

Pre-Evangelization

CATECHESIS

Catechesis teaches the faith in detail.

It has four parts, Creed, Sacraments, Commandments and Prayer, and it is given systematically.

In practice, systematic presentation often selects topics to match the liturgical year, and every lesson mentions prayer and application to Christian living.

See *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition, My Way of Life* on pp. 5-7; *Daily Prayers* pp. 8-10.

THEOLOGY and APOLOGETICS

Theology lectures on faith seeking understanding.

Apologetics argues for understanding seeking faith.

See *Handouts* n. 87 for the beginnings of a *Catholic Family Apologetics Catechism* in 25 Q&As.

EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization preaches, like St Peter and St Paul in the Acts of the Apostles and their epistles.

The Gospels themselves are written almost as sermons. They give Our Lord's message, either in His own persuasive words or that of the evangelists who wrote about Him and what He did.

Evangelization merges into catechesis and theology.

PRE-EVANGELIZATION

Pre-Evangelization persuades towards evangelization and catechesis. They all overlap, of course.

In the Acts of the Apostles, St Paul has different approaches for (1) believing Jews and sympathetic Gentiles, as at Antioch in Pisidia in Acts 13; and (2) the philosophers at Athens in Acts 17.

His basic strategy is always to start from where people are at, and move on towards the Lord Jesus and what He wants of us. That's our approach, too, but remember, Satan works to spoil all the good we do.

Modern Evangelization

POPE FRANCIS is encouraging us to use the new social media to evangelize the modern world.

Talk-back radio and old-fashioned print-media of Letters to the Editor are also the opportunities for us.

Here are samples of pre-Evangelization already printed in a regional newspaper.

The topics jump around. Often they were written as answers to anti-Christian sentiments in earlier letters, but without naming their authors. Or they seemed apposite in today's climate of unbelief and political correctness, which inclines people to disparage traditional morality and any public manifestations of Christianity, or traditional marriage and family.

"BECAUSE" and "SHOULD"

REAL RELIGION is good for us. It's about God and morals and judgement after death and it's wonderfully improving.

The catch is that some religious people go bad, implode or even explode. Such bad news becomes good news for the media. They thrive on it.

Yet even the bad religious people prove the rule, that real religion is good for you.

The Devil knows it and doesn't like real religion. He wants to wreck every good thing God is doing or that we are doing. He loves false religion.

Why doesn't God zap the Devil? He could, but He prefers that angels and men take the consequence of their free will.

Can we be sure God is real? Yes, every time we say "because" we are expressing our faith in natural human reason. Where will that reason lead us?

We seek understanding and explanation. Modern science finds more and more wonders, so we might ask, why there are such wonders. Where do they come from? They surpass our inventiveness in their intricacy and relationships. Chaotic chance cannot make this sort of thing.

Apply to the wonders of the world. There must have been a Creator. When Catholic priest Father Le Maitre, 1894-1966, invented the Big Bang Theory, some rejected it because it implied a beginning and a Creator, and it was in the Bible, "so it must be wrong". So a rival theory said there was a continuous creation of hydrogen — but not by an Intelligent Being.

Imagine you've found a corpse, face down with a dagger sticking out of his back. You conclude he's been murdered. You do not say, "It just happened. It's just the interaction of random particles." Further, you think to yourself, "Behaviour is purposive" or "There's a reason and a motive for things," so like a good detective, you look for an agent and a purpose.

We say "should" to express our zeal for doing good and avoiding evil. Moral evil is the absence of good that should be there. Where do our consciousness and conscience and "should" come from? There's more to us than medical wonders. We have a dignity, a duty and a destiny. Best we pursue them, and aim for the True, the Beautiful, the Good and for God.

Just think of the people you know who struggle against their worse selves so as to be patient and kind, because God wants it. Think how we'd all be more pleasant to talk to, or to live next to, or to travel with, if we tried harder to keep the Ten Commandments, all of them. Yes, real religion is good for us.

NATURAL LAWS

LITTLE CHILDREN manifest some simple and wonderful insights.

First, and quite naturally, they love their parents.

Quickly, they manifest an innate sense of justice, crying out, "It's not fair!"

They demonstrate an innate power to think by asking "why". They draw conclusions. Sometimes the outcomes of their thinking are faulty or even funny, but it is from lack of information to work on, not from lack of reasoning about it.

Finally, they seem to have an innate Sense of the

Sacred and a love for The Almighty, albeit vague, because God is unseen yet evident everywhere. The "reason why" things are the way they are is the beginning of both science and religion. Science asks "why" in the sense of "how does it work?" Religion asks "why" with the meaning of "what is it for?"

Children are born with these instinctive powers. Subsequently, parental teaching by precept and example finds a ready-made foundation, only waiting to be built on, to develop those innate powers towards excellence.

In an imperfect world it can be for better or for worse. Vice is the evil use or misuse or abuse of innate instincts, whereas virtue is their usage with a good conscience according to God's commandments found in natural morality — which is what earlier wisdom called natural law or natural moral law.

"The only purpose of our instruction is that there should be love, coming from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith."

PROMISES & PROHIBITIONS

TOLKIEN IS FAMOUS for *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

In *Tree and Leaf*, he gives us a new insight into "fairy stories", or fantasy stories, as he prefers to call them.

They are not as much about possibility as desirability.

They arouse a desire for noble ideas and ideals in the real world.

They proclaim the profound and practical importance of keeping promises and of observing prohibitions, even with intolerable consequences.

Some find these thoughts applicable to marriage.

Since Christian times, and before, marriage has been based on promises of life-long fidelity (or at least a mutual desire and expectancy of it) "till death do us part". It has not been based on feelings, no matter how noble, though it is feelings which lead up to and flow from marriage. And there is a prohibition on adultery.

Contrast the crude witticism in *Yes, Minister* that, "In some countries, women get stoned for committing adultery, but here, they commit adultery when they're stoned."

True Love Waits is a new and joyful movement promoting integrity and resisting promiscuity. It favours the making of marriage vows before the act of self-giving. It resists the cheapening to second-hand goods of oneself or possible spouses. Biologically, the reproductive powers are clearly designed for having children, children who are both a new joy and hard work for home-makers and bread winners.

True Love Waits promotes both promises and prohibitions.

YETI AND S.E.T.I.

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN of the Himalayan Mountains is called the yeti. He is allegedly a hairy ape in a scary context, no doubt a

cousin of our home-grown yowie.

A famous predecessor of the *Yes, Minister* series, famed for his Parkinson's Law, used a pun on yeti to describe that obstruction to good things happening, the Abominable No-man. In many hierarchic organizations he is a real life fact to be reckoned with, and he says "no" to everything — on principle, or lack of it. More recently, he evolved into the Prohibitive Procrastinator, who says "no" more slowly, so as to torture good suggestions to death, but gradually.

Such negativity runs parallel to Hanrahan's gloom of "We'll all be rooned" — by droughts, floods and fires. Some people are only happy in cheerful gloom, and in converting the cheerful to gloom: "If you were really with it, you'd be confused like we are."

We meet it in some popularizers of science who fail to apply scientific thinking to our human condition. For instance, they deny any intelligent design in nature, or the universe or creation (call it what you will), or in human nature.

Yet they believe in S.E.T.I., the Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence. How will they recognize intelligence? By meaningful patterns in radio signals against a background of meaningless static from light years in outer space. They hope that a more intelligent species than man will send out 3.14159 etc (but in binary notation, of course), to call attention to their knowledge of diameters and circles. That just couldn't happen accidentally!

Scientific thinking is refined common sense. It assumes philosophical ideas like "order implies design and means intelligence". Apply this to the macro and micro discoveries by telescopes and microscopes.

Apply it to the extraordinary and attractive complementarity we find between male and female, of XX and XY chromosomes, of sperms and ova, of respective bodily organs. They fit together — like a key in the lock which it was made for. Those who dismiss all that as blind chance are at once engloomed personalities and doomed against further scientific thinking.

Another extraordinary thing is that out-of-fashion morality seems to fit scientific biology. The Yeti give way to the S.E.T.I., the "no-man" recognizes intelligent operations nearer home.

NON-PHOBIC OLD-TIME RELIGION

CALLING ALL IDOLATERS! God invites you to something better.

Calling all who live in pride, pelf or excess pleasure to repent and adore the living God, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier.

Calling all perjurers, blasphemers, and those who hold God's Rest Day in contempt.

Calling all ingrates who dishonour father or mother.

Repent! admit your dignity, duty and destiny.

Calling all the violent, adulterers and disordered to the Manufacturer's Instructions.

Calling all thieves and liars, of high or low estate.

Calling all the dirty minded and the greedy.

God has sent you and us a Saviour, Jesus Christ!

Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you.

Draw near to God: believe He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him and keep His commandments.