



Theology Outside the Walls

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

Theology on Tap offers young adults the opportunity to gather outside of places of worship to discuss religion among themselves and with an invited guest. Last March 15th, mercy was at the heart of the matter.

On March 15th the dioceses of Saint Boniface and Winnipeg relaunched *Theology on Tap* (TOT), an activity originating from the diocese of Chicago some 30 years ago. TOT was at its height in Winnipeg three years ago.



During TOT, young adults from all over get together one evening in a bar/restaurant in the company of a speaker, to meet and discuss a pre-determined theme and also to have their questions answered by that speaker. On March 15th, it was Father Len Altília, Jesuit and president of St. Paul High School in Winnipeg, who spoke to the audience of the Jubilee of Mercy and of Pope Francis.

Father Altília affirmed that for Pope Francis, mercy is very important, something he practices a lot. On Holy Thursday, he went to a prison and washed the feet of prisoners, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. And his first visit away from the Vatican was to a refugee camp. He always extends a hand to those marginalized (even by the



Church), for God never tires of forgiving. Pope Francis tells us that, like God, we must be agents of mercy, of compassion to make a difference in others' lives, to give them back their dignity. We must shake things up, change the world. No need to walk on water! Change can happen in small ways.

Ofelia Tatu, participating with her husband, confided that she was drawn to the gathering by the topic of mercy. She claimed that although we are invited to be more attentive to mercy, she often wondered how to live it, how to put it into practice. Father Altilia's words resounded for her as did the ensuing discussion at their table. She realized that she had often been unconditionally forgiven by God, so why shouldn't she forgive and offer mercy?



As for David Schilling, member of the organizing committee, what stands out for him is that it is important to love everyone and treat others with dignity: it is the best way to live this Jubilee of Mercy.

Ofelia Tatu adds that we often think that

we must accomplish great things, but the Lord never asks of us more than we can do. This became clear to her that evening.

According to Diocesan Coordinator of the Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface and co-organizer of TOT, Mireille Grenier, TOT is a good way to reach people who have wandered away from the faith or who have questions about it. Here they can ask all their questions in a friendly atmosphere and without judgment. And mostly the environment is less imposing as the meetings are not held in a church.

Another TOT organizer, the director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, Christian Martinez, adds that it is good for youth to collaborate between dioceses rather than be in competition, as we all live in the same city. He notes that we are one big family and if we unite our forces, we can reach more youth.

The first TOT proved Christian's assertion to be right. Although he and Mireille Grenier optimistically hoped for thirty or so, the final count was in the sixties – all people who came to meet, discuss, and listen to Father Altilia!

Janelle Lafantaisie heard about *Theology on Tap* from a friend and thought it was a good idea and a cool way for the Church to evangelize, to reach people. Moreover, she felt Father Len Altilia's explanation of the Year of Mercy, and what we can do to contribute, was excellent and very useful.

Father Altilia concluded by saying that he has dedicated his life to faith and youth education, and that it was therefore without hesitation that he had accepted the invitation to address the TOT gathering. He expressed hope that he will have helped the youth in their search for faith or for a better understanding of God.



TOT will be held once a month until June 2016 inclusively. The next evening is planned for April 12th at Johnny G's, 177 McDermot Avenue, starting at 6:15 PM (theme presentation at 7 PM). The invited guest, Msgr Maurice Comeau from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Winnipeg, will address the topic of redemptive suffering.