HOMESCHOOL CURRICULUM · A SECOND TRACK

Reading Backwards from the Pascha

A year of Scripture for a child of about thirteen, read from its end: the seven readings sung in the dark at the Easter Vigil. It runs from September to June beside the Benedict Year, two sessions a week, and ends in the Vigil and confirmation.

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The end of the content

Every text in the year is chosen by one end. The seven readings of the Easter Vigil are the Church's answer to a single question: what must you have heard to understand tonight? Creation; the beloved son carrying the wood; the sea that drowns and saves; the forsaken wife taken back; the waters offered free; wisdom come to dwell; the new heart.

Luke 24 is the charter. On the road to Emmaus the risen Christ, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, interprets in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (24:27). He reads backwards, from the end, and Luke does not write the lecture down. The end comes first in intention and last in execution (Thomas, I-II q. 1 a. 1 ad 1), and the year is built that way: the Vigil chooses October's readings before October has heard the Vigil.

The end of the method

The method has an end too, and it has the same shape. A type is read from what it points to; a week is placed by the night it is for. The year ends not in a test but in an event that would happen without it: the child walks into the Vigil literate and hears their own year sung back by candlelight.

So the method is read backwards from its end, as the texts are. Explanation comes after the encounter, as in the ancient catechumenate, where Cyril of Jerusalem explained the sacraments to the newly baptized in the week after Easter. Nothing is graded, because recognition is the point and recognition cannot be graded.

The likeness runs all the way down. Neither end is inside the thing ordered to it: the readings do not contain the Pascha, and the year does not contain what it is for. At Emmaus the teaching ends at the breaking of the bread; the disciples know him, and he vanishes from their sight (24:31). On Holy Thursday, when the child recognizes Exodus 12, the instruction is two words: say nothing. The teacher's silence is the method imitating its content. Luke 24 is both at once: what the year teaches, and how.

The week

Two sessions, about ninety minutes in all, never in one sitting.

- **Session A, the reading (55 minutes).** Open and read aloud before any framing: Scripture first, then a Father of the Church. Reading dominates. You explain less than you want to.
- **Session B, the argument (35 minutes).** An unanswerable question, a what-is-it-for question, a short video, memory work, or a set piece: put someone on trial, take opposite sides, read with parts. A thirteen-year-old needs somewhere legitimate to put the combat.

The two kinds of question do different work. An **unanswerable** question (does Isaac know?) has no answer key to guess, so it cannot be performed. A **what-is-it-for** question (what is the blood on the doorposts for?) usually has its answer in the text, and the child finds it. The first keeps the argument honest; the second trains the eye for ends.

The Tile Board

A wall for the types. Each week adds a card with the passage and the date it was heard, pinned wherever the child likes. Before the Vigil it stays unorganized: the child may pencil a line between two cards when they see one, and you never suggest one. In Easter week the child inks the lines that still hold, each as an arrow from a card to what it points to, and rubs out the rest. Ask once where the arrows go, and leave it.

The cards carry their dates, so the board is a graph as of a day. A line rubbed out in April is a reading once held, and it stays in the notebook.

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