

## Seventh Sunday of Easter (B)

### The Church and the Media

Today is designated 'communications Sunday'.

*There's a story told about this guy who decided he had enough of prison, so he decided to tunnel his way out. After growing weary of tunnelling he decided it might be safe enough to come up. When he emerged over ground, lo and behold he found himself in the middle of a playground, full of four year olds. With great excitement he started jumping up and down and shouting, 'I'm free, I'm free, I'm free'. One little girl immediately piped up **'That's nothing, I'm four'**. We communicate mostly through words but they sometimes can mean different things to different people.*

I sometimes feel that the Catholic Church is a bit like that in the area of communications. For instance, at the time of Pope John Paul's funeral we got quite positive media coverage - the Polish pontiff being very much a media figure. But this flurry of interest was mostly short-lived. He had myriads of admirers but his fair share of detractors as well – a bit like the present Pope, I would say.

Overall, I would say that the secular press are more apt to carry stories of a contentious nature about religion and overlook the positive contribution which the Church has made over the centuries to the betterment of mankind. In 2009 when Pope Benedict visited the Holy Land, some in the Press were more focussed on the 17 year old Joseph Ratzinger's involvement with the Hitler Youth some 60 years before than his heartfelt pleading for a radical overhaul of approach in the Holy Land which would pave the way for lasting peace. This should have been the headlines rather than what happened over 60 years previous. He told them to tear down the walls and open up channels of communication for peace to be given a chance. If they had listened to his words then and took them on board this death, destruction and man-made famine we see today would be unthinkable. Jesus predicted the total destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 under Titus because by and large the people at the time ignored his message. There are consequences for subverting the Word of God.

Modern culture, by and large, does not sit easy with organised religion but let's not undervalue ourselves as catholic Christians and hide the light of our faith 'under a bushel'. It is of paramount importance that we don't 'muddy the waters' but transmit the catholic faith in a clear and

unadulterated manner whether orally or in print. Shilly-shallying on religious issues is often a betrayal of the truth.

For today's rather sceptical audience we need to communicate, whether orally or in print, the full gospel message from a commanding standpoint. Recent popes spoke about the dangers of relativism especially in the context of morality. Modern man feels ill at ease with an objective moral order - hence the appeal of relativism which is often a cop-out.

Yes, the church is in the business of world communications. Even though it may appear to be a dialogue with the deaf at times we need to use every means of communication, orally, electronically or in print at our disposal to transmit the perennial Gospel Truth to a contemporary audience with enthusiasm and effectiveness, and not flinch from the task.