

Home Mission Briefing

‘Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. And suddenly the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two.’ Mt 27: 50-51

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

March 2011

DIO:GESE

East Anglia Diocese is home to the National Shrine of Our Lady which is this year celebrating the 950th anniversary of its foundation. See: <http://www.walsingham.org.uk/>



INITIATIVE:

GOOD NEWS Magazine includes testimonies, prayers, feature articles and information about Catholic events across the UK. It's now available free online: <http://www.ccr.org.uk/goodnews.htm>



MEDIA

There be dragons is the name of a recent film release about the founder of Opus Dei, St. Josemaría Escrivá. It is set in background of the Spanish Civil War: <http://www.zenit.org/article-32028?l=english>

ECUMENISM

Christian Nightlife celebrates the impact of faith based initiatives working within the night-time economy (between 5pm and 6am) of towns and cities across the UK: <http://cninet.weebly.com/>

Parables for Today

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom by referring to elements from his environment: fields, seeds, flocks and other images, said Pope Benedict XVI recently. He added that we are called to discover new symbols and metaphors, in order to proclaim the Gospel to a digital culture.

The Pope made this reflection when he addressed participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

The Holy Father centered his reflection on the concept of 'language.' He referred to his Message for World Communications Day, which speaks of the cultural transformation being brought about by new communications technology.

'A new way of learning and thinking is being carried out, with unheard of opportunities to establish relationships

and to build communion,' he said.

In that context, the Holy Father offered a reflection on 'the fact that thought and relationship always occur in the form of language, understood of course in a general sense, not just verbal.'

Language, he said, is not just a 'provisional coating of concepts,' but rather the 'living and palpating context in which the thoughts, concerns and projects of men are born to the conscience and are molded in gestures, symbols and words.'

'Hence, man not only "uses" but in a certain way "inhabits" the language,' the Pope stated.

The language being developed for digital communication has particular tendencies, Benedict XVI observed, as it tends more to emotion and intuition than analysis, giving priority to images. There is no longer a clear distinction between

written and spoken language, as writing in this digital world is taking the form and immediacy of oral communication.

The person, of course, is involved in this communication.

'When persons exchange information, they are already sharing themselves and their vision of the world,' the Pope clarified. 'They become "witnesses" of what gives meaning to their existence.'

Full text: <http://www.zenit.org/article-31878?l=english>



Image: www.ebibleteacher.com

Fasting and Abstinence

Archbishop Vincent Nichols has called for a return to the tradition of self-sacrifice and abstinence during Lent.

He said recently that Catholics should give up meat on Fridays and practice self-denial with increased giving to the poor. The Archbishop suggested that self-sacrifice during Lent could help people cope with their busy lives.

A letter expressing his views has been read out at churches in the Archdiocese of Westminster. He acknowledged that the increased pace of life has left less time for spiritual practices, but he insisted that self-denial and reflection could actually help people cope with stressful lives.

Speaking on Radio 5 Live he called on people to give up meat on Fridays until Easter, or some other favourite food. He also shared that he always gives up alcohol during Lent and while such abstinence was 'essentially a spiritual exercise' there could be 'a lot of other benefits to it', such as losing weight.

'And I think you will find you get a better balance,' he said. 'When we make space for God, we get a bit more peace ourselves and there's more space for others as well.'

(Adapted from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12657101>)

During Lent we are all invited to turn back to God who loves and forgives us unconditionally. We are encouraged to spend more time in prayer, to practice self-denial and engage in charitable works. The season of Lent offers us an opportunity to step back and reflect on our relationship with Jesus and with others.

Pope John Paul II wrote: 'The parable of the prodigal son expresses in a simple but profound way the reality of conversion. Conversion is the most concrete expression of the working of love and of the presence of mercy in the human world...' (*Dives in Misericordia*).

Encouraged by the invitation issued by Archbishop Nichols and the late Pope John Paul II I pray that the remainder of Lent will be a time of immense grace for us all and that we may be ever more attentive to embracing ways of signposting others to the Cross of Jesus.

Clare Ward, Home Mission Advisor

Ash Witness



Catholics across England and Wales were invited to wear their ashes with confidence earlier this month to witness to their faith.

Bishop Kieran Conry, Chair of the Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis, said: 'Ash Wednesday is the start of Lent when we are invited for forty days to set aside more time for prayer and fasting in preparation for Easter. The Ashes, made in the sign of the cross on our foreheads on this day, are an outward sign of our inward sorrow for our sins and of our commitment to Jesus as Our Lord and Saviour.'

'The wearing of the ashes provides us with a wonderful opportunity to share with people how important our faith is to us and to point them to the cross of Christ... Please try not to rub off your ashes as soon as you leave church, but take the sign of the cross to all those that you meet - in your school, office, factory, wherever you may be. This might just make people curious and wonder why you would do this. If you explain about Lent and Easter it might just make them think and may even awaken in them the questions that might lead to faith. Many people have a dim awareness of Lent and even ashes. It would be good to make this clear rather than dim.'

'Don't underestimate the power of this simple action... This small step could awaken faith in the hearts of many that you meet in a way that words could never do so.'

Full text: http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/Catholic-Church/Media-Centre/press_releases/Press-Releases-2011/Wear-Your-Ashes-To-Witness-To-Your-Faith

CTS on Facebook

The Catholic Truth Society, Publishers to the Holy See, has recently launched on Facebook.

Two recent publications are Pope Benedict XVI book 'Jesus of Nazareth Vol II' as well as the new translation of the Roman Missal for England, Wales, Scotland and Australia. See: <http://www.facebook.com/CTSpublishers>

Place for the Cross

The European Court of Human Rights ruled by 15 votes to two this month that the presence of the crucifix in the classrooms of Italian public schools is in conformity with the European Convention of Human Rights. It reverses the previous decision unanimously adopted.

The Court announced that Italian 'regulations confer on the country's majority religion preponderant visibility in the school environment' but that 'that is not in itself sufficient, however, to denote a process of indoctrination.' In other words, the Court ruled that 'school curricula or provisions establishing the preponderance of the majority religion did not in themselves point to undue influence on the part of the State or attempted indoctrination.'

Full text: <http://www.zenit.org/article-32058?l=english>

Critical Religion

Academics at the University of Stirling, and the beliefs and values think-tank Ekklesia, have teamed up to promote a new research agenda and blog entitled Critical Religion, which aims to put hot topics under a careful spotlight.



The idea is to bring together researchers from a wide range of backgrounds to explore the way 'religion' is employed as a label, category and idea in both public and intellectual discourse. See what you think by visiting: <http://www.criticalreligion.stir.ac.uk/blog/>

Free leaflet

One of the most popular resources sourced by the Home Mission Desk is called *Everyday Evangelising*. It offers simple ideas about how you can witness to your faith in daily life. If you'd like to receive a copy please contact the Home Mission Desk.