples of Jesus.



HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Three components: In-person, On-line, & Service

PART I: GATHERING TOGETHER IN PERSON

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Mt 18:20)

Make a point of not referring to the in-person gatherings as ‘classes’, refer to them as ‘sessions’. The goal is to get away from a ‘school model’ of the faith formation program.

Be creative and customize the sessions to include whatever you think is needed.

- Begin the program with an in-person “Parent & Student Meeting”.
 - Introduce and explain in detail the project component as well as the on-line sessions.
- Following the “Parent/Student Meeting” the teens meet about once every three to four weeks for the in-person sessions.



Try using QR codes in a scavenger hunt in the church or in some other creative way. You can make your own at <http://www.qurify.com>

In his message, [Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age](#), Pope Benedict XVI writes:
"I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible."

Ideas for in-person sessions

- Began the first session with a prayer which includes the reading of the *Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-28)*. The teens then watch a youtube video of a modern day interpretation. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMMGMlXmxOk&feature=related>. Then think about and share the gifts/talents that they will use and brain storm project possibilities in small groups.
- 'Dinner & a movie' (pizza)
- Scavenger hunt in the church using QR codes
- Use cell phone texting polls ('polleverywhere.com') in the session to learn what the teens really think about issues or their faith.
- Trivia day (about whatever topic is wanted/needed)
- A 'what I *really* want to know' session and/or general discussions
- Discuss, as a group, any issues that need to be clarified or expanded upon (use what you learned by reading their on-line comments).

PART II: Out of the Classroom...Into the "NET"

- Between each in-person session the student must complete an on-line session assignment before the next meeting.
- At the "Parent/Student" meeting a tutorial is shown and discussed on how to use the on-line Power of ONE site. Check it out at <http://powerof1.weebly.com/>
- The online site covers themes such as Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Creed, the Mass, parables, gospels, saints, etc.
- Each session may include things like youtube videos, Catholic Youth Update articles, articles or videos from other sites as well as comments written by the CL or catechist. The CL or catechist asks a few questions and the student must 'comment' on each question.
- ***One thing that is very important...*** each student is assigned an **anonymous number** that they must use when they 'comment' on the blog site. **They do NOT use their own name.**



Each student is assigned and **anonymous number** so that they can feel more comfortable giving honest opinions and answers to the questions asked.



...And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Mt 25: 40)

This is the part of the program that hopefully connects the teens with their parents, the parish, their community, and God.

The difference with the Power of One program is that each student must come up with a project on his/her own and the goal is for them to have 'ownership' of the project. Hopefully the project will be more meaningful and help them to understand the idea of having been called by God to use their own gifts and talents given to them to make a difference in their world.

- Each student must reflect on what gifts and talents they have been given by God.
- They must brainstorm with their parent(s) or guardian to come up with a project that they would like to do.
- They are encouraged to prayerfully consider what they should do.
- If they choose to do so, they can work with another student as a partner, but the parents of each student must be supportive and approve of the project as well.
- The parents are responsible for any transportation, or permissions that are needed for the project.

At the first in-person session (the parent/student gathering) the program is explained and each student/parent chooses an appointment time for an 'interview'.

The Interview

- Discuss with the CL (or program leader) what their *Power of ONE Project* will be and all the details that go with it.
- Discuss possible obstacles that may need to be overcome and how they might go about doing that.
- Discuss what 'seed money' may be needed, if any.
- This interview takes place about 2 months after this initial meeting, so they have plenty of time to seriously (and prayerfully) think about options.
- This interview should take about 20 minutes.

Remind the teens to take lots of pictures when doing their project...to share at the 'Celebration'



Share the projects with the parish at a “Power of One Celebration”



It is very important that the parish community is made aware of the Power of One program and support the teens in their projects.

- Have someone explain the program at mass.
- Put announcements in the bulletin.
- Ask the parishioners to make a small donation (*just a dollar or two*) to be used as ‘seed’ money if needed for a teen project. (*optional*)

CELEBRATE!

Have a ‘Power of One’ Celebration event at the end of the program year.

- Each student (or group) sets up a ‘booth’ displaying pictures of their project.
- Decorate the room (*ie. balloons*)
- Invite parishioners to the event. (*advertise*)
- Teens explain their project to the people that come to their ‘booth’...
 - why they chose the project
 - what they learned
 - how they ‘made a difference’
 - what gifts or talents they used.
- Have refreshments (or hold a pot-luck dinner)

Some projects done by the teens

- **Teaching Mass Project:** Three boys revised a ‘scripted mass’ and found volunteers to act out each part including the priest. Two of them were out of sight asking and answering questions about various things that were happening during the mass. They videotaped it so that it could be used as a teaching tool.
- **Pray for Our Troops Project:** A fundraiser done by ordering wristbands that said “Pray for our troops”. The money collected was used to purchase supplies that were sent over-seas to her cousin’s unit.
- **Veteran Outreach Project:** Another fundraiser done by selling wristbands and bake sales at church and at school. Teens presented a check for \$600 to the organization.



Interfaith Children's Fun Night

- **Basketball Training Camp:** 3 of the teens and their parents put together an event where the teens taught basketball tips to younger boys and girls and provided refreshments. It was VERY well attended and a great time by all.
- **Interfaith Fun Night for Children:** Teens and parents advertised in the community and held an event with games, food, grab bags and prizes. VERY big hit!!
- **Reverence Project:** Two teens cleaned the headstones at a local cemetery that had been neglected for years and did some other necessary clean-up.
- **Handymen Project:** 3 students built and repaired various projects around our parish throughout the year.
- **Grieving Family Project:** One of the students in our program lost his mom to breast cancer during the year, so two other students and their moms worked together to have a huge bake sale that raised over \$1,000 that they donated to the family.
- **The Holiday Project:** 2 students collected money, bought gifts and delivered them (along with food) to a needy family of seven at Christmas.
- **Furry Friends Project:** A teen that works with various 'exotic' animals brought them to the parish and explained how to care for them and let the children touch them and ask questions. She had 10 minute presentations on each one.
- **Be the Change Project:** To be an example to the teens...I did my own project. I showed 'World Water Day' videos, showing children in need of clean drinking water. I had the class put special labels on empty water bottles and gave them out to various people (including class volunteers and our pastor along with family and friends). After filling the bottles with change, everyone returned the bottles to me. The \$250 collected is being donated to help build a well connected to a mission project this spring.

A WORK IN PROGRESS...

Although there are a few things to modify, I believe the program is working out very well. I have gotten very affirming feedback from the teens, parents, parishioners and the pastor. . The *Power of ONE* is still a work in progress, I will be trying to add both a sponsor and parent on-line component this year. I believe the Holy Spirit is truly at work here...you can just see the Spirit in the teens