



07-B-31

LENTEN ANIMATION IN A HIGH SCHOOL (1)

Stella Maris College, Tamatave, is a secondary school which caters to students of the first and second cycles, that is, students from sixth class to the final year in which they do the baccalauréat (from 11 to 18 years of age approximately).

In 1984 when the Lenten animation began, the college had 1350 students of whom 900 were in the first cycle. 60% of these first cycle students are Catholic while the others belong to different Protestant groups. We felt it our duty to reanimate the faith of all these students, Catholics and Protestants alike.

Presentation of our programme

Quite simply we wish to share with you our efforts to give meaning to our catechesis and inspiration to the Christian life of the college during the Lent of 1984.

As happens every year, great importance is attached to the liturgical season of Lent and an attempt is made to live a fuller Christian life. It is a special time in the life of Christians and we try to use it to awaken or strengthen the faith of our students which is often superficial and dormant.

We focus on three points:

Strengthening the students' faith by a well-adapted catechesis and by scripture reading each morning.

— *Reconciliation with Our Lord by an effort towards penance and conversion: all classes receive the sacrament of reconciliation and a greater effort is demanded in work, in respect for others, in fidelity, etc.*

— *Renewal of Christian life: love of God and our neighbour.*

This year two special efforts were demanded:

— *The first was reception of Holy Communion during Sunday Mass. (Attendance at Divine Service for Protestant students).*

— *The second was a greater willingness to share with those in need (the poor, orphans, lepers, sick children, prisoners, old people).*

Each section of the college was organized for a precise effort to help our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

To attain our objectives:

— *we tried to mobilize and sensitize all our teachers without exception. To this end we held a meeting on 25th February, during which the Lenten programme was worked out in detail.*

— *On the following 5th March the first hour of class was devoted to the launching of the Lenten programme by each form master.*

— *An inquiry was carried out throughout the college on Sunday observance. Three questions were put to the students:*

- Religion (Catholic or Protestant?)
- Did you attend Mass yesterday or Saturday evening?
(For Protestant students - Were you at the "Fiangonana" meeting yesterday?)
- Were you at Mass (or Divine Service) on Sunday 12th, 19th, 26th February?
(Answer: not at all, once, twice, three times).

— *At the same time an explanatory leaflet was given to each student and a letter sent to the parents so as to involve the families.*

— *Catechetical instruction in all classes was devoted to the observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day. A booklet of eight pages was prepared and distributed among the teachers.*

Programme drawn up with the teachers

The following is a resumé of the decisions taken together for the animation of Lenten observance in 1984.

Motivation of our action:

We attach great importance to the feast of Easter for several reasons:

— This a Christian school and the education we offer is based on Christian principles. Christian belief enlightens our judgements and our year is scanned by the liturgical feasts of the Church (Christmas, Easter, etc.). With due respect for the liberty of our students we try to instil in them Christian values: the Gospel Faith, Sacraments, the Church...

Generally speaking, our students are happy in this atmosphere of Christian education. Some ask to be baptized and large numbers prepare for the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation.

— The feast of Easter takes first place in our calendar. It is the foundation of our faith, the celebration of our redemption by Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. "Jesus is alive", is the message of hope that, like the Apostles, we wish to share with our students.

— Hence the importance of the Lenten preparation. This year it takes on greater importance than ever because we are going to celebrate the jubilee of our redemption, the 1950th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Our Saviour, while for the Catholic Church it is also a year consecrated to reconciliation. To come closer to Christ and to be reconciled with our brothers, it is for that purpose that we have developed this Lenten programme and it is the entire educative community which is going to put it into practice: form masters, teachers, animators.

The example we give of a Christian life is important for our students.

Lenten animation has three goals:

- an effort to strengthen the faith of our students
- an effort toward penance and conversion
- an effort to live a full Christian life: love of God and our neighbour.

— We shall try to strengthen the faith of our students in two ways:

— by a well-adapted course of religious instruction based on the observance of Sunday, an instruction which will prepare for the effort at Christian living which we insist on. This instruction by bringing us back to the Sunday Eucharist, will lead us to the theme of redemption, to our salvation effected by Jesus Christ. A little booklet will help us to renew our own lives and to assist our students and their families.

— by a reading from the Old and New Testament at the beginning of class each day, followed by a brief commentary from the teacher.

— Effort at conversion:

— There are penitential efforts to be made: more serious application to work, to the duties of one's state in life, respect for the work of others, self-discipline, for the sake of the common good.

— There is also the sacrament of reconciliation. An outline of the celebration of reconciliation will be given to each teacher. Each group may use it with the agreement of the college chaplain. It is important that the groups work closely with him. Each team corresponding with a given age group, will have a coordinator.

The examination of conscience is most important. It is a means of forming the consciences of young people, of teaching them to distinguish between the important and the accessory, insisting on the duties of one's state, on respect for others, on the common good as well as on one's duties to God, to one's parents and to one's neighbour.

— Effort at living a Christian life: Love of God and One's Neighbour:

— Sunday celebration as part of religious education. We wish to restore the meaning of Sunday celebration, not as an obligation, but as an important part of our life as believers. We shall make a lightning "sondage" to find out the rate of participation in the Sunday Eucharist or in the meetings of the Protestant "Fiangonana". A concrete effort in this matter will be demanded from the students and their families will be informed accordingly.

— Care for one's neighbour. Each group of classes will draw up a programme for help to the neighbour, as was done last year, in order to make the students more aware of the needs of the less fortunate: the handicapped, orphans sick children, prisoners, and the old. Don't be afraid to shake up the selfishness and indifference of the students and get them involved in visiting and in material aid. They must be made aware of their duty to their neighbour and of the need to forget themselves. But it is also important not to reduce care for one's neighbour to mere almsgiving. On this point we must take the initiative. Class teachers must work together and stimulate each other.

Co-ordination of efforts:

The day the programme is launched each form master will take his class for the first hour of the day. He will proceed as follows:

— a lightning inquiry

— a distribution of leaflets to each student. The leaflet summarises the points mentioned above. A brief commentary on the contents of the leaflet is called for.

— a letter to the parents is given to each pupil advising them of the programme and inviting them to cooperate in our efforts.

In this way the season of lent will become a good preparation for Easter and will contribute to personal renewal.

Bro. Louis AGNELLET