

Why Catholic? Journey through the Catechism

At the turn of the New Year, there was much excitement around my home. It seems that TIME magazine had declared me their Person of the Year. And, God bless them, TIME did the same for you. And you. And you as well.

Congratulations. Your parents all must be very proud!

TIME magazine determined that we all were collaborating in the content of the news. News, however, is no longer found in the old media but on the internet. As we were make our own contributions to the home-grown on-line encyclopedia known as Wikipedia; as we develop our own media with pod-casts and YouTube, as we chronicle our own lives on MySpace - we are revolutionizing the world.

Therefore, "You" were selected as TIME's Person of the Year.

In earlier times, the news discussed the happenings of the world outside of our own personal experience, but, which also had potential consequences for us: a war, a murder, a direction or agenda being set by a political leader. More recently, the news has been distilled into manageable clips or sound bites, "news that I could use." Today, however, the 1968 prediction by artist Andy Warhol that "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes" is becoming reality. Today it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that "I am the news."

Our challenge becomes understanding how to address our own sense of celebrity. Those who are celebrities have gained some sense of notoriety or attention. The world can be quick to affirm that we are all worthy of such interest.

There are entire sections of any bookstore designed to help us be the better center of our own worlds. How can I be a better parent? How can I change my work environment? How can I become the life of the party?

Our faith, however, does not call us to be celebrities of our own little universes.

Our Catholic faith demands that we live lives that are worth being celebrated. Those

who are celebrities have an impact that is very short-lived. A celebrated life can make a difference for a lifetime, for generations.

Throughout the public life of Jesus, He chose to live a life worth celebrating. Jesus Christ never opted to become a Superstar.

Jesus had a public baptism but followed this event with a private retreat into the desert. The crowds gathered to hear his teaching, but he would often remove himself from the crowds after speaking about the Reign of God.

Jesus was a miracle worker who usually quietly asked those he healed not to tell others about what had happened. Miracles were not a special-effects device to keep the crowds intrigued but a personal sign of God's love and forgiveness.

At the conclusion of the Lenten season, we acknowledge the pinnacle of fame that the public Jesus achieved. During Holy Week, we see the celebration of Palm Sunday quickly fade into the scandal of a public execution. The fame and notoriety of the prophet/messiah only called attention to His sacrifice.

It was a sacrifice for me. And you. And you. And you as well.

The public life of Jesus is rich with examples on how to be loving and forgiving, how to look to God for all our needs, how to be humble and open. For those of us of faith, we want to emulate a life so well lived. We want to live a life like Jesus whose life we celebrate. We want to be disciples.

So, let us take our newly-found celebrity as TIME magazine's Person of the Year and see what we might achieve with it. Let us join in a revolution that doesn't fade after 15 minutes but impacts lifetimes and generations. Let us lead lives of intention and sacrifice that are worth celebration. Not because they call attention to us but because they call attention to the One who is the Good News.

Celebrity vs. Celebrated life.

15 minutes of fame vs. impacting lifetime and/or generations.

The first topic for the six-week spring session of Why Catholic? is "Public Life of Jesus Christ." Next week, Dr. Ronald J. Valenti, executive director of Catholic Education Ministries for the Archdiocese of Baltimore will write about the second

topic, "The Paschal Mystery."