

Home Mission Briefing

'The missionary spirit of the Church is none other than the impulse to communicate the joy which has been given.'
 Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas address to the Roman Curia, 2008

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

May 2010

DIOCESE:

Understanding Islam is the title of a course currently being offered at the Christian Education Centre, Archdiocese of Southwark. The course content links with the new Bishops' Conference document on inter-religious dialogue. See: www.cectootingbec.btik.com

INITIATIVE:

Fanning the Flame is a Catholic mission which aims to encourage everyone to grow in and share their faith: <http://www.ffcm.com/dk/?action=frontpage>



ENQUIRIES:



Ian contacted the Catholic Enquiry Office this month to ask: 'Can you be a godparent in a denomination different from your own?' (Name changed to protect)

TECHNOLOGY:

Italian, Fr Paolo Padrini, wanted to put the new technologies at the service of the spiritual life of Catholics and priests. He came up with the *iBreviary* initiative, which digitised the Liturgy of the Hours for use on the iPhone and iPad.



ECUMENISM:

Biblefresh is a movement of churches, agencies, colleges and festivals seeking to encourage and inspire churches across the UK to a greater confidence and appetite for the Word of God. See: <http://www.biblefresh.com/>

Authentic Witness

Speaking when he met with bishops at the Shrine of Fatima, Portugal, on 13th May, the Holy Father said:

'The times in which we live demand a new missionary vigour on the part of Christians, who are called to form a mature laity, identified with the Church and sensitive to the complex transformations taking place in our world. Authentic witnesses to Jesus Christ are needed, above all in those human situations where the silence of the faith is most widely and deeply felt.'

'When many people consider that the Catholic faith is no longer the common patrimony of society, and see it as a seed threatened and obscured by the "gods" and masters of this world, only with great difficulty can the faith touch the hearts of people by simple speeches or moral appeals, and even less by a generic call to Christian values.'

The courageous and integral appeal to principles is essential and indispensable; yet simply proclaiming the message does not penetrate to the depths of people's hearts, it does not touch their freedom, it does not change their lives. What attracts them, above all, is the encounter with believing persons who, through their faith, draw others to the grace of Christ by bearing witness to Him.'

Turning then to consider the movements and new ecclesial communities, which he described as a 'new springtime' for the Church, the Holy Father said: 'Thanks to their charisms, the radicality of the Gospel, the objective contents of the faith, the living flux of Church tradition, are all being communicated in a persuasive way and welcomed as a personal experience, as free adherence to the mystery of Christ.'

He ended: 'Rekindle, as individuals and as a group, a sense of mercy and of compassion, in order to respond to grave social needs. New

organisations must be established, and those already existing perfected, in order to respond creatively to all forms of poverty, including those experienced as a lack of meaning in life and an absence of hope.'

www.zenit.org/english
 VIS 2010051



Sharing Our Story

One of the emphases of our work at the Bishops' Conference as we prepare for the Pope's visit, is to support and encourage people to reflect on a moment when God spoke to them heart-to-heart, and to share it.

Throughout the ages sharing faith, or to put it another way, giving testimony to the work of God in our lives, has been one of the most effective and powerful tools of evangelisation. During the first centuries AD, when Christianity was an underground movement for fear of Roman persecution, faith spread and was taught during small group gatherings and through one-to-one conversations. Faith sharing was part of the culture of the early Church and it's the simplest way today that we can share with others the joy of knowing we are loved by God.

The Home Mission Desk and partners will be providing resources over the summer to help people faith share in groups and one-to-one. At the moment, faith testimonies from some of our bishops are being videoed and it's been beautiful to witness their passion and sincerity of expression, to see them speaking from the heart. It makes for powerful viewing because it provides a glimpse of what and who is their treasure in life. We are called to share faith in this same way in our lives.

When we start doing anything new, it's to be expected that we won't get it right first time, so it can be helpful to practice. When sharing something of your faith story, be prepared to allow God to use your seemingly failed attempts. Confidence will grow the more faith sharing and reflection are part of your daily routine. In this way you never miss an opportunity to speak of his love and light.

Clare Ward
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*(The full text of this article is in **The Universe** newspaper, 30th May 2010.)*



Resources in support of the Papal Visit will be published online over the summer months. See: www.thepapalvisit.org.uk

Faith Sense: Basis of Authority

This month's audio resource to support Catholics to grow in confidence and knowledge of their faith, summarises the Catholic understanding of Church authority.



In response to recent news stories members of Catholic churches in England and Wales are increasingly being asked to explain their beliefs. Such are the challenges and difficulties being faced that for some it has provoked heartfelt questioning about the basis of religious authority. Which authority bases are true and good? How can a Church claim to speak and teach with authority when its members are so flawed? Can anyone truly claim to have the moral high ground? These and other questions are explored by Fr Stephen Wang, Dean of Studies at Allen Hall Seminary, London. This file will shortly be available at: www.catholicchurch.org.uk/Catholic-Church/features

Volunteering in Parishes

This resource promotes best practice in enabling participation in mission and ministry. The materials are specifically designed for clergy and lay leaders. All the core resources are rooted in prayer, scripture and sound theology. The practical step-by-step, approaches aim to:

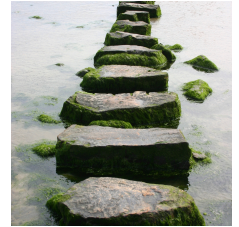
- equip
- energise
- enable

greater participation in the life of communities. See: www.volunteeringinparishes.org.uk/



Papal Visit and Parish Resources

By 20th June every parish in England and Wales should have received a booklet which has been created to support local preparations for the Papal Visit. Resources and ideas are offered in it under seven different 'pathways': Prayer, Formation, Promotion, Local Events, Journey of Faith Witness, Service and Daily Life. In addition to sending representatives to some of the national Papal events it is hoped that every parish will consider organising at least one initiative locally in service of Home Mission.



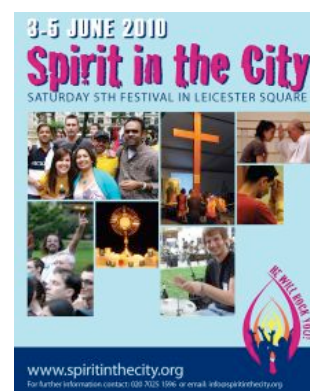
Research: Statistics

Over nine years, the Catholic presence in the world has grown from 1.045 billion in 2000 to 1.166 billion in 2008, an increase of 11.54%.

The figures were released in a new edition of the Statistical Yearbook of the Church, comprising information from 2000 to 2008. Numbers in Africa grew by 33%, in Europe they remained generally stable (an increase of 1.17%), while in Asia they increased by 15.61%, in Oceania by 11.39% and in America by 10.93%.

Spirit in the City

This is an exciting Catholic festival in the heart of London – with a fantastic programme lined up on Thursday 3rd June/Friday 4th June. Amongst the contributors are Fr. Stan Fortuna and



Archbishop Vincent Nichols. There will be street outreach, processions and the BIG DAY OUT in Leicester Square on Saturday 5th June with concerts

and workshops. For a detailed programme see www.spiritinthecity.org/.