

Catholics vs Crossroads – what can we learn from the Mega Churches that are drawing people away from Catholic church?

Objective:

As Catholics we believe and can trace our beliefs back to the birth of Christ, the life of Christ, and Peter the chosen leader of the catholic church by Jesus Christ. The “Mega Churches” (like Crossroads) seem to be good, solid, Christian institutions that do a lot of good, Christian work. So why are they so different?

The biggest difference is THE MASS, it is a celebration of the sacrifice Jesus Christ, made to atone for our sins already made and will be made in the future. Jesus said do this in remembrance of me - no mention of grand entertainment - just a service centered around the last supper, the bread and wine, the body and blood of Jesus Christ and His teachings. We can trace from Jesus to Peter Pope #1 to Francis #266.

However, these megachurches do attract a lot of people and do a lot of good for the community. So, what can we learn from them? How can we continue to celebrate Mass and worship God as was intended over 2000 years ago, but still incorporate some of the very positive elements from our friends at the Mega Churches?

Song Suggestion: One Bread, One Body (Blue 337, Red 813, Gather 346, Music Issue 357)

Suggested Bible and Catechism Readings:

Matthew 16: 15-18

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Catechism 1378

In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession."

Catechism 2044-2045

The fidelity of the baptized is a primordial condition for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church's mission in the world. In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians. "The witness of a Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have great power to draw men to the faith and to God."

Because they are members of the Body whose Head is Christ, Christians contribute to building up the Church by the constancy of their convictions and their moral lives. The Church increases, grows, and develops through the holiness of her faithful, until "we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Saint: St. John Paul II – patron saint of the new evangelization

Vignette:

This past Sunday, as Jim and his wife were pulling into the parking lot of a local Trader Joe’s store they noticed throngs of people suddenly swarming into the parking lot. His immediate thought was either Trader’s was having a fantastic Memorial Day sale, or it was a flash mob preparing to do something weird. Then he saw the Bibles. Since they rarely frequent this store’s location, he had forgotten that The Rock megachurch was right across the street. Then he remembered reading somewhere that the Sunday attendance at this church was in the thousands.

As they waited for the pedestrian traffic to thin out, Jim lamented to his wife that it’s likely that most of those people leaving The Rock church were lapsed Catholics. No surprise there. Jim had attended a megachurch for many years himself, and understand the powerful draw of an emotionally charged worship service, where the stage resembles a rock concert and the sermons are motivational and inspiring. Some of the most spiritually vulnerable are the poorly formed Catholics who don’t understand even basic elements of the faith. Years of faulty catechetical instruction both in the home and in the parish have produced spiritually malnourished Catholics. So it doesn’t take long before the salvation message of the well-intentioned pastor, whose message contains just enough truth to draw the Catholic in, does just that. This is so tragic!

On the drive home, Jim couldn’t stop thinking about all the lapsed Catholics at The Rock who abandoned the Church for a praise ‘n’ worship site that makes them feel better. It made him so sad. All he could think about was bringing them back to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, where they can experience the amazing love and grace that Jesus gives us through his body and blood. But it always goes back to the same question, “How do we reach them and bring them back?” There are many approaches, but, perhaps evangelizing the parish should be the focus. By strengthening the spiritual foundation of our own parishes, there would be no reason for anyone to leave! After all, where would they go (cf. John 6:67–68)?

Why not adapt some of these ministry ideas to fit the needs of your parish? If Protestants can do this, why can’t we? Don’t feed the excuse monster with things like “I don’t have the time,” “My pastor will only put up roadblocks,” or “I might make mistakes.” We must not lose our apostolic courage. As Pope Francis has said, “You might say ‘But Father, we might make mistakes.’ I might respond, ‘Well, what of it? Onward, if you make a mistake, you get up and go forward; that is the way.’ Those who do not walk to avoid mistakes make a the more serious mistake.”

Questions for large and small Group Discussions:

Why are some ways that might engage lapsed, or disinterested Catholics to come back and participate more?

What could you do just within the confines of your own family that would bring the Catholic faith more alive?

Why do you stay Catholic and how can you communicate that message to others?

References:

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/how-a-megachurch-reaches-the-pews>
<https://www.ncregister.com/features/creating-catholic-community-the-story-of-two-megachurches>
<https://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2009/12/should-catholics-copy-megachurches.html>

Action Plan:

Saint Pope John Paul II said, “

In the present circumstances the lay faithful have the ability to do very much and, therefore, ought to do very much towards the growth of an authentic ecclesial communion in their parishes in order to reawaken missionary zeal towards nonbelievers and believers themselves who have abandoned the faith or grown lax in the Christian life.

1. Spend some time in prayer to think about what you are passionate about, and then how could you engage others in this passion

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