

Screwtape & the Catechism

I'm all for using the Catechism of the Catholic Church, especially in unconventional ways. One of the biggest barriers between Catholics and the Catechism that I hear most often is that it isn't accessible. The language is either too complex or too theoretical.

In C.S. Lewis renowned *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape is a demon advising fellow demon Wormwood about how to tempt and lead a man to damnation. Marlon takes chunks of Screwtape's letters and lead the students in debunking his advise using the Catechism. Engaging the Catechism in this way makes the content immediately practical and exciting to read. *Screwtape Teaches the Faith*.

Having taught High School catechetics for many years one thing that kept coming up in all of my religious education classes was the issue of sin, temptation, and what to do about it. Go figure, a teenager wanting further explanation on sin, the Devil and how to deal with temptation. This led to the idea of utilizing "The Screwtape Letters" a required reading for my religious education courses and adding a twist to their lesson. Knowing my classes keen interest in sin, I decided to construct lesson plans utilizing "The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis and cross-referencing the chapters with the CCC.

What I found in this process was a wealth of doctrinal formation that my students instantly gravitated to because they could see the dialogue come alive between Wormwood the understudy and Screwtape the uncle whose instruction dealt with leading souls away from Christ. Using the Catechism gave me the opportunity to introduce the students to the Catechism and what is. Once my students figured out how valuable the Catechism was during this semester course, debunking the methods Screwtape taught Wormwood their secular world view began to change to a Catholic world view.

The success of this process is attributed to sin. Before you start implicating me in inciting heresy, what I mean by this statement is the desire of the human heart to know and understand sin, knowing our concupiscence is something we live with daily. The teenagers I have had the privilege of teaching continually asked me how to avoid sin and seek a closer relationship with Christ. You could see the longing in their eyes for truth that would ease the burden in their souls. With this backdrop, I approached *Screwtape Letters* as an opportunity to help my students know and understand why Christ came into this world.