“The Salesian Spirit” ESSAY CONTEST

Revived in 2006, with the 40th anniversary of DeSales University and in conjunction with World Communications Day, the Salesian Center for Faith & Culture sponsors an annual writing contest for members of the campus community. World Communications Day is celebrated in most countries on the Sunday before Pentecost. The announcement of the theme is usually made on September 29, the Feast of the Archangels Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, who have been designated patrons of those who work in radio. The Holy Father’s message for World Communications Day is traditionally published on January 24, in conjunction with the Memorial of St. Francis de Sales, patron of writers.

Theme for 2017

“Fear not for I am with you” (Isaiah 43:5)
COMMUNICATING HOPE & TRUST IN OUR TIME

“Best of the Rest” award

Jesus Christ:
Good News in a Fallen World

by
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When my mother selects a book to read, she likes to pick out the fairy tales. The ones where prince charming and his princess live a happy life – on earth and in eternity. She likes the ones where the goodness of humanity is shown in a world devoid of suffering and evil. This outlook is a fine one to have when wrapped up in the sheltered world of a novel, but does not always work in the world.

We do not live in a fairy tale world. We are constantly being bombarded with bad news. Pope Francis in his message for World Day of Communications tells us we ought to respond to tragedy and the evil of this world in a way which points to Christ. Having this world view provides comfort to us as we walk through trials of this world, knowing that Christ walks alongside us.

In his message, Pope Francis expresses concern over the content of media content blasted onto us. We see suffering, evil, and tragedy all the time; in every single newscast and all the breaking news alerts that scroll across our phones announcing the latest horror. Pope Francis asks that we work to “break the vicious circle of anxiety and stem the spiral of fear resulting from a constant focus on “bad news” (wars, terrorism, scandals and all sorts of human failure)”.¹ With this warning, Pope Francis tells us not to focus on or gawk at human
tragedy and misfortune. So then I think, I am doing a pretty good job of this as I live my sheltered life on this college campus. But then we read on and discover that he is not asking that we grow apathetic or ignorant towards the bad news but instead encourages us to begin to acknowledge it and formulate a specific kind of response to it. I am to be educated in the world and see the bad in light of an even greater good news.

Pope Francis explains the good news as being Jesus. If we look only at what some may call “bad news”, the tragedy and evil in Jesus’s story, then we have overlooked an integral part of who He is. There was more to Him than His suffering death and in order to get the whole picture of who Jesus really was, you have to look at the good news, the news that doesn’t sell in the newspapers these days. You have to see the perfection He lived out and the unstained life He lived, in order to comprehend the beauty. You have to recognize the love and understanding God has for us; that the Son would suffer in the human condition and therefore knows our suffering intimately. You have to recognize that the paschal suffering of Jesus is inextricably linked with His kingdom glory. For Jesus’s death brought suffering to himself but was also His moment of greatest glory as it says in John “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”.  

Acknowledging all of who Jesus is and the glory brought to Him because of His suffering transforms this broadcast of tragedy and pain into one of good news. Saint Francis de Sales gives some wisdom on how to see good news of our own suffering in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Here, St. Francis invites us to offer our burdens, pains, and weaknesses to Jesus, asking Him to “join them to the torments he received for you”. Our immediate response to the bad news of this world ought to be to first offer it up to Christ. The simple
realization that we can give our pains to Jesus to hold and that the suffering we see and experience in this world is nothing in comparison to Jesus suffering ought to change our perspective. The Holy Father refers to this as the lens through which we view reality.

Viewing reality of this world through the lighted lens of Christianity and good news of Christ illuminates tragedy in our world. Every darkness in the world becomes covered in Christ’s light, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”.4 A single light will rid a room of the darkness, it takes only one flicker of light for the darkness to disappear. In the same way also, when we allow God into our lives, we find that He joins us in our suffering. In the midst of darkness, He carries the lantern of light, the torch of His truth. The Holy Father affirms this “Good News amid the dramatic events of our time, shine like beacons in the darkness of this world”.5 Saint Francis de Sales instructs us to “Live Jesus” in our lives, infusing the light into what we do, seeing the good news amidst a world that focuses so single mindedly on the bad.

We have a God who digs in the trenches alongside His people. This is affirmed in His message of “Fear not for I am with you”.6 When the bad news of this world threatens my feeling of security and safety with reports of terror, God says I am with you. When sadness and desperation pushes me into isolation, God is with me. When I cannot hear Him over the yells and screams of others, God tells me that He is here. When I fail and when I find success, I know that the great I Am is with me.

Let us not be a rubbernecking people but a society that acknowledges the bad news of this world in such a way that points to the good news of Christ. What sort of a different
tale would we have to tell if the news banners scrolling across our phones were lit with the good news of Christ? How would that change the writing of our story?


2 John 12:23


4 John 1:5

5 “Message for the 51st World Day of Social Communications”

6 Isaiah 43:5