

YAC's 'Theology On Tap'

The latest three in our successful series of 'Theology On Tap' were, much like all the others preceding them, a hit. With guest speakers qualified in their field of expertise, the three sessions addressed, one, our powerful media and their not always hidden anti-catholic bias; next, the present-day fascination with the supernatural and para-normal; and thirdly, the almost revolutionary naked truth about sex.

The first session on 'faith & media', held on September 22nd and presented by Mrs. Joanne McGarry, Chairperson of the Catholic Civil Rights League in Toronto, dealt with the more or less explicit anti-Catholic bias in much of the media. While not all the mass media and not all media personnel are outright hostile toward the Catholic Church, there is a certain one-sidedness when dealing with Catholic news items. It is obvious, for example, from the reporting in printed, televised or online media outlets on Catholic events or news where often mere terminology reveals either underlying ignorance or partiality such as when calling the sacred host a mere wafer. Quotes of Church authority are often taken out of context such as happened to Pope Benedict's remarks on AIDS in Africa or to his encyclical letters. Church news, if it is deemed newsworthy at all, is frequently linked to unrelated events such as abuse scandals in what may be seen as an effort at discrediting the item altogether. It appears that the Catholic Church, her teachings and her members are subject to intense media scrutiny while other religious communities or secular organizations go often unexamined on similar subjects. The reason for such bias in some of the media may have to do with the fact that the media has always seen itself on the cutting edge of social changes and the promoter of such changes in society; changes, some of which the Catholic Church can understandably and rightfully not always support and to which she proposes alternatives. It is here that Christians following in Christ's own footsteps become a sign that is being contradicted (cf. Lk 2:34).

The second session on 'ghosts, goblins and God', held on October 20th and presented by Fr. Joseph Devereaux, Judicial Vicar of the Diocese and Pastor at St. Thomas More in Millbrook, dealt with the fascination of the supernatural in popular culture. Indicative of the innate longing of the soul to reach out to God and his life, this fascination cannot but go astray when left without the insights of divine revelation and the help of supernatural grace. Pagan rituals and beliefs celebrate a come-back as can easily be seen surrounding the celebrations of Halloween. The afterlife, death and the deceased have been reduced to more or less frightening realities while supernatural beings, demons and angels, appear, disconnected from their Creator, to be roaming the universe as demi-gods without any specific objective or focus other than for our entertainment. The clear concepts of heaven, hell and purgatory, of Satan and his demons, of angels, archangels and guardian angels seem all but absent in popular culture which somehow has given more room to the more negative, darker aspects of the supernatural. While many dabble in the supernatural or

para-normal as a pastime through shows, movies, board games etc., they may not realize how real the supernatural is and how easily they can open themselves up to serious spiritual trouble. Christian revelation thankfully provides a clear understanding and gives clear direction as to what to do and what not to do in order to have life in all its fullness and not to lose it (cf. Jn 10:10).

The third session on ‘The naked truth about love, sex and God’ was held on November 17th. It was presented by Michelle Griepsma, Teacher of NFP and responsible for Fertility Care Services for the Diocese, and dealt with the issue of human sexuality, its practice and consequences for individuals and for society in general. The omnipresence of sex in society is itself a telling sign of a misunderstanding. Sex is not just about sex. Sex points beyond itself to the truth about man and woman, about the meaning of love, about the ordering of society and even the universe; in the end, it points to the truth about God. Based on Pope John Paul II’s ‘Theology of the Body’, the sexual union makes visible and proclaims the mystery of God’s eternal love. It is from here that sex, sexuality, the human body and marriage find their proper interpretation and meaning. Sex can, therefore, never be a casual matter for it is never insignificant, but needs to be guarded, respected and directed as a most precious and delicate reality. This concept of sex and the distortion thereof have far reaching consequences, which Pope Paul VI already noted in his encyclical letter ‘*Humanae Vitae*’. The contraceptive culture does in the end not promote the wellbeing of either, not the spouses nor the family nor society as a whole. For the sake of such wellbeing or, rather, recovery on a physical, psychological, even ecological and, certainly, spiritual level, a new understanding of human sexuality has been offered to the world through Pope John Paul’s ‘Theology of the Body’. A recent conference in Toronto this past October was attended by over 1000 people, including the speaker as well as a number of youth and adults from the Peterborough Diocese.

(Please note: The above are VEYO summaries of TOT sessions. TOT is organized and hosted by YAC – Young Adult Catholics, a section of VEYO.)