



HOME MISSION

Purpose before pews: What does the Church offer?

Summary of a talk by Fr Christopher Jamison OSB

MINISTRY TO NON-CHURCHGOING CATHOLICS

Meaning of the key features of modern life

There is no point starting this ministry inviting someone to come to Mass. People initially need to receive that we're inviting them to a renewed sense of purpose rather than to fill a church pew.

Newman's prayer to fulfill 'Some Definite Service' is particularly pertinent here: 'God has created me to do Him some definite service'. This is at the heart of what we are called to do – to help others find their 'definite purpose' as the title of the Papal Visit UK Legacy programme suggests:

<http://www.thepapalvisit.org.uk/legacy>

The baptised know their purpose in Christ and are called to invite others to come to that knowledge too. The biggest obstacles are not the usual suspects such as materialism or apathy. The biggest challenge is that people are **busy, happy and spiritual**.

Busy – everyone is convinced they are busy: being busy is to be important. People can become or feel trapped in their busyness, working all the harder to sustain the lifestyle they have. This busyness can mean that people have no time for God, for church: they are literally resting Catholics.

Happy – a widely used understanding of this is to feel good and life's purpose is to keep feeling good. People no longer need a big narrative; they see no need for anything outside of their immediate friendship group and family. If that small group fails they have nowhere else to go and their world falls apart. Research published by the Anglican Church offers some interesting insights called 'Making sense of generation Y', as does research done by the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFed) and CAFOD.

Spiritual – nearly everybody today says 'I am not religious but I'm very spiritual'. What does this mean? Spiritual is a more positive term in their minds, separate from church which is seen as restrictive and institutional.

How can we help them move forward?

It is estimated that 2/3 of baptised Catholics in England and Wales are resting. Research suggests that only 1/8 of young Catholics would tick all the traditional boxes of Catholic practice. Many are absorbed in a busy world.

Busy – We need to help people to find sanctuary and be still. This is the key step to opening up new possibilities.

Happy – Simply feeling good is fine, but there is more to happiness than this. We need to help people know the good and do good. To be Christian is to live in and around the gift of Christ's love, knowing that goodness and living it – this is to be happy.

Spiritual – has many meanings:

- Formative: Belief that there is more to life than the eye can see; a simple affirmation of metaphysics
- Transformative: Belief that ascetic practices can be helpful – e.g. fasting, yoga
- Religious: sharing doctrines and being part of a spiritual community that practices asceticism and follows a disciplined way of life.
- We need to challenge people to move from spirituality to religion. They need both. We need to be convicted that both are needed.
- So some resting Catholics do not understand the spiritual potential to be found in the Church. We are offering connection not restriction.

How can we help people take that vital first step towards sanctuary?

1. Invite them to house **groups** and prayer groups
2. Offer **meditation** and silence. Young people can be encouraged to do sponsored silences. Don't underestimate the power of the simple.
3. **Music** – have concerts of sacred music in church buildings,
4. **Make sanctuaries** – consider in your town coming to an agreement with the other churches that one church will stay open 24 hrs for people to pray and sit; e.g. Night Church

Then invite them to **Mass**.

Concluding Comment

- It's essential that we support people to rediscover their purpose in Christ.
- Every baptised person who is resting from parish life is invited to join us in our shared journey of faith towards God's Light.