

Are We Telling the Right Story?

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Telling the Faith Story

“Dagdilab ang among kasingkasing (our hearts were burning), describes Fr. James Kroeger, MM, on the way Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB makes impact on the listeners on this third day of the IEC Theological Symposium on his topic “The Field is the World: Evangelizing the Secular World.”

The Kernel of the Story

Using the image of the Parable of the Sower, Fr. Rosica highlights the world, not simply the Church as the field where evangelizing should take place, for the Spirit hovers over the world where there is a mix of weeds and wheat. “The field is the world, and this strange array of peoples on the peripheries and outside the perimeter of biblical Israel breaks into the Gospel arena and becomes a vital part of Jesus’ mission. This is what happens when the seed falls



Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB expressed joy for finally getting to visit the Philippines, and even related his own devotion to Filipino St. Pedro Calungsod

unpredictably in the world and not just in the church.”

Jesus, the communicator par excellence who uses his own literary richness like the parables to “convey the true nature of a loving and benevolent God,” keeps open lines of communication with those who have closed their hearts, their ears, and their eyes to his word. We must learn from God's patience, he furthermore explains, as “we see Him allow both the good and the evil to grow together. For when we as Church, as Christian communities, as individuals try to be “weedless,” then we lose our sensitivity and our catholicity.”

Do we tell our story in the right way?

Everyone is challenged to be an evangelizer, to be a witness to the Jesus story. But we have several fears that block us from becoming an evangelizing church: an attempt to be polite and not to appear imposing; lack of catechesis about Jesus, the Bible, and Tradition; and crisis of biblical literacy, Fr. Rosica says.

So Fr. Rosica in his passionate exposition focus on six areas to reflect on our evangelizing in the world:

1. Urgency - There is an urgent need to share the message of salvation, for as Pope Francis says, evangelizing is both a social and spiritual ministry. And we do not need to be perfect to begin evangelizing otherwise we will not be through as we are also “wounded” evangelizers assured that the Lord walks with us.
2. No to Nostalgia - Jesus presence as the story Walk to Emmaus tells us is renewing. It is futile to dwell on the past that petifies us. We must also be a cause for other hearts to burn with inspiration rather than with heartburns.
3. Mercy - With the declaration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy by Pope Francis, we are shown that mercy changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just, Fr. Rosica quotes the Pontiff.
4. Boldness - Learning from Acts 4:31, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with boldness (gk. *parresia*). Fr. Rosica says we must be bold and creative in our pastoral efforts with young people. The young people

are the ones who know better the new media. We can also learn from them. Speaking the Word boldly is prerequisite for the work of Evangelization, Rosica also reminds us.

5. Joy - We are reminded by the words of Pope Francis: There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. Fr. Rosica says an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!
6. Care for Creation - with Laudato Si, we are now asked not just to care for humanity but the whole of creation. Fr. Rosica says, with Laudao Si, Pope Francis is laying the groundwork for a new Christian humanism, rooted in the simple and beautiful image of Jesus that he presents for the world's consideration.



Fr. James Kroeger, MM, gives a spirited and affirmative reaction to Fr. Rosica's talk.

This elicited various responses, expressed or inarticulated. Fr. Kroeger affirms the talk's three areas:

1. We must recognize the challenge that we face: the field is the world.
2. Israel and the New Testament as well as the ministry of Jesus were a product of the interaction with the world.

3. The three constants personified by three popes: Mercy for Pope Francis, boldness for St John Paul II, and joy for Blessed Paul VI.

And with these affirmations we are challenged to be bold and not be timid, not to fear as the popular piety can help us and rejuvenate our urgency of mission, Fr Kroeger proceeds.

Fr. Ramon Echica of the Archdiocese of Cebu asks, as if the sharing was wanting for him, for some missing things: how Fr Rosica works with media in the secularized world, the picture of secularization and its effect. Is the decrease in churchgoers' numbers and its effect due to secularization? Is faith measured in the institutional heirarchy or personal expression?

There can be more and more tips and pointers on evangelizing the secular world. But in the end, as Fr. Rosica says, we will judge our efforts according to the hearts and mind of Jesus. Have we become Christlike? Outwardly, do we appear redeemed or dammed?

- Br. Hansel B. Mapayo, SSP