
Tradition - not Traditionalism

Br Mark O'Connor, fms

Our Tradition is so rich in wisdom. The Catholic practice of the 'Spiritual Works of Mercy' is but one example of that depth. For the 'Spiritual Works of Mercy' helps us disciples explore how we too can dwell in the mercy and tenderness of God - as Jesus our brother guides us on the journey of faith, a journey that is unique for every person.

These days, however, the beautiful concept of Tradition needs to be very carefully distinguished from traditionalism. The proponents of traditionalism - who are notorious for their nostalgia for past 'Golden Ages' (that mostly never existed) and who get their energy from fighting and condemning other people - are not educators but ideologues.

But an educator can never be an ideologue. For ideologues can never 'instruct the ignorant' - what we would call today - 'educate in faith'. For they don't dialogue with learners but talk 'at' them.

Jaroslav Pelikan, the famous Christian Scholar and great teacher, pointed out, however, another way for Catholic educators in faith when he commented:

"Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. Tradition lives in conversation with the past, while remembering where we are and when we are and that it is we who have to decide. Traditionalism supposes that nothing should ever be done for the first time, so all that is needed to solve any problem is to arrive at the supposedly unanimous testimony of this homogenized tradition."

'Instructing the ignorant' - one of the spiritual works of mercy - certainly involves giving people a healthy sense of their Catholic 'identity' or 'imagination'. It aims to help us all live in a postmodern relativistic culture and understand that there is rationality to Christian faith. Simultaneously, it also insists that faith is primarily a relationship with the living Risen Jesus and begins with the heart.

'Instructing the ignorant' is a call for all of us who are privileged to be Catholics, to learn more deeply the 'language' of our faith. In an age characterised by superficiality and crass ignorance of the richness of the Judeo-Christian Tradition - 'instructing the ignorant' is all about showing the beauty of our Catholic Tradition to young and old. It is especially sensitive to reach out to all those people who are searching for God down many paths. The precious gift of faith in Jesus of Nazareth is something we naturally want to share.

Catholic 'educators' (i.e. all the baptised) however can never simply approach people, as if they are somehow just empty 'receptacles' - whose 'heads' need to be 'filled' with more propositions and ideas. As if that was educating people in faith!

No - education in faith is about imaginatively engaging in a conversation between our Catholic Tradition and our culture - a secular society that is fundamentally good because it is created by persons, all made in the image and likeness of God. Yes, cultures are sometimes compromised and flawed and hence in need of redemption. But that does not excuse us from finding ways to discover the 'treasure' hidden in the field' of real people's daily lives. We

need to discover with people that Christ is closer to us all - believers and non-believers (and 'half' believers!) - than we are to our very own selves.

'Instructing the ignorant' then is best done through the witness of our lives and actions - not just mere words. I love the story of Pope John XXIII the Great. Papa Roncalli had a long and quite varied life before he was pope. One of his lengthy assignments as a younger man was in Serbia where there were many Orthodox and few Roman Catholics. He so endeared himself to the Serbs by his disarming warmth and friendliness, that when he left for a new assignment after many years there, people came in great numbers to say good-bye. On that occasion he told them, *"Anywhere I go in the world, if someone in need passes by my house at night, he will find a lighted lamp in the window. Knock. I will not ask if you a Catholic.... Two brotherly arms will embrace you and the warm heart of a friend will make a feast for you."*

No wonder that this holy man opened the 'windows' of the Church at Vatican II and let 'fresh air' in. For John XXIII was a Christian educator who 'instructed the ignorant' - not a humourless ideologue who alienated and frightened people away from Christ, the Merciful One.



13th Macedon Reunion

September 27- 30, 2011

You're invited

HOLY CROSS CENTRE
Serpells Road, TEMPLESTOWE

Enquiries and further details from:

John Kelly at (03) 5782 1987

Terry O'Brien at laurel336@hotmail.com

Barry Hansen at puffnben1@bigpond.com

See Drusilla Blog for detailed program

Postulant Ashley Higgins is welcomed into the Fitzroy Community



Ashley with Pat Connell and Doug Walsh

The Fitzroy community officially welcomed Ashley Higgins into the postulancy on Sunday 20th March with a very simple ceremony in the Chapel. Ashley comes from Brisbane, where he has worked in Marist Schools as chaplain and dormitory supervisor for the past two years and has chosen to move on to the next stage of discernment about life as a Marist Brother. As a member of the community, Ashley will take an active part in normal community life, be accompanied during this period of discernment and commence his studies at ACU with the view to moving into education at a later time. The ceremony was followed by a celebratory meal in the community.



Paul Kane



Justin Guthrie & Mark O'Connor



Tony Caddy



Mark Paul

Smile Awhile



CONFUCIUS MAY HAVE SAID.....

Man who leaps off cliff jumps to conclusion.

War does not determine who is right, it determines who is left.

Man who drives like hell is bound to get there.

Man who eats prunes get good run for his money

Man who lives in glass house should change clothes in basement.

Man who runs in front of car gets tyred; man who runs behind car gets exhausted.

Bloopers from Church Bulletins

Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.

Miss Charlene sang '*I Will Not Pass This Way Again*, giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

Next Thursday there will be try-outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members, and to the deterioration of older ones.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

Potluck supper Sunday at 5.00pm - prayer and medication to follow.

The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7.00pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.



This is what **sorrow** looks like



This is what bad **spelling** looks like

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