

Faith Based Conversation 6th Monthly meeting

A few challenges from Pope Francis

In this Holy Year (of Mercy), we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

Misericordiae Vultus 15

This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! When faced with evil deeds, even in the face of serious crimes, it is the time to listen to the cry of innocent people who are deprived of their property, their dignity, their feelings, and even their very lives. To stick to the way of evil will only leave one deluded and sad. True life is something entirely different. God never tires of reaching out to us. He is always ready to listen, as I am too, along with my brother bishops and priests. All one needs to do is to accept the invitation to conversion and submit oneself to justice during this special time of mercy offered by the Church. *Misericordiae Vultus 19c*

If a fleeting thought comes, do something about it.

Many of us only hear from family or friends when they need something. Therefore a 'I was thinking of you, how are you going?' phone call can be very powerful. When you find yourself reminded of someone you haven't thought of in ages, often that reminder is from God and it means that they need prayers or need to reconnect with you for some reason. Maybe you are the best person to answer a question that has been bothering them. Pay particular attention to the thoughts that seem to come from nowhere, because that is one of the Holy Spirit's favourite methods of guiding us.

Be prepared

That's the advice St Peter gives in 1 Peter 3:15, 'Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have.' Can you tell someone right now about the things God has been doing with you (or in you) recently? If not, then some preparation is in order. It can be as simple as taking 5 minutes each week to write down the things you have been most thankful for. Or as simple as writing down the thought, scripture verse, lyric or scrap of conversation that has lingered with you during the week. Then share it verbally with someone in your household, as practice for when the opportunity to witness to God's reality and love crops up.

Be prepared, part 2

There are a lot of controversial issues in the media each week (eg death penalty, anti-discrimination laws, definition of marriage etc). So do some holy homework. Each week pick one of those controversial issues, and research what the Catholic Church actually teaches about that issue. Allow 15-20 minutes of study time.. That way, if a conversation starts about that topic, you will be able to share a holy viewpoint on that matter, and have reasons to back up that viewpoint. But should you find that your research wasn't extensive enough; promise to do more research and report back.