

DIMENSIONS OF THE NEW EVANGELISATION

NEW APOLOGETIC



Frequently Catholicism is presented in popular discourse as a religion of negatives and prohibitions and sometimes as something opposed to human freedom and flourishing. Sometimes science and freedom are placed in opposition to religion as if Catholicism is not rational or draws on our deepest freedom. This is not the view Catholicism has of itself.

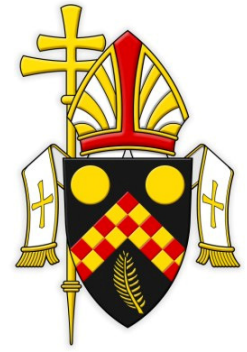
Benedict XVI called on the Church to propose a positive Catholicism and counter the popular discourse. "In a society that rightly values personal liberty, the church needs to promote at every level of her teaching - in catechesis, preaching, seminary and university instruction - an apologetics aimed at affirming the truth of Christian revelation, the harmony of faith and reason, and a sound understanding of freedom, seen in positive terms as a liberation both from the limitations of sin and for an authentic and fulfilling life."

The new evangelisation requires a new approach to apologetics. Cardinal Francis George makes this point : "Apologetics is important first of all within the Church herself. We need to give reasons for the faith not only to enlighten those who do not share it but also to strengthen those within the household of the faith."

**New
Engagement**

New Context

**New
Impulse**



*A basic definition
of new
apologetic:*

Apologetics is a word that is often misunderstood, as if it means 'apologising' for one's faith. The word, however, derives its meaning from the Greek *apologia*, meaning a 'reasoned defence'.

A new apologetics engages present culture with a positive presentation of Catholic faith.

In October of 1999, Pope John Paul II addressed his brother bishops making their *ad limina* visit from western Canada, inviting them to engage people of today in a dialogue which embodies four indispensable qualities - clarity, humanity, confidence and prudence. He suggested that these should mark the project of a "new apologetic".

In *Fides et ratio* John Paul II called Catholicism true humanism as it is aimed at full human flourishing. It has been and is a friend of science, human freedom and promoter of the dignity of every person. Faith can shed light on human reason including science, economics, politics and technology and also grant each of these areas the freedom and competence which is proper to each discipline. Catholicism can and should be presented to the world as such. Therefore an integral part of the new evangelisation must be a new apologetics - a loving and non-defensive but nonetheless clear response to the arguments against the Catholic faith. There is a harmony between faith and reason and the Catholic faith can be presented in a reasoned and reasonable manner.

The implications for adult faith formation and also the formation of children and youth, are dramatic. A renewed apologetics requires a renewed catechetics. Not an old catechetics of question and answer but a solid education none the less. Apologetics requires grounding in the doctrine of the Church and Scripture, the confidence to present arguments and the capacity to present these at a time and in a manner which is appropriate and non-defensive. Every adult Catholic should be able to give a truthful account of the faith at an appropriate level. At a boarder level, concerning the presentation of Catholicism in society, other challenges are present. How is the Church to cut through an uninformed and sometimes obdurate media to engage in the presentation of positive Catholicism?

Questions for prayer and reflection

Thinking about the area of church life for which you are engaged through a ministry or an advisory body, what challenges are there for a positive presentation of Catholic faith?

What might a new apologetic look like, sound like and feel like in your field of church life?

How might the four characteristics of clarity, humanity, confidence and prudence be utilised to develop appropriate responses to different audiences; e.g. those to whom you minister, wider parish and diocesan life and those on the margins of the Church?

What questions, thoughts and ideas emerge for you as you ponder on the new apologetics?

What are the needs of workers and volunteers for adequate formation so as to be able to engage with the new apologetic with confidence?

**New
Method**

**New
Witness**

**New
Apologetic**

Key ideas

- ***Positive presentation of the Catholic faith.***
- ***Reasoned and reasonable.***
- ***Harmony of faith and reason.***
- ***Truth spoken in love.***