
Spreading The Faith. II.

Just why many Catholics lack enthusiasm and genuine interest in spreading the faith is a problem. Ignorance of the content of faith is a partial answer, not the whole answer. Certainly it is not because we have nothing to sell that many of us are classified as poor salesmen. We have the truth, the whole truth, and we know it.

Pius XII recently addressed the final meeting of the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate and exhorted the Catholic laity to contribute with all its strength to the Church's efforts to overthrow petty barriers and to bring about a frank reconciliation and fraternal union among the peoples of the world.

If "pep without purpose is piffle," so is purpose without pep. The first requisite for any Catholic to spread the faith is "pep"--call it zeal or enthusiasm, if you will. If he doesn't possess it, he won't do much about sharing his faith, particularly if this requires sacrifices, or putting himself out, one way or another. A burning zeal isn't necessary either to do something. It doesn't take a college education or the enthusiasm of Saint Paul to pass on a pamphlet or leave it in a railroad station or bus terminal.

Be Convinced.

Before you exercise a conscious enthusiasm for spreading the faith you need as fuel for your "pep" well-defined convictions about the faith. If you hope to convince your kid brother about the value of early rising you had better be an early riser yourself, or your harangues will be as thin as a thread, just about as strong, and will support no heavy arguments.

Non-Catholics are not moved by "pretenders" who don't live their faith. Pretenders don't give a hang whether outsiders are coming or going. Zeal for the faith must be born of living it right here and now. You won't live it with enthusiasm unless you have deep convictions why you should.

Furthermore, you won't cultivate these deep convictions if you are preoccupied with distractions that divert your attention away from sharing the faith. If you have more time for dates and dances than you have for elaborating your knowledge of the faith, if you are more convinced about a good job than you are about goodness, if you have more cents for nonsense than a sense of charity, if you indulge more in bull sessions than in prayer sessions. . . then you are preoccupied, not necessarily with the wrong things, but not with the right things either.

God demands intelligent and generous cooperation with His choice graces. He does His best work with you when he finds you often at prayer, and when he knows you are taking yourself in hand, making yourself undergo a rigorous spiritual training in self-denial and in the practice of virtue. Self-denial is the characteristic of those who follow Christ, because "the sign of the Christian is the sign of the Cross."

Saint Paul puts it bluntly: "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. If you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the Spirit you mortify the needs of the flesh, you shall live."

Furthermore, there is no self-denial that calls itself Christian which does not begin first of all with a generous acceptance and fulfillment of the ordinary duties of one's state in life. For the student this means STUDY. If he can't do this, what God obviously demands, he'll be called out at first base because he failed to touch up. Prayers; (deceased) brother of Emil Hofman (killed in Korea); grandmother of Dick Ricci; grandmother of John Chavanne. All, Father Laskowski, C.S.C.; Mrs. W. B. Kelly.