

Home Mission Briefing

'You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love at which we do them.' St Thérèse of Lisieux

A monthly news roundup for the Catholic community in England and Wales

Easter 2010

DIOCESE:

Northampton Diocese has engaged in a process of renewal called 'Walk Humbly with your God.' One of the main foci is reflecting on the marks of a thriving Catholic Community. See: <http://www.northamptondiocese.org/%7enew-areas-and-timetable.aspx>

INITIATIVE:

The Keeping in Touch (KIT) team has recently launched a website to provide resources to support outreach to resting Catholics. See: <http://www.kit4catholics.org.uk>



ENQUIRIES:

Jean emailed the Catholic Enquiry Office recently: 'I am not a member of your church, but as invited on your website, I would be very grateful to receive a free publication.' Please hold Jean and those who contact us in your prayers.

MISSION DIGITAL:

According to an OFCOM report, the UK is one of the world's most advanced countries for digital communications. How can we respond? See this year's World Communications Day message. http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/media_centre/world_communications_day/world_communications_day_2010



ECUMENISM:

The Church Army has launched 'Now a Christian' which is a short email/web based course for people who want to find out a bit more about how Christianity could make a difference to their lives. See: www.nowachristian.org

Pope invites faithful to know Jesus

Being a witness to Christ presupposes knowing him first hand, not just being told of him by others, said Pope Benedict XVI at a recent general audience.



Reflecting on the theme for this year's theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 'You are witnesses of these things,' taken from the Gospel of Luke - the Holy Father considered what is referred to with the phrase 'these things.'

'If we look at the context of the chapter [of Luke], "these things" means above all the cross and resurrection,' he explained. 'The disciples have seen the Lord's crucifixion, they see the Risen One and thus begin to understand all the Scriptures that speak of the mystery of the passion and of the gift of the resurrection. "These things," therefore, is the mystery of Christ, of the Son of God made man.'

However, the Pontiff continued, that the essential point here is that by knowing Christ, 'we know the face of God.'

'Christ is above all the revelation of God. In all times, men have perceived the existence of God, an only God, but who is far away and does not show himself. In Christ this God shows himself; the distant God becomes close. "These things," therefore, above all with the mystery of Christ, is that God has become close to us,' he explained.

And he continued: 'This implies another dimension: Christ is never alone; he came in our midst, died alone, but resurrected to attract everyone to himself. As Scripture

says, Christ created a body for himself, gathers the whole of humanity in his reality of immortal life. [...] All this, therefore, is very simple, in the last instance: We know God by knowing Christ, his body, the mystery of the Church and the promise of eternal life.'

A second question arises, Benedict XVI suggested: 'How can we be witnesses of "these things"?' The answer, he affirmed, is that we can be witnesses only by knowing Christ, 'and, knowing Christ, also knowing God.' The Pontiff contended that 'we can be witnesses only if we know Christ first hand, and not only through others -- from our own life, from our personal encounter with Christ. Finding him really in our life of faith, we become witnesses and can contribute to the novelty of the world, to eternal life.'

Full text: <http://www.zenit.org/article-28108?l=english>

Papal Visit: An opportunity to evangelise

During the recent visit of the English and Welsh Bishops to Rome the Holy Father confirmed his intention to come to Great Britain. This news was warmly welcomed by Archbishop Vincent Nichols who said that, 'The entire Catholic community looks forward to this much hoped-for visit and the encouragement you will give not only to us but to all our fellow citizens.'

It will be a historic moment for the people of our countries, and as such presents itself as an evangelisation opportunity. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14, Pope Paul VI writes, 'Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection.' The Holy Father will first and foremost come to us therefore to preach the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The question is how will each one of us use his coming to witness to the joy of being followers of Jesus?

Some resources will be made available by the Home Mission Desk to support parishes in this task, but it will be up to each one of us during these months of preparation to consider and prepare our own local response. Do contact our Home Mission Desk with news of what you're planning so that ideas and resources can be shared as the momentum grows.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Kieran Conry
Chair of the Department of
Evangelisation and Catechesis, Bishop
of Arundel and Brighton



Faith Sense: Suffering and natural disasters

Many Catholics want to share their faith but often express that they don't know what to say when people ask them questions. To help the baptised grow in confidence, the Home Mission Desk will regularly offer a short audio resource summarising an aspect of Catholic teaching. This month's focus is suffering and natural disasters. It can be accessed from the Bishops' Conference website at: http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/ccb/catholic_church/features

The introduction to the resource reads: 'All over the world, at some time or another, people are suffering. From viewing images of the impact of earthquakes and tsunamis, to hearing about a friend or relative having a terminal illness, it can all seem not to make any rational sense. Many people find themselves asking: "How can a loving God allow suffering and natural disasters to happen? What possible purpose could there be to suffering and surely it all makes for a grim vision of our existence on earth?"'

Rev Dr James Hanvey SJ offers reflective responses to these questions.



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Trafalgar Square To Host The Passion

It has been announced that a cast of more than 100 actors from Surrey will give a performance of The Passion of Christ in Trafalgar Square this Easter. The actors from the Wintershall Estate near Bramley, will act out the drama of Christ's trial, crucifixion and resurrection for thousands of people in London.

The event will be staged on the afternoon of Good Friday, April 2, coinciding with the most solemn moment of the year for Christians when Jesus' crucifixion is commemorated.

(Source: <http://mediapoint.press.net/article.jsp?id=6434868>)

What is a Catholic?



If someone were to ask you this question what would you say and how would you respond?

Two resources are currently available to help Catholics provide an answer with confidence: A 'What is a Catholic?' PowerPoint and accompanying leaflet.

The materials have been created in partnership with the Seekers' Evangelisation Team in North Wales (Wrexham Diocese). Both items assume no prior knowledge of the Christian faith and can also be used to reintroduce Catholics to the basics, not least outlining how the Catholic Faith is distinctive from other Christian denominations. The word 'What' rather than 'Who' has been chosen deliberately to reflect how people are most likely to phrase the question.

The two resources are downloadable from: http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/catholic_church/catholic_bishops_conference_of_england_and_wales/departments/evangelisation_and_catechesis/adult_formation_and_catechesis

Research: Christianity Survey

To accompany BBC TV's 'A History of Christianity,' the Open University has been conducting an online survey to find out: What it means to be a Christian without a church? What exactly do people mean nowadays when they describe themselves as Christian?

At the time of the last UK Census, over 70% of people described themselves as Christians. Just 15% said they belonged to, or were active members of, a church. The research aims to explain the difference between these numbers. The responses make for fascinating reading.

For the initial results see: <http://www.open2.net/christianity/survey.html>

BBC TV: *The Big Silence*

Coming soon: A new three-part documentary series, *The Big Silence*. Five people attempt to put silence at the heart of their everyday, busy lives and learn what to do with it once it's there. The series investigates just why 'peace and quiet' is so elusive.