

TEACHING METHODS AND PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING ASSIGNMENTS

In our zeal to communicate the essentials in a formation program, the development of written and oral assignments that interest and engage the student is all too often neglected. Our goal is to help candidates to discern whether they are called to permanently embrace the Carmelite way of life. In this context, factual learning takes a back seat to faith development; and assignments need to be designed to engage the person in reflection and application of the material studied to daily life.

Various methods and tools of teaching are available to us. Some of these are:

- Lecture
- Guest speakers
- Tapes (to help focus, pose questions)
- Discussion
- Small groups
- Making up questions
- The Socratic method, in which the teacher asks questions that lead a student to understanding
- Brainstorming within the community.

Some possibilities for designing assignments are:

- Fill in the blank comprehension exercises
- Short essay
- Preparation and presentation of oral reports

In written assignments, as in oral discussions, open-ended questions have a greater tendency to generate valuable responses. Three important questions can almost always be used:

1. In your own words, what did you read?
2. How do you relate to it?
3. How does it apply to you as you try to live the ideals of Carmel?

In the pages that follow, we have provided some examples of the use of open-ended questions in written assignments. Variations on some traditional reading comprehension exercises can also be used to advantage. Examples of this can be seen in some of the models that follow, in which fill-in-the-blank questions provide the source document for the answers, but the candidates have to find them in the source document. Short-answer questions could be used in the same manner.