



Cardinal backs launch of new faith mission

AT THE April launch of the CASE initiative, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor told supporters: "I am sure that many people are aware that I have been meeting on a monthly basis with young people from throughout my diocese. I have been struck by many things but, in particular, today I am conscious of two things that I have learnt from those meetings.

"Firstly, I have seen that young people today are searching and questioning. They are particularly searching for meaning and purpose in their lives. Many recognise their own inner poverty despite, in many cases, intellectual and professional success. They often speak of their need for God.

"Secondly, I have become more and more conscious that there is for many young people a renewed interest and fascination with the person of Jesus Christ. Despite the controversy, I sense that the film *The Passion of the Christ* touched a sensitive nerve in our society and certainly mirrors an interest in the person and work of Jesus for many today. In some ways this is surprising because this fascination with the person of Jesus is coupled with a significant ignorance about him.

"I believe those two things – the search for meaning which has its ultimate goal in God, and the need for a clearer understanding and love for the person of Jesus Christ – is what I think CASE is all about. I note that this initiative is timely and follows the intuition and inspiration of John Paul II for a "new evangelisation". In *Redemptoris Missio* he reminds us: "No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples." And in another place he says, "I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes".

"Whilst the message and meaning of the Gospel are timeless, the form our evangelisation takes ad gentes – to the non-believer – must be influenced by the culture of the age and by our local situation. We need new ways of reaching people without compromising our ecclesiology. We do not need radical changes to our basic structures, but we need more flexibility combined with imaginative and creative thinking. Our witness to Jesus Christ needs to be new in its fervour, new in its methods, and new in its expression.

This is why I and my fellow Bishops welcome CASE and why it is so needed by the Church in our countries. I want to thank Mgr Keith and those who work with him for fronting this initiative, and may God bestow His blessing on all that we do together.

Let's get involved and help spread the Word

"OUTRAGE as Diocese announces parish closure"; "Parishioners stage protest in doomed Church".... Scarcely a week goes by without some announcement in the Catholic press of further Church closures or parish mergers. Church plc, UK branch, seems firmly headed in the direction of downsizing.

It's an issue that has also followed the team members of CASE, the recently-launched Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation, as we have travelled the country meeting bishops and their advisors. Time and again we have been asked how we can help make the downsizing process a positive experience, an opportunity for a new evangelisation at local level.

The very word evangelisation usually meets a mixed response. A recent poll in the US asked readers how they rated various professions, including that of evangelist. "Only slightly better than tax officials", was the average answer.

Catholics in particular tend to be very wary of the "e-word". They tend to do one of two things - or sometimes both: sometimes they associate evangelisation with Protestants, who are good at that sort of thing - which presumably absolves us from having anything to do with it.

Alternatively we interpret it in such a broad way as to emasculate it. This is what happened in the Decade of Evangelisation, when people said, in effect, "Everything we do is evangelisation, so we'll just carry on doing it."

Now the Church does indeed say that any narrow definition of evangelisation distorts it (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 17). But does a broad definition have to be a shallow one?

Pope Paul goes on to list the various aspects of evangelisation - social outreach, education, use of the mass-media, cultural influence, etc. Then he adds: "In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith?" (46)

Yes, at the heart of evangelisation is personal witness - something we can all do. We cannot assume any more that this will happen automatically in Catholic families and schools. Pope John Paul II says: "Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him." (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* 40). I sometimes think I would like to go into every Catholic parish in the country, shout these words at the top of my voice, and ask people why they are not doing it.

If you came out of Church on a Sunday and saw several hundred people lying by the roadside, dying of starvation, you would feel outraged and the parish would be mobilised to do something about it.

But that is precisely what is happening, only the hunger they are dying of is spiritual - and we do



Following Pope John Paul II's call for us "to commit all the Church's energies to a new evangelisation" **Mgr Keith Barltrop** outlines the aims of CASE in the first of a series of articles on the agency's work

nothing about it because we have not woken up to what the world is truly like. We are too much part of that world, too soaked in its messages, values and pleasures to see what is going on. There is a serious possibility that the Church in the Apocalypse to which Jesus says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." (3:16) - is our Church.

There are however, signs of hope in the Church in England and Wales. We hear many stories of people stepping out fearlessly to witness to and share their faith. A woman recently told me, for example, that she belonged to no Church and used to frequent fortune tellers. She told a Catholic friend she was going to see one soon, and the friend said, "You must not do that on any account. It is wrong and very dangerous. I will pray that you do not." As soon as she heard this, the woman spontaneously said to

herself, "My God, I am doing something wrong - I must stop!" She told me it was as if chains fell off her, and not long afterwards, she started instruction in the Catholic faith.

I could multiply stories like that to show how easy evangelisation is - for those who believe in the Holy Spirit. What better prayer could there be this Pentecost than to ask God to surprise us by leading us in the power of his Spirit to share our faith with just one person?

CASE has been set up to help parishes, groups, schools, families and individuals to do just that. If you would like advice or resources, or are interested in becoming one of our Associates or Prayer Partners, please contact us on: 020 8458 3316; or e-mail us at info@caseresources.org Check out our brand new website: www.caseresources.org

Now is not the time to hold back and CASE is here to help.



Witness: What better prayer could there be this Pentecost than to ask God to surprise us by leading us in the power of his Spirit to share our faith with just one extra person?

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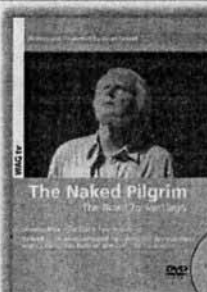
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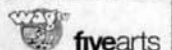
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DIARY DATES

May 29-30 - Birmingham Pentecost City Centre Outreach. St Michael's, Moor Street in Birmingham

May 30 - Celebration Day (S.E.N.T., Brentwood) 10.30am - 3.30pm.

June 1-2: Association of Seafarers Conference

June 6: Pub Outreach organised by Verbum Dei Community, Mass 5pm and Live Christian Band 6.30pm, The Punchbowl, Farm Street, London W1

June 4-6: Youth 2000, South East Regional Retreat. For details: www.youth2000.org

June 15: Ecumenical Conference: Group for Evangelisation's consultation on 'Evangelism in the Church of the Future'. In London.

June 16: Movimento Dei Focolari "Ecclesial Movements and the Marian Profile of the Church", St Mary's, Twickenham

June 18-20: Youth 2000, South West Regional Retreat.