

Irish Conference on the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Talk #2: "The Joy of the Gospel"

Congowes Wood College

Saturday, July 5, 2014

2:15 PM to 3:00 PM

I. Introduction

- a. Building on what we discussed this morning, my goal this afternoon is to allow Pope Francis to inform our conversation about the work of evangelization
 - i. Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Gaudium*
 1. My Premise:
 - a. The Holy Father offers the Church two particular insights that are relevant for outreach, esp. for young adults
 2. Larger Goal:
 - a. To effectively offer to such as these the tools of faith, esp. the Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - ii. That will lead us to time for questions and discussion
- b. Holy Father, Pope Francis: much can be said
 - i. Titles used to describe him are unparalleled
 1. "Breathe of Fresh Air"
 2. "Turnaround specialist" (*The Economist*)
 3. "Man of the Year" (*Time*)
 - ii. A "Second Look" is undeniable
 1. Effect upon young people is profound
 2. Even among non-Catholics
- c. What is most unique about the man may not be as obvious as some claim: Two examples can suffice note:
 - i. First: Francis is often cited as a "humble man:"
 1. True in many ways:
 - a. Two examples:
 - i. Living in Domus Santa Marta
 - ii. Forgoing the trappings of the papacy
 2. Yet, he is not the only pope who was profoundly humble
 - a. Pope Benedict's humility to step down as the successor of Peter is unparalleled

3. Point: While Francis is genuinely humble, there is something more at work
- ii. Second: Francis is known as “a man of the people”
 1. True in many ways:
 - a. Two examples:
 - i. First service on Holy Thursday
 - ii. Stories of escaping the Vatican to serve the poor
 2. Yet he is not the only pope who was a man of the people
 - a. Pope John Paul II profoundly touched the poor and youth
 - i. Story: Madison Square Garden in NYC
 3. Point: While Francis is genuinely humble, there is something more at work
- iii. So what is the compelling about Pope Francis?
 1. There is something unique, compelling, singular in Pope Francis that is inescapable and renewing the Church’s life
 2. “*Evangelii Gaudium*” (The Joy of the Gospel) is where we can get a glimpse into what is truly unique
 - a. Two insights that he has highlighted and have resonated in the live of believers and non-believers:
 - i. Call to Mission
 - ii. Rediscovery of Joy
 3. I believe that recapturing these two ingredients are essential in any effective evangelization outreach, especially of young adults

II. FIRST ELEMENT: CALL TO MISSION

- a. There is a profound development in the notion of Evangelization underway in Pope Francis that is touching the lives of many people
 - i. Chapter One: It is what the Pope describes as the “Missionary Transformation” of the Church
 1. What does he mean and why is it so powerful?
- b. Before we can understand what the Pope is calling us to live, we need to define the word “mission”
 - i. STORY of MISSION: 9/11 attack and the marine

1. Marine's response: *"You are my mission"*
 - a. Let us look at the three elements of that young man's action:
 - b. Three essential ingredients:
 - i. Impelled to action
 - ii. Courageous in discerning what it is
 - iii. Committed to the end

2. I would like to suggest that these same three ingredients apply to the mission of evangelization given to us in Christ
 - a. Mission = Our going forth with a purpose
 - i. Our purpose: to spread the Good News of Salvation in Christ
 1. Bring people to faith
 2. Deepen the faith of believers

 - b. There are three elements to our Mission:
 - i. IMPELLED: By the power of grace
 1. Which we received in Baptism
 - a. It is a mission given to all the baptized
 - b. Its success is measured by God's standards and not ours

 - ii. COURAGEOUS:
 1. Not simply a human attribute but one of seven fold gifts of the Holy Spirit
 2. To do what? To discern
 - a. The signs of the times
 - b. The true needs of the people we serve
 - c. What we need to remain faithful
 - i. Catechism: to be fed the truth in our lives

 - iii. COMMITTED:
 1. This is not an addition to my life and yours
 - a. It is at the very heart of our lives
 2. Eucharist is food that strengthens this commitment
 - a. It is the antipasto of heaven.

- ii. Pope Francis, has highlighted two additional elements that are essential to our Christian mission that are often forgotten (and resonate powerfully with the people of this age).
 - 1. First Element: The Holy Father is reminding us that our mission is to serve those in real need
 - a. For example:
 - i. STORY: (WYD): Couple and child with brain defect
 - ii. STORY: (Rome) Embrace of man with disabilities
 - 1. Francis: Mission of Mercy & Charity is central to Evangelization
 - a. Two views of Mercy
 - i. Pulling from above
 - ii. Lifting from below
 - b. This call to mission has powerfully resonated with young people: why?
 - i. Part of the answer lies in the challenge that many young people face (which we spoke of this morning)
 - 1. Too many young people believe that they are UNLOVEABLE
 - 2. Many Causes for this:
 - a. Confusion of love with passion
 - b. Societal forces: consumerism
 - c. Formative power of technology
 - 3. Result: Central claim of Faith that God is love is reduced to myth
 - a. Concrete Works of Love and Mercy:
 - i. They give credibility to the claim that God is love
 - ii. Young people can dare to believe that the same concern can also be given to them.
4. Evidence even among active young people:
 - a. Service is the element in catechesis that is easiest to “sell”
 - i. Why? Service makes love credible

- ii. KEY: Broaden our catechetical method to accommodate this new phenomenon

- 2. Second Element: The Pope reminds us that our mission is to serve one person at a time
 - a. Two examples:
 - i. Story: (WYD) Rio de Janiero and the Boy
 - ii. Story: recent stop in Italy with family whose son is ill
 - 1. Common in both:
 - a. Pope was only concerned with the single person before him
 - b. Rediscovery of the Methodology of the Lord who often reached out one person at a time
 - c. This approach creates new challenges and opportunities for our work:
 - i. We Need to Balance the importance of programs and the lived experience of our people
 - ii. We may need to redesign some of our catechetical programs to follow more of a catechumenate model and less a school model
 - iii. We must recognize that the Catechism can be studied in many ways, according to the need of the people

- 3. The Pope's call for missionary discipleship recognizes and addresses the great change underway in the West
 - a. Our starting point has changed
 - i. As a little boy
 - 1. The priest opened the door and they came to us
 - ii. Now: We open the door and we go to them!
 - b. The Holy Father's dream is this:
 - i. "I dream of a "missionary option" that is, missionary impulse of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than its self preservation."

4. In summary: Pope Francis see the work of evangelization through the prism of mission
 - a. This changes the very dynamism of evangelization

III. Let us try to define the Mission of Evangelization

a. Evangelization is all about “Good News”

- i. Father Barron in his series *Catholicism* reminds his audience that it was common practice in ancient Imperial Rome for the emperor to send out messengers to proclaim the eu-vangelium, “the good news” of his victories to his subjected people

1. The purpose of such Good News was clear:

- a. The Emperor’s reign remained intact, growing, and to be feared

- ii. Evangelization literally means that “good news”

1. From the days of Pentecost, Christian women, men and children by word and witness have proclaimed, taught and professed in every culture and age Good News

- iii. Our Good News that begins not with something but someone: JESUS THE CHRIST

1. For it is Jesus the Christ who fulfilled the promised message of joy found on the lips of Isaiah (61:1):

- a. *“The spirit of the Lord has been given to me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor.”*

2. Jesus the Christ who through word and sign proclaimed and established a Kingdom both here and not yet:

- a. In the words of Cardinal Ratzinger: “But the Kingdom of God is not a thing, a social or political structure, a utopia. The Kingdom of God Is God.”

- i. This Kingdom of God is Christ among us!

1. We are welcomed and belong.

3. This Kingdom has a “King” unlike any we have or ever will see:

- a. Who has revealed God as Love

- i. Trinity: Community of Divine Persons of Perfect Love

- b. Who has revealed in his Death and Resurrection to be the very Incarnation of Love Himself
 - i. In-breaking of God into human life
 - 1. Who has come to transform Life Itself
 - c. Who has revealed that we are not left us alone
 - i. Remains in our midst in word and sacrament
 - 1. A Kingdom that is taking root through his Presence in the community of believers
4. This Good News has come to us precisely through the voices, hands and witness of those who have come before us in faith and who live among us now as disciples
 - a. Unlike many of our Protestant brothers and sisters who seek this personal encounter with the Lord solely through Sacred Scripture, Catholic faith recognizes that the more primordial reality is the community of believers, the Church itself.
 - b. Born on the day of Pentecost, who guided and inspired by the power of the Spirit gave birth to the Scriptures, to a Living Tradition and a Magisterium whose authority rests in service to its Lord
 - i. We have encountered the Lord in a living community that proclaims Him in a credible way
 - ii. Story of my father's famous saying:
 - 1. "Blood is thicker than water"
 - 2. "Grace is thicker than blood"
- b. Summary: Evangelization effectively offers an invitation to have a personal encounter (to know and love Jesus the Lord) and to seek an enduring relationship with Him through the credible witness of the Church
 - i. The work of EVANGELIZATION + the methodology of MISSION will give powerful testimony and credibility to the community as an expression of God's love
 - 1. Mission becomes the power behind evangelization
 - ii. Evangelization as missionary disciples will do four things:
 - 1. First: It will touch each of us personally and ask a response
 - a. To such love, a response of FAITH is offered
 - i. Faith is a divine gift that allows a person to "adhere" or "assent" to the whole truth that God

has revealed (CCC, 150): [Truth who is Christ Himself]

2. Second: It will allow us to seek no compromise
 - a. The Call of the apostles
 - i. *"To be covered in the Dust of a rabbi"*
3. Third: It will change one's life and all its relationships
 - a. Conversion from our sins
 - b. Metanoia: "To turn away our face/mind"
 - i. To question one's own and the common way of living and to allow God's power to enter into the criteria of all that we do
 1. Especially in my relationships with others
4. Fourth: It will impel us to share who we have received
 - a. I will wish to share with others the person of Jesus who has changed my life and not simply a program, project or initiative
 - b. Rather, the doorway for all evangelization is not first and foremost what we do or say but rather who we are
 - i. It is the holiness of our lives,
 1. That will allow the GOOD NEWS to be heard, encountered and believed!

IV. There is one last gift that we will receive if we earnestly evangelize in mission: It is the gift of divine JOY

- a. Hence the title of the Pope's apostolic exhortation
 - i. Joy is the POWER BEHIND ALL MISSION
 1. Remember:
 - a. God does not ask us to do anything for which he does not give us the gift by which to do it
 - b. To love effectively in mission (the prerequisite for all evangelization) can't be sustained without a divine gift of Joy)
 - i. Joy is
 1. A sublime gift
 2. A divine gift
 3. A gift that comes to us when we least expect it
 - a. A gift that will surprise us:

- b. Joy is badly misunderstood in our contemporary age because it is confused with another state of life....Happiness
 - i. Happiness is very important to Americans:
 - 1. In the Declaration of Independence we hear that: “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” is our right
 - i. Nothing more American!
 - 2. Happiness: is the state in life when all is going well at any given moment
 - a. I am content, right now
 - b. We avoid all suffering, pain or challenges: not make us happy
 - 3. Problem: it never lasts because it is dependent upon external circumstances that I have no control over:
 - a. *Result: pursuit of happiness is very frustrating!!!*
 - b. We all know people who are consumed with the pursuit of happiness:
 - ii. Christian joy is very different from happiness:
 - 1. St Paul (Phil. 4: 4-7): *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall do again, Rejoice! Your kindness shall be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”*
 - a. Joy is a deep and abiding sense of contentment that arises from one’s relationship with God:
 - i. It is a Divine Gift to realize that in the end, all will be well when we trust ourselves to God
 - ii. Saint Juliana of Norwich: “...All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well” in the Ground of our beseeching
 - b. Joy is never dependent upon the external circumstances of life
 - i. It does not require possessions, success, etc.
 - ii. It remains even when we suffer because we often have no one else to whom to turn who is always there!
 - iii. It is so deep an emotion that words and thoughts cannot fully express it. This is the reason why joy is often expressed in tears

2. JOY is born in anyone who believes that LOVE can conquer all things, even death itself!
 - a. STORY: Catechist:
 - i. J = Jesus (who encounters me in love)
 - ii. Y = You and me (by showing our love of the Lord to...)
 - iii. O = Others (our neighbor)

II. EVANGELIZATION IN MISSION is meant to give the gift of Joy

- a. In two ways:
 - i. Proclaiming and teaching the truth of God's Good News in the Cross of Jesus Christ leads to Resurrection!
 - ii. Creating a community of love that helps deepen the ties that form the People of God
- b. The great challenge before us is to find effective and concrete ways by which we can experience the Joy of Christ
 - i. For at least three reasons
 1. Joy = is the antidote to all the lies of our world
 2. Joy = helps us to deepen our relationship with the Lord
 3. Joy = is an irresistible invitation to allow others to "see who we have seen"

V. CONCLUSION

- a. STORY OF MOTHER THERESA: "You did it for me"
 - i. This is the task of our age and time
 1. May we be faithful to the end.