

Evangelization

Bringing others to Christ through the “open door”

BY MARCEL LEJEUNE
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A few years ago I was flying to Arizona from Texas for a conference. During this time, there were numerous forest fires below the plane in both New Mexico and Arizona. After boarding I found myself sitting in the middle seat between two men. We politely greeted one another and I struck up a casual conversation with the older gentleman to my left. When we passed over the fires and were able to see the smoke rising from them, he said to me, “God be with those people,” to which I responded, “Amen!” Noticing my enthusiastic response, he asked if I was a Christian; I responded affirmatively. We then entered into a great conversation about our faith journeys.

In his own story, he detailed how he had been one of the early followers of Scientology (the cultic religion of stars such as Tom Cruise). He told me how he helped L. Ron Hubbard establish the first Scientology reading room in Los Angeles. Years later he left Scientology because of an encounter with Christians who witnessed to him. He joined a small church and professed

his great gratitude to God for showering him with grace and leading him to Christ. I then told him about my

conversion to Christ and how his grace showered upon me as well. In this sharing we came to a mutual respect for one another and an understanding of how Christ was the most important thing in both of our lives.

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Up to this point, about an hour into the conversation, he did not know I was Catholic. After he asked me what I did for a living he was shocked to find out I was Catholic. He told me he didn't know Catholics believed in the “gospel of grace” and he had never met a Catholic as bold about proclaiming Christ. This opportunity to witness to Christ working in the Catholic Church was an eye-opener for this fellow brother-in-Christ. He then asked me many questions about the Catholic Church, which I gladly answered for him. Because his prejudice

against the Catholic Church was turned upside down, he was open to hearing the answers.

Throughout our conversation the man to my right was mostly silent, though I knew he was listening to our conversation. He broke into our conversation to tell me his wife was a Catholic, and he was a non-Christian who had emigrated from India. He had always wanted to ask someone questions about the Catholic Church, but his wife never had adequate answers for him. So, I proceeded to field questions from both men until we landed at our destination. This exchange drew a somewhat larger crowd of listeners from those who surrounded us. At the end of the flight both men thanked me for answering their questions and I thanked them for the conversation. I exchanged business cards with my fellow Christian who sat on my left and

we corresponded with mutual admiration for a short time following our trip.

This experience is a good reminder to me that I must constantly be looking for — and praying for — the open doors of evangelization. Christ will sometimes shove the door wide open as he did on an airplane to Arizona, or he might just crack it ever so slightly. Regardless, we should be on the lookout for opportunities to build short-term relationships and then seek to plant seeds. Many times, we may not be the ones to water or harvest the seeds, but we must allow the Lord to do the work through other Christians at other times.

There might be other relationships that are even shorter. It may be intimidating to approach a complete stranger and start to talk to them, but a smile and an extended hand to introduce yourself can help crack the ice quickly. We must remember that all relationships must start somewhere and a “chance” encounter with another person is an open door that Christ offers us to walk through, in order to evangelize.

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