

**“I prayed, and understanding was given to me;
I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.”**
Wis 7:7

Every day, as I walk along Orwell Place and Tackett Street and see ordinary folk going about their daily business, I think, ‘How on earth are we to draw them to a belief in the Catholic faith? What do we offer that they can possibly want, they who have almost every material advantage? They who have freedom, and independence, and the right to live according to the dictates of their own thoughts and preferences?’

Over the last sixty years or more, the Catholic Church has sought to open Herself up to the world, flinging open Her doors and windows to all comers, almost as if She were saying, ‘See, we Catholics are not so different from everyone else after all. We can all get along together, and so long as we do none harm then we can all meet merrily in heaven together at the end of our lives here on earth.’

But in presenting ourselves as normal – as ordinary – to the rest of the world, we have, in fact, sold the Catholic Faith short. And, much worse, we have done an injustice to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Because, you see, He is far from ordinary, and what He has to offer is far from normal. And the more we, as Catholics, try to assimilate ourselves into the conventional ways of the society in which we live, the more we do both ourselves and other people a disfavour.

I do not say that common feeling and a general sense of fellowship and brotherhood among different peoples and nations is unimportant; neither do I say that we may trample carelessly over the sensibilities of others. I do not suggest that care for our environment is irrelevant, or that the pressing issues of the day might be ignored. But I *do* say that these are not the things which constitute the Catholic Faith.

We will attract the lost people of today's generation not so much, I suggest, by engaging them in the issues of the day and arguing about morality or ideologies, although there is indeed a place for this. Rather, the Catholic Church has always attracted converts when She does well what She does best, namely when She preaches what Her Divine Founder preached, and when She offers them what He offered them.

The Catholic Faith is a treasure beyond wonder. It is rich and bountiful, and it has a substance – a solidness if you like – that the world's philosophies simply cannot match. And if we delve into that substance, we will find ourselves sharing in an altogether different reality from the social media shallowness and idle chatter, the continual pursuit of novelty and the latest trends, that pass for normal out there but which are, in fact, the death of the soul.

The Catholic Faith offers something utterly at odds with the ways of the world, and as our society veers further and further from the path of its Christian heritage, and sets itself on an altogether different trajectory from that of our ancestors, the gap between what Catholics and non-Catholics believe grows wider and wider every day.

I am not suggesting that each of us, as Catholics, should start to live as a recluse, in hiding from the world, or in self-contained Catholic ghettos, but I am suggesting that if Catholics are serious about their faith then they will find themselves more and more at odds with the world in which they live. And instead of rebelling against this difference we would do well to *embrace* this difference and be happy to live a Catholic life rather than forever trying to fit like a square peg into a round hole, because, in the end, the Catholic Faith on the one hand and the ways of the world on the other are, quite simply, incompatible. We should stop trying to marry them up as if we can have the best of both worlds, because sooner or later we will find ourselves without either.

The Book of Wisdom (from which we hear a snippet in today's First Reading) opens up for us the nature of this difference:

Love justice, you that are the judges of the earth. Think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in simplicity of heart. For he is found by them that tempt him not: and he shews himself to them that have faith in him.

Wisdom, the Book of Wisdom teaches us, is both a Person – the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity – and a virtue. By the virtue of Wisdom we can begin to see as God sees, and how God sees the world is utterly different from how we normally see the world. To be a Catholic in our world today means seeing everything – and I mean everything – through a different filter from the one everybody else sees the world through. To be a Catholic today means adopting a radically different mindset from almost everyone around us, and that, of course, is a hard thing to do. But if we truly wish to love God and the things of God, and if we really place a higher value on getting to heaven than on accumulating the treasures of this world, then there is actually no other approach we can take.

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