

Teaching religion to teenagers can be quite challenging, let alone on Saturday mornings. Throughout the years, I have had students who excel at making my task of getting through to them nearly impossible. But I remember what a friend said to me, “As long as we reach at least one.” And this year is no different.

We’ll call him Joe for the sake of anonymity, and he was surely put in my life this year to test my catechetical dedication and patience. Even though I had a one-on-one talk with him a couple of weeks ago, and although he seems to be coming around a bit, most of the time I could just kick him out of class, because it would just be so much easier, you know? This past Saturday was one of those days…we were barely into our class and I was already this close to giving up on him and telling him not to let the door hit him on his way out.

Then, I had an unexpected visit from an ex-student from five years ago. We’ll call her Christie. Back then Christie was sorta like Joe…she was quite a challenge…a test to the limit. Right after her Confirmation, Christie came back to CCD to help out.An unlikely candidate, I thought at the time.And she ended up staying and teaching until this August when she left to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida. One of those surprise students. I’ve had a number of those throughout the years. Anyway, like I said, she came up to my class to visit me and told me how well she is doing up at UF, how happy she is there, and that she started going to mass at St. Augustine, the church across from campus that I myself used to attend when I was up at UF. That was wonderful, I thought, and I felt so proud of her. But it didn’t stop there. She also told me that once she got settled in, she looked into it, and is now teaching CCD up there. As she shared these things with me, amidst her many warm hugs, she thanked me for everything she says I had done for her, adding that she has not forgotten my class or the things I spoke about.

After a few minutes, Christie said goodbye and my attention returned to my class. As I faced my students once again, now with a grin on my face, not only from satisfaction, but mostly from realizing how God had just winked at me and how His timing never fails, I continued the challenging task of teaching that Saturday’s class, Joe included, with a surge of patience and

a renewed and illuminating sense of purpose. Right, my friend, God’s funny in that way…the way He winks at us…with almighty timing…again and again.

I shall never believe that God plays dice with the world.– Albert Einstein

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