

EDITORIAL

Preach the Gospel without words in the workplace

Those of us who work for *Today's Catholic* find ourselves in a unique situation. We pray for guidance before our staff meetings, attend retreats, have our own Disciples in Mission group with communications staff and even have Mass with the staff. We are fortunate that a crucifix, photos of Our Lord, the popes, our bishops — reminders of our Catholicity — are a welcome decor in our new office building. From a spiritual standpoint, some may say that “we have it made.”

God and the church are our business. But 99 percent of you do not have the luxuries that afford our staff. Some businesses restrict the use of religious items.

We hope that the articles in this week's newspaper will offer suggestions about bringing your faith into the workplace.

Do people at your office or factory even know that you are Catholic? Or do we blend in with the rest of the secular office workplace?

We're not suggesting preaching at the water cooler that you are Catholic. St. Francis told us to preach the Gospel; use words if necessary.

In other words, our actions speak louder than our preaching. So how would a Catholic behave in the workplace? Here are a few examples: Straying away from gossip; doing your work efficiently and positively; partaking of your fair share of the workload; watching your language; refraining from cursing and using the Lord's name in vain; treating co-workers with the dignity that they deserve as a special child of God; giving an honest day's work for an honest day's wage; and giving your best for God.

The same is true of those entrusted with management duties. Do you see that your employees get the rest they need? Do they get the vacation time they need to reenergize their spirit? Do they receive needed family time? Do they receive encouragement?

Celebrate the human spirit at work

Jack Lannom is a motivational author, researcher and speaker. He works with leadership development and with individuals and businesses to “celebrate the human spirit.”

His latest book, “People First” is an effort to prepare corporate America for the worst shortage of skilled workers in U.S. history that will take place by 2011 as the Baby Boomer population retires.

In order for businesses to keep their best employees, he encourages a major shift in philosophy — one from profit first, people last, to putting people first. Lannom says, “Every human being needs to know that who they are and what they do in a company has purpose, meaning and immense significance.”

When people are put first, Lannom says, “Excellence is the inevitable outcome of adopting this philosophy. People will work in excellence when they are treated excellently, and with this excellence will come profits.”

Treating people with excellence sounds like a business term that Jesus would invoke. When we live in pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our lives, especially holiness, then we shall find a reward of eternal happiness.

We can help those devastated by Katrina

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend will be taking a special collection for those devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Bishop John M. D'Arcy is now consulting the Presbyteral Council and the vicars concerning this collection. It is most likely parishes will be offered the choice of two weekends, Sept. 18 or 25 for this collection.

Catholic Charities USA is also collecting financial donations to help communities recover from the damage brought on by Hurricane Katrina. Donations will be used to fund local Catholic Charities agencies' emergency and long term disaster recovery efforts in areas hit by the hurricane.

Catholic Charities USA, which has been commissioned by the U.S. Catholic Bishops to represent the Catholic community in times of domestic disaster, responds with emergency and long-term assistance as needed.

Its Disaster Response Office connects the church's social service agencies and disaster planning offices across the nation.

Besides the parish collections, to contribute to the Hurricane Katrina disaster relief fund:

- Call (800) 919-9338
- Visit www.catholiccharitiesusa.org
- Send checks to Catholic Charities USA, Hurricane Katrina, P.O. Box 25168, Alexandria, VA 22313-9788.

Today's Catholic editorial board consists of Bishop John M. D'Arcy, Ann Carey, Father Mark Gurtner, Father Michael Heintz, Tim Johnson, Vince LaBarbera, Msgr. J. William Lester and Sharon Little.

COMMENTARY

TODAY'S CATHOLIC welcomes letters from readers. All letters must be signed and include a phone number and address for verification. Today's Catholic reserves the right to edit for clarity and length. Address letters to: Today's Catholic • P.O. Box 11169 • Fort Wayne, IN • 46856-1169 or e-mail to: editor@fw.diocesefwsb.org

Offers a defense for the faith

As I read George Weigel's article Aug. 21, “Making ‘Catholic’ make sense,” I reflected upon one of the most “sensible” arguments I have in defense of our faith.

Years ago, before one of my weekly visits from a wonderful Jehovah Witness lady, I had prayed, knowing that God did not give me a “spirit of confusion,” and asked the Lord to speak through me to her or them. After all, she was pretty firm in her beliefs, as I was in mine, and both of us had the same intention in mind — conversion. Needless to say, many times, her friends would accompany her and that got quite awkward, especially when you are blasted with a question before you

could answer the one prior.

Sadly, these genuine people have a bizarre and twisted opinion of Catholicism, and as we were sharing, our church came up again.

I asked them if they knew what a Black Mass was and they responded that they knew it was a satanic ritual. I proceeded to ask them if they really knew what takes place and they were not sure.

I told them that a Black Mass is a parody of the Roman Catholic Mass. Our Mass is read backwards; our Holy Water is stolen and urinated in for their ritual (and it has to be water blessed by a Catholic priest — not from another church or from a faucet); and our Eucharist is desecrated during these horrific rituals.

My point ... if we believe that our God is a God of goodness and love and the devil is a god of hate

and destruction and if our Mass is so evil, why do they have to change anything to worship the devil? Why are these evil people not attending our Sunday Masses with us each week? And as we know, the devil used Scripture to tempt Jesus in the desert, so he is well aware of what actually takes place during Mass.

For me, this sensibly proved the beauty and power of the Catholic Mass and all that is within our faith.

They never returned. Neither have any other Jehovah Witness or Mormon who has come to my door after I have asked them to explain this question to me.

I pray that this is a question that they will ponder and the blindness in their eyes will be opened to truth.

**Kathrine Nisley
Mishawaka**

Behind the boss's back: Prayer in the workplace

BY JULIE McCARTY

Is there a way to pray in the workplace, without neglecting your job or infringing on the rights of others? A way to keep in touch with God while running a grocery store checkout, managing a daycare, answering phones or meeting with clients? Or is prayer something restricted to that little Sunday box on your calendar?

A lot depends on how you define prayer. Praying the rosary while interviewing a new hire or meditating in a lotus position while running a backhoe certainly won't work. Your boss won't be a happy camper if you tell him or her that you missed a critical staff meeting because you were in a deep mystical ecstasy.

I suspect that few of us have ever thought about taking God with us to the workplace — but God is already there. After all,

God is everywhere. Merely recalling God's presence is itself one type of prayer. Simple? Yes, but difficult to remember to do. Here are some ways to prompt yourself to pray inwardly during your work day:

- Place little reminders of God around your work area. If your office doesn't allow religious symbols, use ordinary objects, like family photos, a personal book with a spiritual cover, or notes posted inside your briefcase to remind you of the spiritual dimension of your work, writes Gregory F. A. Pierce in “Spirituality@Work” (Loyola, 2001). Writing a Scripture verse in your planner or selecting a gor-

geous nature scene for your computer's desktop wallpaper are other examples of unobtrusive ways to draw your heart to God without forcing your views on others.

- Use your coffee break for a rendezvous with God. Little reflection booklets with the daily Mass readings, such as “Living with Christ” (Novalis), take only a few minutes to read, but help one enter into God's presence.

- Group with others for prayer time. In New York City, Muslims, committed to praying five times a day, meet in small groups during lunch or break times to recite the opening of the Koran and pray with bows, kneeling and prostrations, writes Joseph Berger in the *New York Times*. He also reports

higher intelligence into your office meeting without saying it in so many words, suggests Deborah Savage, adjunct faculty of theology and business at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. Savage says God's grace is constantly present to us, but we need to slow down in order to notice it. For example, one business she heard about instituted a company-wide policy that allotted one specific hour each day for sacred work time: no meetings, no phoning, no interaction, just sitting at your desk to do your work.

- Practice awareness of the present moment. Savage also observes that we often mistakenly imagine the soul as one little compartment of who we are, when really our soul is “larger” than our body and connects us to God. You can't very well leave your soul at home when you drive to work in the morning — it's the spiritual thread that runs

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that observant Jews similarly gather for minyan (prayer group of at least 10) in at least 180 places in busy Manhattan. Catholics might consider attending a weekday Mass at noontime or forming a small prayer group to meet at a nearby food court or coffee shop.

- Set aside distracting thoughts. Just as you set aside distracting thoughts during prayer time, gently let go of distracting thoughts when a co-worker is speaking to you. Listen carefully to him or her — you might just hear the Spirit of God in something that is said.

- Try to bring more silence into the work environment. God speaks to us in silence. You can invite a

through every moment of our lives, she says.

Prayer is really more about being, than do-ing, Savage reminds us, so it's good to practice being attune to everything in the present moment — our feelings, our sensory perceptions, our thoughts, etc. Everything we are actually exists within the presence of God. As chapter 17 of the Acts of the Apostles declares, in God “we live and move and have our being.” God is always with us — even in the busy workplace.

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