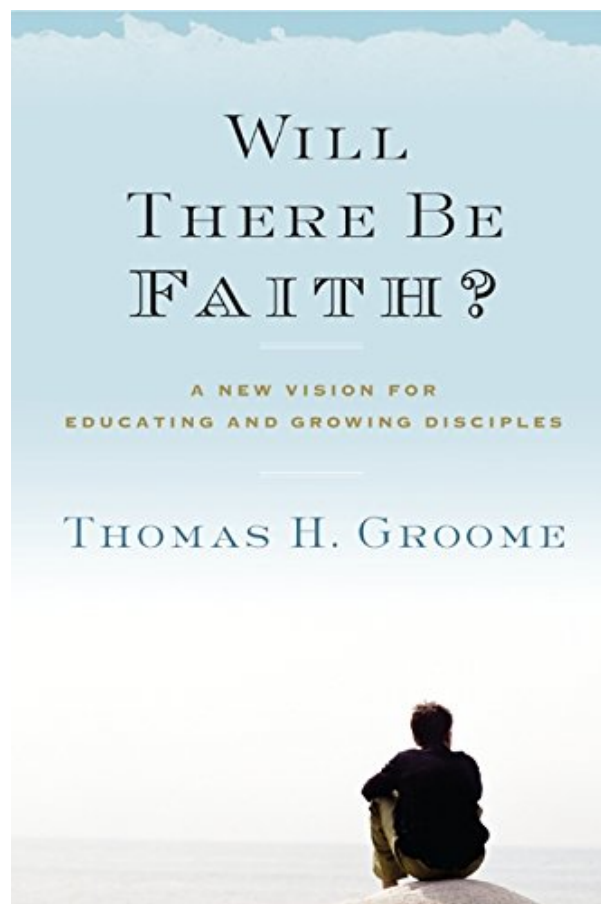
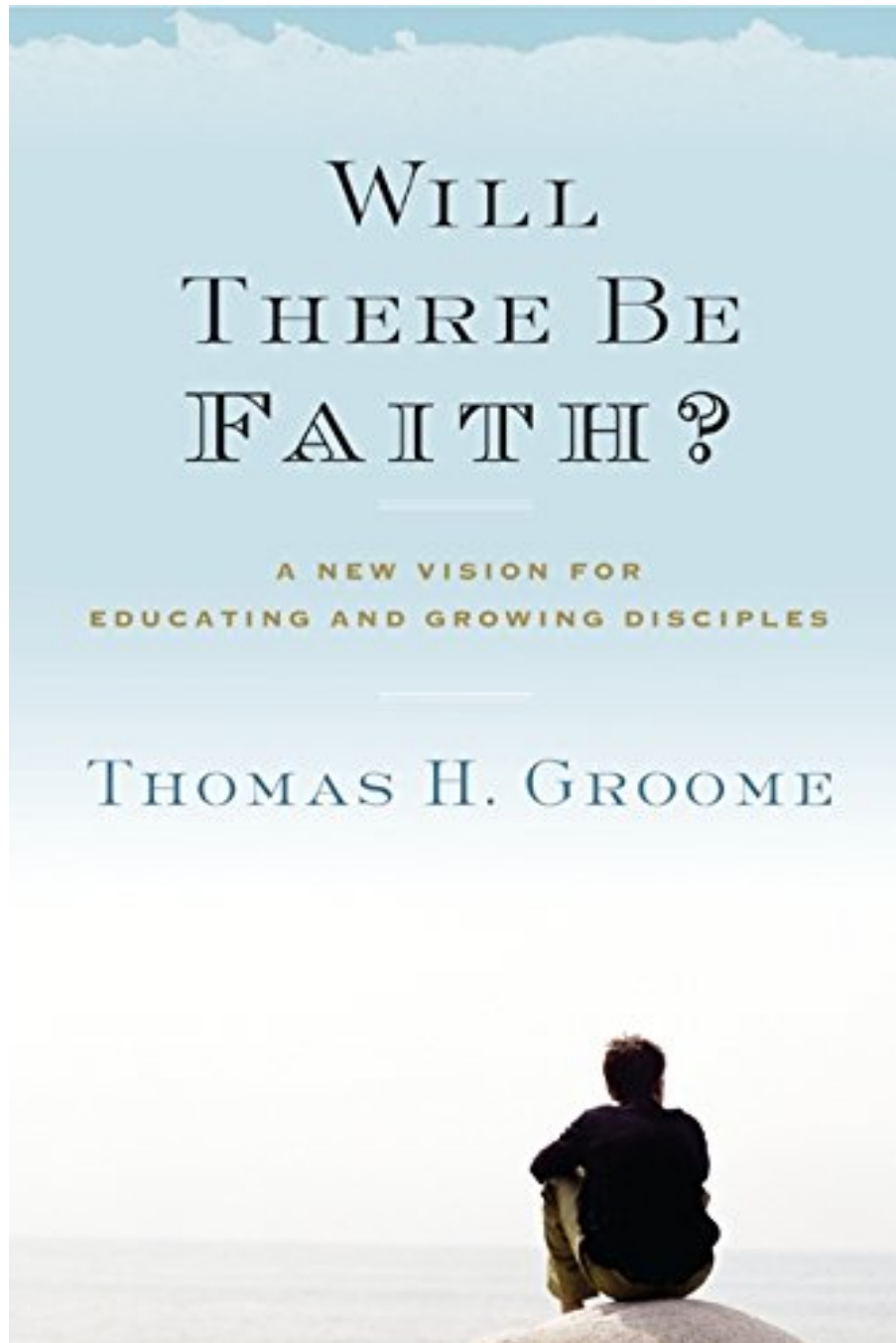


**WILL THERE BE FAITH?: A NEW VISION
FOR EDUCATING AND GROWING
DISCIPLES BY THOMAS H. GROOME**



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Will There Be Faith?: A New Vision For Educating And Growing Disciples By Thomas H. Groome.

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Review

“An amazing tour de force covering the terrain of Christian doctrine and practice....This book is a valuable resource for reviving and refreshing the faith of Christians of all ages.” (U.S. Catholic)

About the Author

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WILL THERE BE FAITH?: A NEW VISION FOR EDUCATING AND GROWING DISCIPLES BY THOMAS H. GROOME PDF

A Modern Manual for Sharing a Relevant, Vibrant, Enduring Faith

In the face of mounting obstacles, parents and educators find themselves increasingly challenged by the task of leading people toward lives of faith. Now Thomas Groome, a world-renowned authority on religious education, has created a contemporary, holistic approach to teaching Christian beliefs and values that offers real, effective solutions for today's parents and teachers. His guide to religious education—which aims to “bring life to Faith and Faith to life”—is a hopeful road map for reenergizing the faith community and family from the bottom up.

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Most helpful customer reviews

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

An important, but slightly off-putting, catechetical vision

By Jonathan F. Sullivan

Whenever I engage in conversation with my catechetical colleagues, certain questions and themes arise again and again:

- What would catechesis look like if it followed the pedagogical model used by Jesus?
- What if we sought to not just teach about the faith, but help the faithful (both young and old) learn from and be transformed by our rich Catholic tradition?

- How can parents be more intentional about passing on the faith?

Thomas Groome's new book, *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples*, seeks to answer these questions by proposing a life to Faith to life model for catechesis and Christian religious education.

By life to Faith to life Groome means a methodology that begins with the life experience of the faithful, invites them to consider that experience in light of the wisdom and practices of the Church, and then to bring those new insights back to their lived experience. This intuitive, praxis-based approach builds off of Groome's earlier body of work in the field of Christian religious education.

Groome's aim is to take catechesis away from the strict classroom-based model that has become prevalent in many places in the Church. This model, although popular, has led to the compartmentalization of catechesis. As Groome writes:

"The emergence of denominational schools, Sunday schools,' and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) all greatly enhanced the effectiveness of religious education. The disadvantage, however, was that they removed the family from its central position as educator in faith and gave the impression that the school -- of whatever kind -- could educate better than and instead of parents. Even the Church helped to convince parents of this schooling paradigm. As a result, most parents still assume that if they simply take their children to a parish program, say one hour a week for about thirty weeks a year, it will make them Christians."

Groome's life to Faith to life approach seeks to re-integrate faith formation into the lives of the faithful by beginning not with the dogmas and doctrines of Christianity, but with the lived faith experience of the people to be catechized.

Groome quotes liberally from the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC) in making his case, pointing out that catechesis "bridges the gap between belief and life, between the Christian message and the cultural context" (n. 205) and "one must start with praxis to be able to arrive at praxis" (n. 245), to give but two examples. He also utilizes the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-35) to demonstrate Jesus' use of this approach. By beginning with life experience as a tool to draw people into conversation about the faith, Groome honors the GDC's commitment to catechize as Jesus did. (Cf n. 143)

At the same time Groome affirms the need for good doctrinal content to the proper formation of the faithful, including catechisms and curriculum guidelines. By starting with life experience Groome is not proposing a radical "I'm OK--you're OK" relativism; rather, he proposes using life experience as the starting point for introducing how our Catholic faith provides a framework for living as a disciple of Christ in our particular historical, social, and cultural contexts.

All this would be well and good as a theoretical discussion. Fortunately *Will There Be Faith?* shines in its outline for implementing the life to Faith to life model in a variety of settings. Groome lays out strategies for parishes, schools, and families for putting the life to Faith to life approach in to action. Groome even has positive things to say about devotional practices for families:

"After Vatican II, such popular practices fell off, and for so good reasons. Many had become exaggerated devotions, sometimes with a dash of superstition, there being a fine line between faith and magic. Vatican II made a successful effort to recenter what should be at the core of Catholic faith: Jesus, the Bible, Mass, the sacraments, and discipleship. Now, however, almost fifty years later, we might return to some of those old

devotions, informed by better theology and without exaggerating their importance to the Faith. We need some such personal and family-centered practices. They are powerful ways to nurture and sustain people in faith. They educate. The key is for families to choose ones that will be meaningful for them, so that they are likely to practice them regularly."

My only correction to this passage would be to add that such a revitalization of devotional practices -- in light of the Second Vatican Council -- is already occurring, spearheaded by young Catholics who are rediscovering them with joy.

Unfortunately Groome's approach will be overshadowed for some people by his use of inclusive language and praise of liberation theology -- which is a shame, because these issues not intrinsic to the life to Faith to life approach he outlines. Groome goes out of his way to avoid gender-based pronouns for God, including such phrases as "God calls us to Godself," a phrase I can't imagine being written by anyone except an academic theologian. His uncritical praise of liberation theology is especially disappointing since Groome points out that all metaphors for Christ's work, if taken too literally, end in error -- yet he never points out such boundaries on his metaphor of "liberating salvation."

That having been said, I would encourage readers to look beyond these secondary issues to the heart of Groome's approach, which offers a promising vision for Christian religious education. *Will There Be Faith?* merits multiple readings -- especially the last two chapters in which he lays out his total vision for the life to Faith to life approach. I look forward to reaping the fruit of this book for years to come.

Disclosure: I received a review copy of this book for free from TLC Book Tours.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Not as groundbreaking

By Amazon Customer

Of all of Groome's writings, I find this one to be the most difficult and least engaging. (Consider that statement in light that Groome's writing were part of my dissertation, where I treat him as an educational philosopher.) It appears he is attempting to re-establish himself as a preeminent voice in revising Roman Catholic catechism(s), so this the focus feels more forced: rather than a reflection on the future of Christian Religious Education, it comes across as presumptive authority defending normative standards. Worthwhile for someone trying to map the span of Groome's thinking, but not an extension of previous theory & praxis.

4 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

a theologically and pedagogically sound approach to religious education

By Greg Smith (aka sowhatfaith)

I read Groome's *Christian Religious Education* while in seminary (the only text written by a Catholic included in my reading list for my basic course in religious education), and was intrigued to see how his perspective changed over the last thirty years. Both volumes provide theologically and pedagogically sound understandings of the enterprise known as religious education. Additionally, both offer import contributions to the conversation, especially with regard to the "how" one engages in the shared praxis. Note how the "how to" component shifts (and remains the same) between 1980 and 2011:

THEN

First Movement: Naming Present Action

Second Movement: The Participants' Stories and Visions

Third Movement: The Christian Story and Vision

Fourth Movement: Dialectal Hermeneutic Between the Story and Participants' Stories

Fifth Movement: Dialectal Hermeneutic Between the Vision and Participants' Visions

NOW

Focusing Act (FA): Engage people with a real life or faith theme.

Life

M1 (Movement 1): Have people respond to the theme as it pertains to their lives.

M2: Encourage them to reflect critically on the theme in conversation together

Faith

M3: Share the Story and Vision of Christian faith in ways pertinent to the theme and meaningful for this group, context and occasion.

Life

M4: Encourage participants to appropriate and integrate Christian faith with life.

M5: Invite people to make a decision - cognitive, affective, or behavioral in response to the whole process (p.299-300).

Will There Be Faith? is an important contribution to the current discussion. While the "how to" component underwent more updating in language than process, the earlier portions of the new text include more substantive revision (and the inclusion of considerable amounts of new material). For those in the profession of religious education, it is a helpful read. The addition of numerous "For Reflection and Conversation" questions helps readers apply it to their understanding and context, while also making the book (as a whole or in part) useful for leadership teams/committees/bodies responsible for Christian religious education (parish, school, etc.).

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