

THE VISION STILL HAS TIME

The vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment,
and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come,
it will not be late.

—Habakkuk 2:2-3

Living our faith in a time of chaos

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A VISION OF SEEKING GOD

Someone with great spiritual gifts and passion said to me recently that they can't wait to evangelise and tell people about Jesus!

Today, we desperately need such people with 'fire in their bellies', to proclaim the Good News.

One could imagine such 'evangelists' as "pearl merchants". They have found something—no... someone!—a 'precious pearl' i.e. 'Jesus' and understandably they want to share and spread this good news to others.

And so their urgent message is: "Let's get on with it..." That's an important reminder to the lukewarm and cynical.

However, this missionary approach also needs to be balanced by another image. For, after all, do we ever really 'bring Jesus' to other people? Jesus is already here in our midst! Jesus always gets 'there' well before us! He loves every single human being from eternity.

Our witness, perhaps, is more often to simply help people discover and celebrate 'the Christ' hidden and mysteriously already present in their ordinary lives.

Such evangelists then might be alternatively imagined as "treasure hunters." They do not just preach at others with something to 'give'.

Yes, they do have something very precious—the good news (gospel) of God's incredible love and mercy. But in order to find the divine treasure that is hidden there, they have to dig deep into the 'soil' of the new culture that they are encountering. And since these evangelists cannot really do the 'digging' alone, they have to enlist the help of the people of that culture and trust them to do most of the digging.

That is why I find very helpful the core ideas of the eminent Canadian Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, set out in *A Secular Age* and elsewhere. He helps us understand the 'soil' (culture) within which our faith might flourish. Charles Taylor sees that there are among us both

'seekers' and 'dwellers'. The seekers—baptised Christians or not—continue to question. The dwellers have found a home in a church but can 'nest' there so thoroughly that they only accept those who 'believe' exactly as they do.

Hence the prophetic challenge of Pope Francis. Our Holy Father describes the church as a 'field hospital' where there is a place for everyone who is wounded and suffering. "No closed doors! No closed doors!" he continually tells us.

Yes, Pope Francis is calling us to go beyond our 'comfort zones'. He challenges us to become a more welcoming church that can communicate with the many spiritual seekers all around us.

Many tensions in our church develop because the 'dwellers' among us look back to a seemingly secure past. The truly orthodox Catholic imagination, however, always avoids the 'black and white', binary and narrow-minded approach of the nostalgic and the fearful.


We need instead to ask the bigger question with Pope Francis: how can we as Church credibly be both 'pearl merchants' and 'treasure hunters' and likewise both 'seekers' and 'dwellers'?

How can we open hearts to where the Holy Spirit is calling us today?

As the USA writer Paul Elie points out there is no place where this is more obvious than in Rome—which, as seat of the church and site of pilgrimage, is held in common by the seekers and the dwellers.

That is precisely why we rejoice in being Roman Catholics. We are not members of a gnostic 'cult' or some elite 'club' but a community that welcomes everybody.

That's an infallible truth about Jesus—our Founder, Risen Lord and friend. He loves and welcomes every one! And so should we, his family of disciples...



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