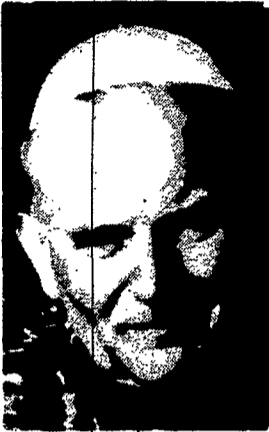


Catholic Schools Job: Communicating Christ

Following is a message from Pope John Paul II which was delivered via videotape to Catholic teachers and administrators at the NCEA convention in Philadelphia in the Spring.

It is a joy for me to address the members of the National Catholic Educational Association as you assemble in the great cause of Catholic education. Through you I would hope that my message of encouragement and blessing would also reach the numerous Catholic schools of your country, all the students and teachers of the institutions and all those generously committed to Catholic education. With the Apostle Peter I send you my greeting in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ: "peace to all of you who are in Christ" (1 Peter 5: 14).



As Catholic educators, assembled in the communion of the universal Church and in prayer, you will certainly share with each other insights of value that will assist you in your important work, in your ecclesial mission. The Holy Spirit is with you and the Church is deeply grateful for your dedication. The Pope speaks to you in order to confirm you in your lofty role as Catholic educators, to assist you, to direct you, to support you.

Among the many reflections that could be made at this time, there are three points in particular to which I would like to make a brief reference at the beginning of my pontificate. These are: the value of Catholic

'This is a great vocation and the Lord Himself will reward all who serve in it . . .'

schools, the importance of Catholic teachers and educators, and the nature of Catholic education itself.

These are themes that have been developed at length by my predecessors. At this time, however, it is important that I add my own testimony to theirs, in the special hope of giving a new impulse to Catholic education throughout the vast area of the United States of America.

With profound conviction I ratify and reaffirm the words that Paul VI spoke originally to the bishops of your country: "Brethren, we know the difficulties involved in preserving Catholic schools, and the uncertainties of the future, and yet we rely on the help of God and on your own zealous collaboration and untiring efforts, so that Catholic schools can continue, despite grave obstacles, to fulfill their providential role at the service of genuine Catholic education, and at the service of your country." Yes, the Catholic school must remain a privileged means of Catholic education in America. As an instrument of the apostolate it is worthy of the greatest sacrifices.

But no Catholic school can be effective without dedicated Catholic teachers, convinced of the great ideal of Catholic education. The Church needs men and women who are intent on teaching by word and example -- intent on helping to permeate the whole educational milieu with the spirit of Christ. This is a great vocation, and the Lord Himself will reward all who serve in it as educators in the cause of the Word of God.

In order that the Catholic school and the Catholic teachers may truly make their irreplaceable contribution to the Church and to the world, the goal of Catholic education itself must be crystal clear. Beloved sons and daughters, Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others. In the expression of the Second Vatican Council, those who have been baptized must be made ever more aware of the gift of faith that they have received, they must learn to adore the Father in spirit and in truth, and they must be trained to live the newness of Christian life in justice and the holiness of truth.

These are indeed essential aims of Catholic education. To foster and promote them gives meaning to the Catholic school; it spells out the dignity of the vocation of Catholic educators.

Yes, it is above all a question of communicating Christ, and helping His uplifting Gospel to take root in the hearts of the faithful. Be strong, therefore, in pursuing these goals. The cause of Catholic education is the cause of Jesus Christ and of His Gospel at the service of man.

More Opinions

Death Penalty No Deterrent

Editor:

We appreciate and commend the Courier-Journal for its support against the death penalty. Your articles dealing with the death penalty have been very informative and very good. We urge you to continue in your endeavors to foster a respect for life -- even for that of the criminal.

We would like to add a few of our thoughts to this issue. In reflecting on the question of the death penalty we should not be willing to abandon hope for the reformation of any human being. We are called by a higher order to respect all human life, even the life of an individual whose actions seem to reject all reason for respect.

The critical question for us is how we can best foster respect for life, preserve the dignity of the human person and manifest the redemptive message of Christ.

We are not blind to the rising rate of crime. The senseless killings and other acts of violence which mark our times are barbaric. It is understandable that people are afraid. In our fear, it is easy to be inclined to return injury for injury, blow for blow, to "even the score" and seek the death penalty as a deterrent to capital crimes.

Criminals must be brought to justice, but we do not believe that more deaths is the solution to violent crime. Statistics show that the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime.

We need to seek methods of dealing with violent crime - methods which respond to

the causes of crime rather than react to the crime itself. What caused the individual to commit the crime? Drugs? Unemployment? Passion? Is it not more constructive to work toward the elimination of the cause rather than the elimination of the person guilty of the crime?

The death penalty does not deter. It does not make society safer. It does not save taxpayers' money. It does provide vengeful retribution and is a discriminatory sentence levied by the courts upon minority groups and the poor.

We urge all people to begin an even stronger campaign to overcome the view that the violence of the state is a moral response to the violence of an individual.

Please write to Gov. Carey supporting him in his stand against the death penalty; write to your legislators in Albany urging them not to support any death penalty bill and specifically to vote against any attempts to re-establish the death penalty in New York State. Thank you.

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Fr. Cuddy 'Slips'

Editor:

Father Cuddy, long time Courier-Journal columnist, is a stickler for accuracy and takes pains in writing and rewriting his OTRS every week. All the more

reason then for questioning a phrase he misuses too often.

In chronicling his peregrinations through the diocese Father Cuddy frequently writes that he "slipped into" some rectory or "slipped east into Auburn" (7/11/79). Is he deliberately trying to mislead his readers into picturing him as a svelte, lithesome figure? I fear he is weakening his credibility and should face the fact that he carries too much weight to be able to "slip into" any place or any thing.

On a nostalgic note I recall the days fifty years ago when my then seminary classmate was a slim right fielder on the Moabites and was able to "slip". He has long since waxed strong and grown in wisdom, knowledge and avoirdupois.

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Ad Abuses Sacrament

Editor:

A word of protest is due Radio Station WROC for its presentation of "Adolph's Meat Tenderizer" ad.

By referring to the "abuse" of a beefsteak as "giving it the last rites" the ad makes a deliberate mockery of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

Humor is an enjoyable gift to be shared with others -- but not at the expense of the Sacraments of the Church.

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Insights in Liturgy

By David E. Nowak

Spirituality Of the Preface

"Through his cross and resurrection he freed us from sin and death and called us to the glory that has made us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart."

"Everywhere we proclaim your mighty words, for you have called us out of darkness into your own wonderful light." (P 29).

One of the most important sources we have for knowing ourselves is how other people see us. Often, others can tell us best how helpful we have been when they needed us. Or, when we have failed them, they can remind us why we should not be too hard on ourselves.

Ordinarily, this is the role we give to our friends. We need them to give us a balanced and complete picture of both our strengths and weaknesses by letting us see ourselves through their eyes. We rely upon them to know us, sometimes even better than we know ourselves. We trust them to share their experience of us honestly, to love us even when we have let them down.

Similarly, the Preface for Sundays in Ordinary Time I invites us to take a stand in God's imagination of us. In it we recall that God sees us in the image of his Son, "through his cross and resurrection." We are reminded that God thinks of us, chooses us, as friends.

From God's perspective

we have been "set apart," "freed" to share his glory. He has shown us a way out of the darkness of "sin and death," and he sees in us the great things, "the mighty works," he has done. In his eyes we are a living reminder of his "own wonderful (admirable) light." He admires us as he sees himself in us.

This is not easy for us to accept. We shy away from being told we are admired, especially when it is just because of who we are. We do not feel we deserve to be loved unless we have done something to earn it. And even then we can be preoccupied with failure, with losing love unless we resolve to do still more next time. To allow ourselves to be admired is to give up our own self-appraisal long enough to see ourselves as others do. Ultimately, it requires that we love ourselves as the one others love, rather than as the one we pretend to be.

To see ourselves as God sees us is an exercise in wonder. To know ourselves as we are known by God is to marvel with him over the wonderful works of creation and redemption. It is to see through God's eyes the world as it was meant to be, as the unfolding of the mystery we celebrate. It is to proclaim "everywhere," in all we say and do, that in Christ God and humanity are inseparably one.

This traditional Preface (Gelasian Sacramentary, c. 5th century) announces our eminent dignity, a new vision of ourselves seen through the generous and creative love of God. It

reveals in the insight that we know ourselves truly only when we know ourselves in the vision of being loved by God, that "love which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:9)

This is the mystery at the heart of all our prayer. This is our reason for being Church, for gathering as a worshipping community, as Gerry Broccolo has written, "people making love to God together." This is "the mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations, but now is clearly shown to his saints," nothing less than "Christ in you, your hope in glory." (Col. 1:20,27)

God's vision of us through the death and resurrection of Christ is God's plan that we share his perfection in the fullness of Christ. It is the revelation that we are "being transformed into his very image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18) In the highest sense, the mystery we proclaim in our eucharistic praise is God himself. It is God as he is in the depths of his being (1 Cor. 2:10), as he is revealed to us in Christ, and as we are called into his light, shining in our hearts, "that we in turn might make known the glory of God." (2 Cor. 4:6)

The Christian mystery is not an ancient rite, or our interpretation of an ancient rite. It is simply the fullness of God filling all things. It is our fundamental ministry, our fundamental liturgia, our experience of the glory of God shown forth in his creation that God may be all in all. This is our faith, the saving event of God's plan, even now, unfolding in us, "that we should be called, and should be children of God." (1 Jn 3:1)