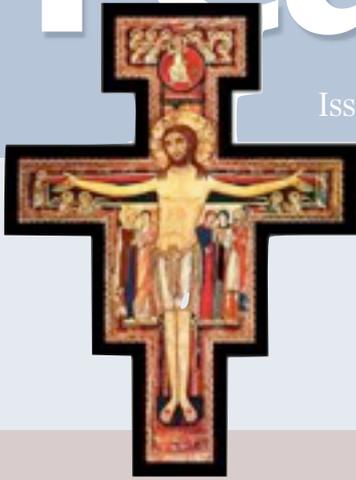


Year of Faith

Issue Number 5

St Ethelbert's Parish, Deane, Bolton



The media is often anti-Catholic. Why?

The Catholic church receives criticism because it goes against the grain of popular society. It is the target of bigotry because it preaches the gospel, stands for absolute values, and represents Christ. As a wise person once said, "You can avoid criticism by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing." Opposing popular society — being countercultural — will eventually elicit negative comments, even hatred. But this should not surprise us. Jesus himself said that if we want to follow him, we should expect to receive a cross. And, getting this kind of reaction means the church is probably doing something right. Another wise voice said, "It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone." Certainly, today we do not see the type of widespread discrimination against Catholics that earlier generations experienced. But in recent years, there have been very visible examples of anti-Catholicism. Prevalent is the popular media's distorted and unfair profiles of the church and church teaching. Russell Shaw, a Catholic journalist, claims that the media drive the "new" anti-Catholicism by giving preferential coverage to dissenters in the Catholic church. An impartial study - Media Coverage of the Catholic Church - documents the media's unfair treatment of official church teaching. If the media are distorting Catholic teaching, we can certainly understand why some people dislike Catholics. Prejudice, after all, is a prejudgment made on insufficient information. Studies also reveal that most in the media (TV and print reporters, movie producers and actors, and other opinion makers) do not go to church. Rather, they consider themselves "secular humanists" who oppose religion, with its core belief in the supernatural and a supreme being - Almighty God. What seems to rankle many of these secularists is the church's strong and consistent stand on issues like abortion, contraception, moral relativism, and consumerism. Let's be fair, though. Some of the criticism aimed at the church results from the sins of a few of its most visible members. In recent years, for example, the molesting of children by some priests has received massive media attention. No one can excuse this abuse. It is wrong. It tragically hurts the persons affected. But let us remember that only a very small percentage of people commit these crimes which the media love to sensationalize. A closing thought: Sailors in the North Sea marvel at how icebergs float in the opposite direction of powerful winds. The reason for this is that eight-ninths of the mass of the typical iceberg is underwater and reacts to the hidden currents. It is like that with the church. The Holy Spirit is guiding the church and helping it to resist - even in the face of criticism - the contrary winds of the modern age. The "hidden current" is the Holy Spirit of God.

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The Gospel means "Good News". What Good News are we bringing today?

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Have You Heard The News?

The Fathers of Vatican II, Paul VI, and John Paul II, prompted a major development in the church's understanding of itself when they placed evangelization at the very centre of ecclesial concern. They taught us that everything in the church—preaching, liturgy, pastoral care, striving for social justice—has to do finally with announcing the Lordship of Jesus Christ and drawing people into a share in his life. In the years since the Council, however, something odd has happened: when you say the word “evangelization,” eyes seem to glaze over and people quickly lose interest. Perhaps it's because we've used the term so often that it's become a catch-all, meaning everything and nothing. Or maybe it's just that, despite all of the

endorsement from council and popes, evangelization still strikes Catholics as vaguely Protestant, just not something that “we” do. Given the etymology of the word (“euangelion,” glad tidings), here's the bottom line: evangelization must be about something very good and very new. In the Acts of the Apostles, we find an account of the first Christian preaching. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles are ecstatically proclaiming Jesus on Pentecost morning. St. Peter gets the attention of the people with these words, “You who are staying in Jerusalem, these men are not drunk, as you suppose!” Now that tells us a great deal about the quality of enthusiasm and commitment in the proto-evangelists. They had been struck by something so wonderful and unexpected,

that they couldn't contain themselves; they wanted to grab everyone around them by the lapels (if I can be permitted an anachronism!) and tell them the news. And what is this desperately important message: “Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs. ... This man you killed, using lawless men to

crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death.” The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the “euangelion,” the good news, the Gospel, and announcing it with a contagious, compelling enthusiasm is evangelization.

Father Robert Barron



“Never rob the Cross of its power!”

The Power of Love

Mother Teresa of Calcutta evangelised through love in action. Here are some of her thoughts that can inspire us to live the Gospel everyday – the “Good News”



Love cannot remain by itself - it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action and that action is service. How do we put the love for God in action? By being faithful to our family, to the duties that God has entrusted to us. Whatever form we are, able or disabled, rich or poor, it is not how much we do but how much love we put in the doing, a lifelong sharing of love with others. Today our poor of the world are

looking up at you. Do you look back at them with compassion? Do you have compassion for the people who are hungry? They are hungry not only for bread and for rice, they are hungry to be recognised as human beings. They are hungry for you to know that they have their dignity, that they want to be treated as you are treated. They are hungry for love.