

Marketing the Church

Many strange things come across my desks week by week, but one of the strangest is an article I received last week, from the Church Resources News bulletin which was sourced from The Times Online. The article purported to be about “church” and was directed at the gender imbalance that we see in church communities. An organisation entitled Christian Vision for Men, a member of the Evangelical Alliance had some provocative things to say about why men don’t go to church. Apparently “real” men don’t like going to church because “they don’t want to sing love songs to a man”, because “vicars wear dresses”, and because they want to be waited on by women rather than queuing for coffee after the service. The article goes on to seriously advocate that instead of the usual flowers and statues of the Virgin Mary “how would it go down to decorate with swords, or pictures of knights, or flaming torches.” GOOD GRIEF!

But probably most disturbing of all is this quote from the organisation’s spokesman:
“The problem has become male culture versus church culture. Too many sermons talk about Jesus’ love, compassion and grace which are great but not male concepts. Men want to know about his great decision making and leadership. That is what they recognise. Churches are very pastorally driven whereas blokes are looking for decisions not discussions.”

So here we have yet another attempt to market the church! Apparently the church needs marketing, sexing up, because everyone knows it’s out of touch and boring ! But it all depends upon what you see the as the church. If the church is merely an institution then it’s no wonder that we have such facile solutions.

As I See It, the church is the embodiment of the Christ. As such we should mirror in our lives the Christ values of “love, compassion and grace” and when we see these flowing from the lives of people we are experiencing the church at its best. We don’t need to introduce marketing for a product that should speak for itself. Any attempt to do so I believe will in the end fail to satisfy. Like any marriage it is the day to day loving that makes it work. But let me end with a quote from Richard Rohr’s book “Everything Belongs” (Available from the Ida Burchill Library – is this marketing?) -a poem called *Inherent Unmarketability*

*How do you make attractive that which is not?
How do you sell emptiness, vulnerability and non-success?
How do you talk descent when everything is about ascent?
How can you possibly market letting go in a capitalist culture?
How do you present Jesus to a Promethean mind?
How do you talk about dying to a church trying to appear perfect?
This is not going to work.
(Admitting this might be a first step).*

Jesus said: “Very truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit.” John 12: 24.

Now market that !

Tony would be more than happy to chat about the above article with anyone who wants to.

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