



Podcast: St Bernardine of Siena and Communicating the Faith, 20 May 2021
Mgr Daniel McHugh

Journey of Faith - Life from Holy Mass - with Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Hello, I am Monsignor Daniel McHugh.

When I started this series of weekly Podcasts: Journey of Faith – Life from Holy Mass, I was thinking of the strength and inspiration, Mass each day has given me and those joining me at daily Mass through Commemoration of Saints and the readings from Scripture. Most often, I look ahead at the upcoming Liturgical Celebrations in the Calendar of the Archdiocese.

This week I noted once more the Celebration of St Bernardine of Siena: an incredible preacher of the Gospel from the latter part of the 1300s and the first half of the 1400s. He lived at a time when the ready availability of the printed word was not something you could look to, and the Internet would not have been thought of.

This week, we have been thinking of communications and the resources available to us in the Church to spread knowledge and understanding of our Faith. Each year this is a Sunday, the one before Pentecost, when we reflect on the importance of modern mass communication and how we can make best use of it to evangelize.

What does St Bernardine have to do with this? He was a wandering Franciscan preacher of the Gospel, famous for the lengths he went to in terms of preparation of his sermons and the way he related the Scriptures to the life experience and concerns of the people of his day. People came from all over to hear him and were inspired to change their lives. For any Priest or Deacon, he is someone to take inspiration from too. In his day, he was very aware of the need not only to prepare well and relate to the concerns of the people of his time, but to use popular imagery and creative language, touching the hearts of his congregations.

The paintings and frescoes of St Bernardino are noted for two things: one is 3 Episcopal Mitres on the ground before him, representing the three Bishoprics he declined in order to continue his life of full-time preaching the Gospel, the other is most significant an icon with the first 3 letters of the words “Jesus Hominum Salvator” – Jesus Saviour of Mankind. These three letters he displayed before pulpits where he preached, the first time a visual symbol was displayed to draw attention to the key, the central message of his proclamation of the Good News. Later it made its way onto church buildings too. In the Church, he became Patron of Communications and Advertising!

This year’s theme chosen by Pope Francis is “Come and see” Communicating by Encountering People where and as they are. The quote is from St John’s Gospel Chapter 1, where Jesus invited the first disciples to go to where he lived, to see Him as He was.

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And, the Pope encourages us to search for the truth and communicate Truth in our use of Social Media which takes up so much time in our lives today.

I was very interested to see the way in which the Archdiocese of Dublin developed this theme in its Communications' Sunday materials, producing a Reflection which I will share with you:

*Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page but yours,
Yours are the tweets through which love touches the world,
Yours are the posts through which the Gospel is shared,
Yours are the updates through which hope is revealed.
Christ has no online presence but yours,
No blog, no Facebook page but yours. (By Meredith Gould)*

I wonder, do you think of your use of Social Media as potentially a tool for communication of truth in the world so vulnerable to "fake news".

This prayer, ending Pope Francis' message for Communications Sunday 2021 reflects for me the life of St Bernardine of Siena encountering people where they are, as they are:

*Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves,
and to set out in search of truth.*

*Teach us to go out and see,
teach us to listen,
not to entertain prejudices
or draw hasty conclusions.*

*Teach us to go where no one else will go,
to take the time needed to understand,
to pay attention to the essentials,
not to be distracted by the superfluous,
to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth.*

*Grant us the grace to recognize your dwelling places in our world
and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.*

Thank you for listening. You can find more Podcasts from the Archdiocese of Birmingham on www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/podcasts

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