



Speak for Faith Competition – Maya Mintz speech

Evangelizing presupposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery. [Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, Address to the College of Cardinals, 2013].

At the periphery we must remember, above all, to love our neighbour. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, meaning to call out. We aren't supposed to be just in the Church, but to be in communion with God. But have we got caught up in selecting who belongs in God's family?

As mentioned in Genesis 1:27 "God created mankind in his own image", granted inherent dignity irrespective of difference. At its core, God accepts all of us due to harbouring this innate Human Dignity, which should not be compressed. However, in our modern society, there have been a number of injustices which have compromised the freedom of society's most vulnerable; those on the peripheries.

For example, in recent years the number of openly homosexual people has increased. The Catholic Church's stance surrounding relationships that aren't heteronormative has never been one of acceptance; as "homosexual acts...are contrary to the natural law," and "under no circumstances can they be approved" (CCC#2357). However, has this attitude led to a decreased sense of community and acceptance within parishes?

There are a multitude of examples of Jesus showing compassion to people, despite their 'sinfulness', religion, or social status. For example, Jesus pardoning the sins of an 'adulterer'. In John 8, Jesus was brought a woman who was caught in adultery. However, instead of condemning her, Jesus called the woman to "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11). Jesus taught that we must see the face of God in every sinner.

Another example is the parable of the Good Samaritan, which tells the story of a Samaritan and a Jew, who wouldn't usually be friends. However, the Samaritan helped the Jew who was injured and in need of help. Jesus then calls us to "Go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37), asking us to enact the two great commandments.

It is these commandments which govern all aspects of one's life. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". And "Love your neighbour as yourself". (Matthew 22:36-40). By getting caught up in who we love, people have forgotten the very essence of the instruction; everyone is your neighbour. The commandment doesn't ask us to agree with the moral principles and ethics of our neighbour, but to love. Just as "love is patient", it also "does not dishonour others" (1 Corinthians 14:4-5).

To draw back to the love at the core of Christianity, the Catholic Church underwent a period of reform following Vatican II, enacting 'Aggiornamento' and 'Ressourcement' to update to Church whilst remaining authentic to sacred scripture and tradition. The ecumenical council allowed mass to be spoken in local vernacular, with an increased role of laity and a renewed importance of the sacraments.

The Church was able to respond to the need for renewal, including through increased ecumenism, interfaith dialogue between Christian denominations. However, we should seek to reach those on the peripheries, including the LGBTQ community, the role of women in the church, and divorced Catholics, increasing the dialogue not just within the church but between the church and the world. According to Gaudium et Spes 43, it isn't "the world against the church" it's "the world together with the church".

"If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will", or if a divorced person wants to receive communion, "who am I to judge?", says Pope Francis. After all, it is God who forms the conscience that stirs within us. In fact, it is those on the outskirts who are in need of the gift of the Holy Spirit most, as Luke 19:10 states that "For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost". Jesus was an upstander, and calls humanity to respond to issues with an open heart.

In being caught up in the symbols of the church, has the very nature of our loving Church community been lost? Thank you