



Spring 2011

Homework and Jesus (Joseph Fehlen)

Have you ever been told "you can't talk about religion in a public school"? That is true; you are not supposed to bring up your faith, in any of your conversations with students in the public school setting. But this last week I bent those 'rules' at bit. It happened at our after school Homework Club, at a local elementary. While at HC, I noticed four girls at the end of a table acting like they were deep in their studies. I, being the professional father that I am, knew this was not the case.

So I sat down next to them and asked how they were doing.

One girl immediately shared about her friend across the table. "D's grandfather just died and she is very sad. We don't know what to say to her. So we just listen. She doesn't want to talk much about it". This, of course, is not what you expect to hear at homework club. So, I took the next few minutes talking to her about her grandfather. She shared how their family would not be able to make the trip south to go to the funeral. She was very sad and her friends comforted her nicely.

The conversation turned in a different direction, as she pulled a book out of her bag. She didn't know how to properly site the book she was going through for this assignment on her daily reading log. The book was her Catholic Daily Missal. This being post Palm Sunday, she was reading the story of Jesus' death and resurrection out of the Book of John.

She had to write down what the story was about on the log. And right there, I found myself talking about Jesus in a public school with four kids totally dialed in as the young girl was talking about scripture. It was a great moment as we talked about how this Easter story related to her grandfather!

This was soon interrupted, as most conversations are with 4th grade girls, by another girl talking about how she was celebrating the Laos New Year at her temple that very week. We talked for awhile about what that meant to her and how important it was to her family.

Here were two girls from two totally different cultures and religious backgrounds sharing with each other at Homework Club in the local elementary school. I left them to get back to reading and shook my head in amazement.