

WRITING A LESSON PLAN

Patricia Thibodeaux, OCDS

I have been asked to write a few thoughts about creating lesson plans. This is both an honor, and a humbling experience. What I would like to do is to suggest some ways to approach lesson planning using the new Uniform Formation Guidelines, and to point out helpful related resources included in the Formation binders. In drawing up these guidelines, the Formation Task Force was careful to avoid words such as “teacher,” “student,” “class,” and “homework” because these words have negative connotations for some people and because Formation is so much more than simply reading a book and answering some questions. Although I will be using some of these terms, as well as results of educational research, I ask that you remember we are not setting up ordinary classrooms, but Teresian schools of Christ.

The best way to begin the planning stage, as we begin any endeavor, is with prayer. Those of you who attended the first Formation Directors meeting (held at El Carmelo in January 2003) will remember Fr. Kanjiramukil’s conference on the Holy Spirit as the true Formation Director of souls. We are only the Spirit’s instruments, and as such we need to remain open and responsive to where He may lead us. We can pray before preparing each lesson that God will use us to do His work, that the candidates will be open to what He wants them to hear, and that the Spirit will grant all of us the gift of understanding.

As Doreen Glynn Pawski states in her article on Writing a Syllabus, a lesson plan follows from the syllabus. The syllabus tells me what information I am going to present; the lesson plan tells me how I am going to present it. There are many ways to communicate the knowledge we wish to impart. One of the most common is the traditional lecture. Another might be by eliciting information through a question and answer format, or through small group discussions based on questions which have been previously assigned. It is often best to use a variety of approaches in each lesson.

At the first Formation Directors’ meeting, Toni Hagi, then Formation Director for the Las Vegas Community, gave a presentation on Learning Styles. You may remember the individual assessments she distributed so we could determine our own learning styles. If a lesson plan is to be student centered, which it should be, then we must be aware of the different ways our candidates best learn new information. The 3 main styles of learning have been categorized as: visual (for those who learn best by seeing information), auditory (for those who process new information best when it is heard), and tactile/kinesthetic for learners who learn most efficiently by “doing.” For a visual learner to try to learn a foreign language using the “listen and repeat drills” in a language lab can be torture (as I can personally attest!) or for kinesthetic learners to try to master material only by attending lectures can be a very frustrating experience. Certainly, the candidates

should be responsible for their own learning, but as teachers, it is a sign of respect for us to be aware of the diverse needs of the individuals we are forming. This means thinking creatively about how we present the material to our Formation classes and using a variety of formats to get the message across. At the end of this article, you will find two charts that give more information about Learning Styles on one page, and a brief explanation of four Teaching Styles on the last page.

Since most people tend to teach as they were taught, we also need to be aware of what different teaching methods are available for us to use. If a student's learning style is compatible with the teaching style of the teacher, then students tend to retain more information and can more effectively apply it and have a better attitude toward the subject. After all, isn't that one of our goals? Pages 99 and 100 in your Guidelines, entitled "Teaching Methods and Principles for Developing Assignments," contain a list of suggestions for different methods of both teaching and developing assignments in order to bring variety into your Formation classes. In addition, "Principles for Leading Discussions" on page 97 contains excellent suggestions for beginning and encouraging participation in group discussions. All of these ideas can be incorporated into your Formation presentations and activities.

I would like to give an example. I begin to write each lesson plan by checking my notes from the last meeting. Did we have time to cover all the intended material? Were there any difficulties that need to be reviewed, or perhaps presented in a different way? Which areas of the class were most successful and which need more work? When writing a lesson plan, it is good to keep in mind all the materials that will be presented and look for ways they can be integrated into a single theme. Let's use as an example a class on "The Living Flame of Love" by St. John of the Cross. This poem and its Commentary are presented in Year 2 of Formation I. These candidates are in the year preparing for the Temporary Promise. If I am preparing a lesson for Stanza I numbers 19 and following, I notice this section is a digression on "purification, or the purgative way," so I can choose this as my theme. I consider if I have any audio or video materials, handouts, or speakers I may wish to use for that lesson. We always begin the class with a reading of the entire poem we are studying. Then I could give a short lecture on the role of purification in St. John of the Cross's writings, and how it relates to the theme of Divine Union in The Living Flame of Love. Since we would have recently studied the biographical introduction to The Collected Works, I could ask for examples from St. John of the Cross's life which show how he dealt with opportunities for purification. If written work has been assigned based on the reading, then some time must be allowed for questions and answers.

Also, this year of Formation is designated as a time for deeper study of the Constitutions and words of the Promise, so this would be a very good time to ask the candidates what practical application our theme of purification has for Carmelites today. They could look for examples in the Carmelite Rule, the Constitutions, especially in the Promise, and in

the Statutes. If this is assigned ahead of time, it can make for a very interesting discussion with each person given an opportunity to contribute what they have discovered. If not, candidates could be divided into small groups of two or three, and then each pair or group could be asked to look through one of the documents, find examples, and then report back to the entire group. In a one-hour Formation class, 3 or 4 short, but related, segments seem to work well. Finally, written work should be collected, and new assignments for the next meeting should be explained. Your Formation Binders have a rather lengthy section with many examples of Models of Assignments, which begins on page 101. As soon as possible after the meeting, I make notes to myself on the lesson plan evaluating the session and noting down any ideas I may have for the next meeting.

The actual lesson plan can be as simple or as detailed as you wish to make it, but be sure to include the materials you will need, the page numbers you will be using and the order in which material or activities will be done. A plan for the lesson described in the previous paragraph could look something like this:

1. Ask volunteer to read poem (p. 639)
2. Finish Lesson 3 questions from last meeting (questions 6-10) through p. 653 in text - 15 minutes
3. Introduce theme of Purification (Purgative Way) in St. John of the Cross (my notes) 10 minutes
Ask for examples from St. John of the Cross's life
4. Look to Rule, Constitutions, & Statutes for examples of purification that can actively prepare Carmelites today for union with God. Brainstorm list & look for
Constitutions: p. 12 #9e, p. 13 # 14 & 15
Statutes: p. 60 Sec. X
Rule: #6&8, 10, 12,16, 17, 21 (all)
Discuss as time allows
5. 5 minutes before the end of class, collect answers from Lesson 3 and answers for "legislation search" question (previously assigned.) Distribute Lesson 4 questions with answers due at next meeting.

While the curriculum, as the outline or skeleton, can be kept indefinitely, I see the lesson plans as ever developing depending on the candidates in each class, possible new presenters and the inclusion of new material as it becomes available. So, while I always keep lesson plans in a folder or computer file, I don't think I've ever taught the same class twice; I use last year's lesson plan as the basis that can be adjusted for this year's new class.

There are a few more sections in the Formation Binder that I would like to bring to your attention. One is the Supplementary Recommended Resources found on pages 34-37.

We must always keep in mind the importance of our work. Being appointed to help with the Formation of Candidates to Carmel is truly an awesome responsibility. In order to do it well, we need to be mindful of our own formation. By familiarizing ourselves with these additional resources, as well as some of the material found in the bibliography (pages 175-178) we can better prepare ourselves to teach the subjects we have been given, and we can model our own commitment to life-long formation.

The article by Fr. Deeney entitled “Discernment of an OCDS Vocation” (found on page 43) contains a section which addresses the creative tension that may be found between the spiritual and the academic/intellectual aspects of our vocation, and directly impacts formation:

The writings of Saint Teresa of Jesus are the expression of the charism of the Discalced Carmelites. The spirituality of the Discalced Carmelites has a very well based intellectual foundation. There is a doctrine involved here. Doctrine, comes from docere, Latin for to teach. Any person who wants to be a Discalced Carmelite must be a person with an interest in learning from the teachers of Carmel. There are three doctors of the universal Church, Teresa, John and Therese.

A person comes to the community, a person with a great love of the Blessed Mother, wants to wear the scapular in honor of Mary as a sign of dedication to her service. This person is very prayerful but has no interest in reading or studying the spirituality of the Teresian Carmel. This person tries to read one of the Carmelite Doctors but just cannot find the interest to keep reading. To me, this is a good person who may belong in the Confraternity of the Brown Scapular, but definitely does not have a vocation to the Secular Order of Carmel.

There is an academic aspect to the formation of a Teresian Carmelite. There is an intellectual basis to the spirituality and identity of one who is called to the Order. And, as with each friar and each nun, each Secular represents the Order. A Carmelite that does not have the interest in studying or deepening the roots of his/her identity through prayer and study loses identity and can no longer represent the Order. Nor does that person speak for the Order. Many times when listening to a Carmelite speak it becomes obvious when hearing what is said that they have not gone beyond what they heard in formation years before.

This intellectual basis is the beginning of an attitude that is open to study. It leads to a deeper interest in Scripture, theology and the documents of the Church. The tradition of spiritual reading, lectio divina and time for study is the intellectual backbone of the spiritual life. Good formation depends on good information. When the information is bad, or absent, or incorrect, the formation stops or is stunted resulting in confusion in the Secular. If that Secular through some twist of fate becomes somehow an officer of the OCDS community, the community suffers. It happens with friars and nuns, and it happens with Seculars. (page 46)

“Study and the OCDS” is another excellent article by Fr. Deeney, which can be found on his blogsite, www.OCD4OCDS. In it, he points out the differences between the “academic study” we all did in school, and “study” as it applies to initial and on-going formation of the members of the Secular Order. Especially for anyone involved in Formation, our General Delegate’s advice found in both of these articles is worth reading and re-reading often, and keeping in mind as we make our lesson plans.

Learning Styles

This chart helps you determine your learning style; read the word in the left column and then answer the questions in the successive three columns to see how you respond to each situation. Your answers may fall into all three columns, but one column will likely contain the most answers. The dominant column indicates your primary learning style.

<i>When you..</i>	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic & Tactile
Spell	Do you try to see the word?	Do you sound out the word or use a phonetic approach?	Do you write the word down to find if it feels right?
Talk	Do you sparingly but dislike listening for too long? Do you favor words such as <i>see</i> , <i>picture</i> , and <i>imagine</i> ?	Do you enjoy listening but are impatient to talk? Do you use words such as <i>hear</i> , <i>tune</i> , and <i>think</i> ?	Do you gesture and use expressive movements? Do you use words such as <i>feel</i> , <i>touch</i> , and <i>hold</i> ?
Concentrate	Do you become distracted by untidiness or movement?	Do you become distracted by sounds or noises?	Do you become distracted by activity around you?
Meet someone again	Do you forget names but remember faces or remember where you met?	Do you forget faces but remember names or remember what you talked about?	Do you remember best what you did together?
Contact people on business	Do you prefer direct, face-to-face, personal meetings?	Do you prefer the telephone?	Do you talk with them while walking or participating in an activity?
Read	Do you like descriptive scenes or pause to imagine the actions?	Do you enjoy dialog and conversation or hear the characters talk?	Do you prefer action stories or are not a keen reader?
Do something new at work	Do you like to see demonstrations, diagrams, slides, or posters?	Do you prefer verbal instructions or talking about it with someone else?	Do you prefer to jump right in and try it?
Put something together	Do you look at the directions and the picture?		Do you ignore the directions and figure it out as you go along?
Need help with a computer application	Do you seek out pictures or diagrams?	Do you call the help desk, ask a neighbor, or growl at the computer?	Do you keep trying to do it or try it on another computer?

Below are **FOUR TEACHING STYLES** that represent typical orientations and strategies used by college faculty. These styles, like colors on an artist's palette, make up the characteristic ways professors design instructional settings. A brief description of each is detailed below.

Teacher Centered

The expert/formal authority style tends toward teacher-centered classrooms in which information is presented and students receive knowledge.

Model/Expert

The personal model/expert/formal authority style is a teacher-centered approach that emphasizes modeling and demonstration. This approach encourages students to observe processes as well as content.

Facilitator

The facilitator/personal model/expert style is a student-centered model for the classroom. Teachers design activities, social interactions, or problem-solving situations that allow students to practice the processes for applying course content.

Delegator

The delegator/facilitator/expert style places much of the learning burden on the students. Teachers provide complex tasks that require student initiative, and often group work, to complete.

