

To share the faith, be 'open but not obnoxious'

By Linda Weaver

Last month, I encouraged you to be "visibly Catholic." How do you do that?

First, not everyone will be "open" with their faith in the same way. I am very open, yet I would still be uncomfortable wearing my sweat shirts that say "It's cool to be Catholic" or "Catholicism is not a Spectator Sport" down Michigan Avenue.

In any event, Father Tom Rzepiela, pastor of St. Thomas of Villanova Parish in Palatine, says, "Being 'open' is not about wearing Christ on your sleeve. It's about wearing him in your heart so that your life will reflect his love."

Here is how I try to be open about my faith at work:

First, I have a few visible signs of my faith in my office: a small cross over my desk along with a framed saying of the verse John 15:12.

Okay, so I also have a beautiful 3-foot-by-2-foot Radke painting of angels on the wall. (At my old firm, atheists told me they used to come into my office at night to look at it when no one was around.) You don't have to go that far. Something simple is good enough.

What do I "do" differently, and what has been the result?

On Monday, when we tell about our weekend, I include that I went to Mass. Most people skip that.

On Wednesday as I walk out of the office to go to the 11:40 Mass at St. Peters, instead of telling my secretary that I'm leaving "for lunch," I tell her I'm going to Mass.

People know I'm at Mass on Wednesdays over my lunch hour. Occasionally, someone will ask if they can tag along or ask for the schedule on Ash Wednesday.

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One attorney asked if I could pick up something for his nephew's confirmation at the gift shop. I wouldn't have known they were Catholic but for the fact that they knew I am actively Catholic.

A Protestant asked if I could help choose a Bible passage for a particularly difficult meeting at her church, and we discuss how our respective churches handle different issues.

Another Catholic attorney e-mails me when controversial church issues surface, and we discuss them. Another is now a lector at the cathedral. Others (Catholic and non-

Catholic) have asked to receive the Evangelization Newsletter I write for the archdiocese. One attorney's mother even receives it! Another asked if I could help find a church where her sister could get married.

I asked if they wanted a Catholic Church, knowing she and her sister were Catholic. She said the groom had never been confirmed. They thought they couldn't get married in the Catholic Church. I cleared that up, got them registered at a parish, and they were married in the Catholic Church this month. These are a few examples of the results.

I don't push my faith on my co-workers. I respect their choices. I simply let it be known that I am a person of faith—the Catholic faith. Hopefully, I am not obnoxious.

Just in case, however, I keep a big basket of chocolate in my office which brings most everyone back!

Think of ways you can be open about your faith this week and get started ASAP.

Surely some of your co-workers would enjoy or benefit from knowing. Finally, while you are working to be open, work to keep Christ in your heart so your co-workers will see his love reflected in your life and know your faith has meaning.

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