

A religious sister once told me a story at a wake to help me understand her deceased brother. She said her brother was such a good man. In his last years, he cared for a wife with advanced Alzheimer's disease. He had spent his life in the military. It was the perfect career for him. He believed everything should be done a certain way, from washing the dishes, to the manner you live your life. That stated, the brother and sister argued a lot over the years about politics. She was liberally inclined. Her brother was a staunch conservative Catholic. Once, when she was a young religious sister, she was made novice director by her community. She was honored. The sisters in her community thought highly enough of her to place the formation of young women entering the religious life into her hands. While home for the holidays, she mentioned her new role at the dinner table, only when she was asked about what was new in her life. Upon hearing that her sister was made novice director, her brother stopped eating and with a look of disbelief yelled, "What? You are novice director? You are barely Catholic!" I laughed out loud when she told me. I told her that even though I didn't know her brother, I love him based on that story.



Be Bold in your Faith!

We need more Catholics like her brother. Too many Catholics have either little faith or a lukewarm faith. It is a telltale sign that they are not living in the Spirit. Living in America, where we are conditioned to believe all religions are equal, doesn't help matters. A person truly living in the Spirit is no wallflower. Take for example, Peter, in our first reading. The Apostles, Peter and John, had been thrown in jail for preaching about Jesus in the Jewish Temple. The next day they were brought before the High Priest and the Jewish religious ruling body, the Sanhedrin. Peter tells them that the Jesus of Nazareth, who they crucified, is the only person one can be saved by.* I wonder how that would go over at a local inter-religious dialogue? It would probably never be said which helps explain the state of the 21st century Church.

The truth is attractive. It can be offensive when it's first heard because it usually contradicts the narrative one has based their life on. When Jesus was before Pilate, He stated that He came into the world to give testimony to the truth, that everyone who hears the truth, hears His voice. Before anything else, we should live lives that give testimony to the truth of our Catholic Faith. We should verbally share our Faith too. We need to be respectful of other people's beliefs. However, by doing so, we shouldn't compromise our own beliefs.

It is understandable to be nervous speaking the truth. Speaking the truth will eventually get you punished. If you don't believe me, just look at a crucifix. That aside, you are obligated in certain situations to speak the truth. Plus, your children, grandchildren and friends need to hear the truths of our Faith. If you want to be a Good Shepherd, speak the truth with love to them. The truth gives our lives meaning, protection and direction. When the opportunity arises, you will never be more helpful or sound more intelligent than when you share our teachings with others. Why? Because our teachings come from God, not from you and not from me. Good-hearted people will hear the voice of God when they hear the truth, although sometimes that takes time. Therefore, be bold. Remember, the truth is attractive. Speaking the truth also puts a good kind of pressure on you to live out the truth.

I recently read a book on the Spanish Civil War. Between 1936-1939, 6,832 men and women religious (priest, nuns, monks and religious brothers) were brutally murdered, in many cases, mutilated by Republicans (essentially Communists). Four thousand lay persons died trying to protect them. In numerous cases, these heroic martyrs stared right into the eyes of their executioners, and before being shot, yelled, "Long live Christ the King!" And you are afraid to mention the name of Jesus in polite society? We owe it to ourselves and to two thousands years of Christian martyrs to be loud and proud of our Christian Faith!

* As I wrote in the Easter bulletin, people of good will in other religions, who have lived good lives, can be saved. However, it's through Jesus, even if they don't realize it at the time of their death.