

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Tell me a Story

“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.” Matthew 13:34

My little three-year-old grandson climbed on my knee with one of his favourite story books. I read a bit and then, from his memory of the many times we had done this before, he told the next bit ... and on we went together, telling the story in turns to each other. However, this time was to be different for, when we got to the last page, one of us (I can't remember which) turned over to the blank page at the end and the blank inside cover of the book and we continued the story together, telling each other what might have happened next. The pictures in the inward eye were much more vivid than those on the earlier printed pages as we went forward together in our imaginations.

Stories – we all love them! Jesus the Great Teacher told lots and lots of stories to adults and surely also to children and young people. Can we be satisfied with teaching which is full of abstractions with few concrete ties to everyday life? Stories immerse us and our students in the real and ordinary everyday world, God's world for which we are to care and in which we are called to serve. They are not merely ways of getting across a 'moral'.

We can follow the example of the Great Teacher and be story tellers ourselves, no matter what subject we are teaching. In his book, *Teaching as Story Telling*,* Kieran Egan shows how stories can be used even in such apparently non-literary subjects as mathematics. The life-stories of scientists and mathematicians can also be a rich source for relating these subjects to the lives of human beings in God's world. For example, Georg Cantor, a mathematician best known for his work on the idea of infinity and the originator of the theory of sets, studied infinity in mathematics because of his desire to understand better what it meant to say that God is infinite.

And let's not forget that we are story tellers in another sense too, for there is the story that we tell in the way we live and relate to others and to God's world. Is the story we thus tell the greatest story of all, the big true story of God?

Great Teacher, we love your stories and the story of you. Help us to be better story tellers and to tell in our living your story, that best story of all. Amen.

* Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986).