

MODULE 2

Purpose-Driven Narratives

Communicating Through Faith

How to tell stories rooted in values, mission, and integral ecology

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Plataforma de Acción
LAUDATO SI'

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8:00 am Mexico City · 4:00 pm Rome



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A 2-Hour Journey

8:00 – 10:00 am Mexico City · 4:00 – 6:00 pm Rome

Introduction	8:00 – 8:12	12 min
Block 1 — Why Stories Move the World	8:12 – 8:32	20 min
Block 2 — The Architecture of a Powerful Narrative	8:32 – 9:02	30 min
Break	9:02 – 9:07	5 min
Block 3 — Communicating from Faith	9:07 – 9:25	18 min
Block 4 — Storytelling Formats for Digital Platforms	9:25 – 9:50	25 min
Closing & Final Activity	9:50 – 10:00	10 min



Develop the ability to build purpose-driven narratives — rooted in faith, values, and lived experience — so Catholic leaders (you, us 😊) can communicate their mission in ways that **connect emotionally**, **build community**, and **mobilize people** toward the care of our common home.

Rooted in Laudato Si' §209–215 — cultivating ecological awareness through culture, education, and communication.

BLOCK 1 · 20 MINUTES



Why Stories Move the World?

Why We Remember Stories, Not Facts



The neuroscience of storytelling

When we hear a well-told story, the brain doesn't just process information, it **simulates the experience**. Neural coupling causes a listener's brain activity to mirror the storyteller's, while the release of oxytocin builds **empathy** for people we've never met. A bare fact activates only the language-processing regions of the brain; a story activates nearly all of them. That is why we forget statistics but remember stories for years.



Data, information, and story are not the same thing

Data is a number. Information places that number in context. A story gives it meaning — a face, a moment, a reason to care. Digital audiences scroll past raw information in under a second, but they slow down for a story that feels true to their own experience. This is the gap Catholic leaders must close: turning what they know into what people feel.

A Tradition Older Than Social Media



How movements — and the Church — have always told stories

The most effective social movements in history did not spread through data reports; they spread through personal testimony that made an abstract cause feel personal and urgent. The Catholic Church has done this since its beginning — through parables, the lives of saints, and the testimony of conversion and encounter. Digital storytelling is not a new skill Catholic leaders must borrow; it is an inheritance they can translate for the feed and the Reel.



What makes a digital story shareable

People rarely share things purely to inform others — they share to express something about themselves: their values, their hopes, their identity. A story becomes shareable when it gives the viewer something to stand for the moment they press 'share.' A story about the care of creation succeeds when it lets someone say, silently, 'this is who I am too.'



Key idea: faith communities are narrative communities — the Gospel itself is a narrative, and the most powerful climate communication talks about people, land, and futures, not CO₂.



OPENING ACTIVITY

What is the most powerful story you've lived in your community, related to caring for creation?

5 minutes · open floor

BLOCK 2 · 30 MINUTES



The Architecture of a Powerful Narrative

The Shape Every Powerful Story Follows



The classic narrative arc

Every powerful story follows a recognizable shape: a **setup** that establishes who and where, a **conflict** that creates real stakes, a **turning point** where something shifts, a **resolution** that shows change, and a **call to action** that invites the audience to respond. Remove the conflict and what remains is not a story — it's a report. Tension is not a flaw to soften; it's the engine that makes an audience keep watching.



The Hero's Journey, reframed for mission

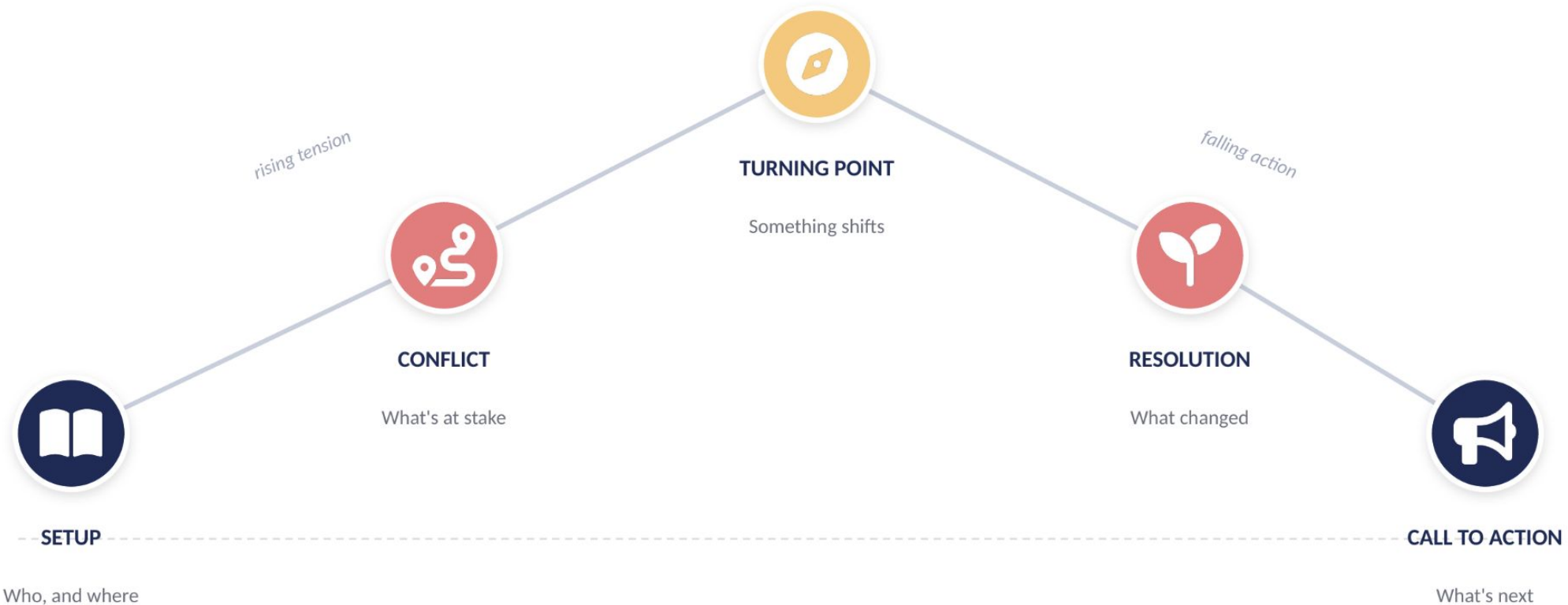
The classic Hero's Journey — ordinary world, call to adventure, trials, transformation, return — translates directly into mission-driven storytelling. But adapted for integral ecology, the 'hero' is rarely a single leader. **More often it's a community, a river, a forest, or the Earth itself** undergoing the trial and the transformation, while the leader's role is simply to bear witness and tell what was seen.



The Shape Every Powerful Story Follows

The Classic Narrative Arc

Setup → Conflict → Turning Point → Resolution → Call to Action



A story without conflict is just a report. Skipping straight from setup to resolution removes the reason to keep watching.

The 3-Part Structure for Digital Stories

Every short-form post, Reel, or testimony can be built on the same three beats.



HOOK

The first 3 seconds of a video, or the first line of a post. It must earn attention before it teaches anything — name the tension, the question, or the surprise up front.



HEART

The lived, human core: what was seen, felt, and lost or risked. This is where the audience stops scrolling and starts feeling — the transformation happens here, not just the facts.



HOPE

A call to action rooted in possibility, not despair — naming what is still at stake, while showing the audience exactly what they can do next.

Choosing the Protagonist, Managing the Tension



Who is the protagonist — you, your community, or the Earth?

The most common mistake in mission-driven storytelling is placing the leader at the center of every story. But the protagonist of an integral-ecology story is rarely the person telling it — it is usually the community doing the work, or creation itself, undergoing harm and renewal. The leader's true role is witness and narrator, not hero: 'I saw this happen to them,' not 'this is what I did.'



Tension vs. trauma: urgency without overwhelm

Tension creates the pull to keep watching. Trauma, described in raw, exploitative detail, creates the urge to look away — and audiences that look away don't act. Effective storytellers name what is genuinely at stake without dwelling on suffering for shock value: enough tension to matter, never so much that the audience disengages to protect itself.

Strategic reflection: How can the story of a river, a forest, or a local market convey the urgency of integral ecology better than a climate statistic?

Reel Script: “The River That Breathed Again”

45 seconds • Hook – Heart – Hope in practice



HOOK

0:00 – 0:03

Visual: Quick cut — murky water with floating trash, then a hard cut to clear water running over stones.

Voice-over: “A year ago, this river was dead.”



HEART

0:03 – 0:35

Visual: The community cleaning the riverbank, planting native trees, children playing near the water.

Voice-over: “It wasn't an environmental NGO that saved it. It was our parish. We started with ten people and trash bags, one Saturday a month. Doña Carmen, 74 years old, never missed a single one. Father Andrés kept telling us: 'caring for the river is caring for the poor who live off it.' Eight months later, the fish came back. The children came back to swim.”

ON-SCREEN TEXT: “8 months • 40 volunteers • 1 river restored”



HOPE

0:35 – 0:45

Visual: The community smiling by the river, golden sunset light.

Voice-over: “If a river can come back to life, your community can start too. You don't need to be an expert — you need a Saturday and a trash bag.”

Group Analysis: Deconstruct the Example

-  Who is the protagonist?
-  What is the conflict or tension?
-  What is the transformation?
-  What is the call to action?
-  What emotion does it generate?





5-MINUTE BREAK

BLOCK 3 · 18 MINUTES



Communicating from Faith

The Catholic Narrative Advantage

Speaking from Encounter, Not Argument



The prophetic tradition

Prophets in Scripture did not argue from abstract principle — they spoke from what they had witnessed and lived. Catholic communicators today can draw on that same authority: not 'I have researched this issue,' but 'I have seen this, and it has changed me.' This is a credibility that data alone can never produce.



Hope vs. fear in ecological communication

Fear-based narratives can capture attention quickly, but they tend to produce **paralysis** or **defensiveness** rather than action. Hope-based narratives name the real crisis honestly, while insisting that **change is still possible** — and audiences that trust a message's honesty are far more likely to act on its invitation. 'Prophetic optimism' means naming what is wrong while insisting on what is possible.



Laudato Si' as a Model — and a Format You Can Use



Testimony: 'I saw, I was transformed, I invite you'

This is one of the oldest and most credible narrative structures in the Christian tradition, and it maps perfectly onto a 30-second Reel or a three-line caption. It requires no theological training — only honesty about what someone has actually witnessed and how it changed them.



How Laudato Si' itself is built as a story

The encyclical does not open with a table of statistics. It opens by naming the beauty of creation, before naming the crisis it faces, and closes with a call to conversion and action. That same emotional arc — beauty, crisis, call to action — is a template any leader can borrow for a single post or a full campaign, and it works for secular audiences too: sharing a personal encounter, rather than doctrinal language, lets anyone connect with the emotional truth of the message.



Local communities are already living Laudato Si' — and youth and faith communities have a distinct role to play as narrators of ecological hope.



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Write a 3-sentence testimony

I saw...

I felt...

I believe / I invite you to...

Share.

BLOCK 4 · 25 MINUTES



Storytelling Formats for Digital Platforms

One Story, Many Formats



The same story doesn't need to be retold — it needs to be re-cut

A single testimony can become an Instagram post, a Reel, a Twitter/X thread, a WhatsApp message, or a YouTube Short without changing its substance. The Instagram carousel might lead with the 'heart' image; the Reel might open with the 'hook' as an on-screen caption; the WhatsApp message might skip straight to 'hope' as a direct invitation to act. Knowing the Hook–Heart–Hope structure means one lived experience can fuel a week of content.



Image, sound, and voice carry the emotion

On visual platforms, the voice behind the camera or caption carries as much emotional weight as the footage itself. A shaky, sincere clip narrated in someone's own voice will often out-perform polished but impersonal production — because **authenticity**, not production value, is what audiences are responding to.



Telling Stories with Dignity



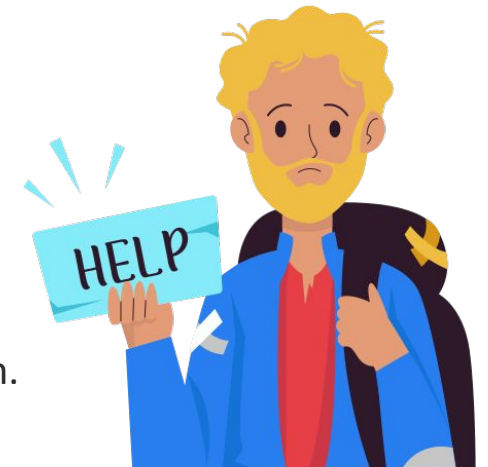
Ethical storytelling: does dignity survive being shared?

Consent, context, and a communal — not extractive — benefit are what distinguish authentic testimony from imagery that reduces someone's suffering into content for someone else's engagement. Before publishing, ask: would this person want to be seen this way? Do they know how their story will be used?



Avoiding 'poverty porn' and 'eco-doom'

Images designed purely to shock — extreme suffering, apocalyptic devastation — can spike engagement briefly, but repeated exposure without hope produces disengagement, not action. The goal is always stories that mobilize, never stories that paralyze.



Strategic reflection: What stories from our communities are not being told? What is stopping us from telling them?

TESTIMONY

Muriel Fleury

Director of Communications, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

A first-hand account of storytelling in service of the Church's global mission — bringing Block 1–4 concepts to life through real Vatican communications practice.



Introducing Muriel Fleury

Alonso de Llanes

1 min



Testimony

Muriel Fleury (French)

12 min

“My Story for Our Common Home”

Each participant writes a short personal narrative (5–7 sentences):

1



Context

Where am I, and what matters to me?

2



Encounter

What did I see, hear, or experience?

3



Transformation

How did it change me or my community?

4



Invitation

What do I want others to feel or do?

Deliverable: uses the Hook – Heart – Hope framework, and becomes the foundation for personal branding in Module 3.

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The world doesn't need more information about the climate crisis — it needs more witnesses and hope.

Storytelling is not a communication technique; it is an act of faith in the power of truth to move hearts and transform action.

THANK YOU

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Every voice has a story worth telling.

What you leave with today:

- The Hook – Heart – Hope framework for short digital stories
- A first personal narrative connected to integral ecology
- Tools to tell your community's stories with dignity and purpose
- A foundation to build on in Module 3: Personal Branding

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