



IGNITED BY TRUTH – THE RATIONALE

A CONVERSATION WITH FATHER JEFFREY INGHAM, PASTOR, ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA CATHOLIC CHURCH, SOUTHERN PINES, N.C., AND SPONSOR OF THE IGNITED BY TRUTH CONFERENCE.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE)

About 113 days ago a few Raleigh Catholic mothers, members of TORCH (Traditions of Roman Catholic Homes) suggested bringing noted Catholic speakers to Raleigh. In less than four months' time financing was secured, a venue selected and nine noted Catholic speakers were engaged to bring you the message of faith enhancement today. Why the need? What's the hurry? Many reasons and who better to explain them than Fr. Jeffrey Ingham, the conference's sponsor.

What's the point of the title IGNITED BY TRUTH?

It pinpoints the conference's compass: to enhance the faith life of attendees and to fire them to be catalysts for real evangelization. People want to proclaim the truth they know and have received from the Church, in a way that shows real renewal, a new focus and intensity.

It is easy for Catholics to forget that the Church is essentially missionary. So today's talks are designed to enhance, encourage and build faith, to give persons the courage and determination to proclaim what they have received.

Has our faith decreased compared to the faith of our parents and grandparents?

Our faith has suffered, however, we haven't lost it completely but our fervor certainly has been dampened. For many people today faith is a struggle and it is easy to lose the missionary concept of the Church. The loss of faith is easy when you only pay attention to your own business: going to Mass, daily prayer – doing the things Christians are expected to do while neglecting the call to holiness. The Church calls us to this holiness, and the grace that comes through Her gives us the strength to answer the call. Once again, we must reinvigorate ourselves to be about the business of the Kingdom of God.

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What should we understand about the holiness we're being drawn to?

We need to make ourselves into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ and recognize that holiness is a call to heroic virtue, or to say the call is to heroic identification with the very person of the Lord Himself, unfortunately that's very easy to forget. The life of mediocrity is comfortable: not much is required, not much is aspired to. That's not the Church. The Church is always calling us not only to be good, but to something far beyond "it" so that our whole life is aimed at the one goal: the reality of God.

Have we lost the realization that there is a God?

No, but many times God becomes one goal among many. We need to remember God is primary and all other goals are subordinate to Him.

Does the culture we're living in impact our lives and cause to lose focus on God?

Our culture is predominantly secular and that often detracts from our attention from God. Our values at times are directly opposed to the gospel and to the teaching of the Church. We are allowing the culture to form us rather than us forming the culture. And that's the real problem. It's hard to confront a dominant ideology and yet that's what the Church must do: remake whatever culture exists in every civilization, in every society into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

What has caused our drift into this "new" culture?

The seeds have been there for a long time – a gradual wearing down of a former culture which was more closely based on the gospel ethic. Its taken time, but little by little the morality proclaimed by the Church for centuries has eroded. A culture of materialism can easily weaken spirituality. To say it in another way, there is the attitude that our culture is not opposed to the Gospel ethic, *when in fact that attitude is the root cause for materialism.*

(more)

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Has the Church been as strong as it should?

It depends. If you mean has the Church been affected by the culture, and people have allowed that to happen, then, yes the Church, to some extent, has been weakened. Some Catholics don't believe the Church has the moral authority She once had and there is confusion among some as to what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and, furthermore, what it means to be a Catholic. One of the conference's goals is to refocus on these basic beliefs.

Where does faith renewal – evangelization - begin?

In the home! The parish can do many things to encourage evangelization, but the home is the basic unit. You can't expect faith-life to grow when categories are divided: my faith here, my home life there and my business life somewhere else. These units are influenced and formed by faith, so the home has to be the base of evangelization then the parish and Church will follow. The home is where the whole person is formed: intellectually, emotionally, and morally. The home deals with the "total person" and presents the focus of the faith journey.

CONCLUSION

Our world teems with "noise and sounds". This constant bombardment makes it hard to reflect on our relationship with God. Helping us focus our relationship on God is a renewed devotion to the Eucharist. We experience God's love for us through the Eucharist: everything flows from it and everything flows back to it. As our understanding of our relationship to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist grows, the spirituality we seek grows. The one element that transforms and gives us strength and vision is the Eucharist: that transformation lets us center on God.

By Jim Harroun

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