

To be a People: Antioch Community Talk Outline

Notes:

- This talk is based on a talk given by Teresa Pirola at the World Youth Day Antioch BAMfest on 15 July 2008 in Sydney Australia.
- The talk is designed to be interspersed with music and song. The songs form part of the teaching. The presenter will need to prepare with the music ministry. Tips for the musical aspect are offered at the end of this outline.
- The talk is about 15 minutes long, however the songs will also take about 15 minutes. Factor this length into your Antioch meeting, e.g. Begin and finish the meeting with less songs than usual since you will be singing in the middle
- Re the content: The aim of the talk is to awaken Antiochians to:
 - The ancient depths of their Catholic Christian faith, reaching back not only to Jesus but to the call of Abraham.
 - The call of the Bishops at Vatican II for the Church to rediscover and to treasure its profound links with Judaism; to remember that Jesus was a Jew. (For some Antiochians it may be helpful to read, or at least be aware of, the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*, 4)
 - The scriptural basis of so many of their songs.
- Note: affirmation of our deep spiritual links with the Jewish people should not be confused with political views on Israeli policies in the Arab-Israeli dispute. The complex politics of this dispute are best kept out of this talk. We can, of course, pray for peace in the Holy Land.
- An optional liturgy is included at the end. This could be used as part of the usual prayer meeting, or at a longer Antioch event such as a renewal day.

I. We are the Body of Christ, called to be one people.

Opening. Begin by singing "We are One Body"

What does it mean to be one body of Christ?

It means that we belong.

It means community. Friendships.

Family. Relationships.

It means that we are never alone.

God calls us as a people.

[Give an example when you experienced this deep sense of belonging in Antioch.]

I wonder if we realize how deep this belonging goes? Sometimes we look upon Christianity as if it emerged out of the blue with Jesus. We forget that Jesus himself came from a people. There would be no Jesus without the Jewish people. We are Catholic Christians, yes. Yet in some spiritual sense we have Jewish hearts.

There is a story told about a Jewish scripture scholar named Amy Jill Levine who was presenting a talk in a Catholic venue full of Catholics. She began her presentation by saying to the audience: "Raise your hand if you know personally a Jew." About 8 people raised their hands. Then she turned and pointed to the crucifix on the wall behind her and she said: "Ah, but you all know this Jew, do you not?"

Funny how we can forget that Jesus was Jew. And still is Jewish, if we believe in the resurrection. And so was Mary Jewish, and all twelve apostles, and St Paul and the holy women, and in fact most of the early church.

We can forget that the very seedbed of Christianity is Judaism. That Jesus prayed Jewish prayers, worshipped in synagogues, taught like a rabbi and proclaimed the Hebrew scriptures.

It is understandable that we forget this, because, for most of our 2,000 year history as a Church, our Christian people have overlooked the Jewishness of Jesus. But we musn't forget... This is what the Bishops said at Vatican II (that great Council of reform in the 1960s). In one of the key documents of that Council, the Bishops said: As Christians we must never forget our Jewish roots. If we are to live as God's people, then we need to know from whom we have come and to whom we belong.

You often hear of people who go to great lengths to search out their family tree. Or adopted children who search out their biological parents. Why? Because they know that these relationships somehow tell them something about who they are. Likewise, at the heart of aboriginal reconciliation is a concern for respecting one's ancestry.

And it's the same in our Catholic Christian family. We need to be aware that our Jewish ancestry, in spirit if not by race, is something to be treasured, pondered, prayed and celebrated.

Core to who we are as Antioch, core to the Church itself, is to know that we belong to the body of Christ. To be the body of Christ means to be *a people*. And to really know what it means to be the People of God, we need to ponder how deep and ancient our story goes...

We need to know that:

- * When Abraham looked up at the night sky and God promised that he would have descendents as numerous as the stars, we are among those promised descendents.
- * When his elderly wife Sarah laughed at the idea that she would bear a child, we are part of the story of the fruits of that miraculous birth.
- * When Moses led his people through the Red Sea, those were our ancestors in faith who went through on dry land; and in some mysterious spiritual sense, 'we too' went through that Red Sea, and 'we too' were there at Sinai.

Our ancient links with the Jewish people are essential to our Christian identity. This is what the Bishops at Vatican II and subsequent Popes and church documents are trying to tell us. In fact they said... *It is impossible to speak of Christianity without reference to Judaism.* They didn't say: It's a nice extra. Or: if you have a bit of extra time on your hands you might want to look into this. No. They said, it's *impossible* to be Christian without relating to Jews.

II. Singing the Hebrew Scriptures

And deep down, perhaps we already know this as Antioch. For example: Just think how many Hebrew psalms we pray and sing as Antioch. We sing the Hebrew psalms all the time! And we love it! Let's hear some of them now as our music ministry lead us in this medley of some well known psalms...

[Psalm Medley. Choose three or four favorite Antioch songs that are based on Psalms and sing as a medley. See sample overleaf.]

So you see, we are praying with the Hebrew psalms all the time. The same psalms that Jesus knew and loved and prayed.

Even that Jesus song we love to sing 'Jesus, Lover of my soul...'
Even this has a verse direct from the Hebrew Scriptures...
'You've taken me, from the mirey clay,
you set my feet upon a rock ...'

That line is straight from Psalm 40.

And what about the prophets? Don't the voices of the prophets of ancient Israel sing out in our Antioch meetings and parishes every week? Let's hear some of them now...

[Prophet Medley. Choose three or four favorite Antioch songs that are based on the texts from the Old Testament Prophets and sing as a medley. See sample overleaf.]

And of course, as well as the psalms and the prophets, there are all those great bedrock stories from Genesis and Exodus, from that part of the Bible that the Jews call the Torah. Stories of Abraham and Noah, stories of Moses leading his people to freedom. Don't we remember and celebrate them with zest and joy and with that particular brand of Antioch humour when we sing:

[Torah Medley. Choose three or four favorite Antioch songs that are based on Torah — the first five books of the Bible — and sing as a medley. See sample overleaf.]

Okay! So you get the idea. These aren't just 'fun' songs, although God loves us to have fun. These aren't just 'Antioch' tunes, although God loves the fact that we make them our own as Antioch. These songs come from Scripture! The ancient Hebrew Scriptures, or what we call the Old Testament. They are gifts from the Jewish people, who gave us

Jesus, and from whom we descend as the people of the Church. What great songs to connect us with our spiritual ancestors!

Sh'ma (Deut 6:4-7)

Now there is another special part of Scripture we can sing. It's a powerful passage from (the Torah) Deuteronomy 6. The Gospels describe Jesus as holding up this text as a key text. It is central to Jewish worship, prayed at least twice a day by observant Jews. And it is core to the Christian faith too.

When the Jewish people pray it today, they do so in Hebrew:

'Sh'ma Yisrael! Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echud'

Which translates:

'Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One.'

And it goes on... (spoken by reader)

'And you shall love the Lord our God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today, take them to heart. Teach them to your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest.' (Deut 6:4-7)

There is nothing wimpy about this scripture. Love the Lord your God, with a passion! The original Hebrew of this text suggests a love so powerful that it completely overtakes a person, like a love-sick lover! In other words: Be crazy about God, because God is crazy about you! This is a passage to be engraved on our hearts every day, as it was for Jesus. No wonder Jesus was able to do what he did, he really believed this scripture! And how he lived it.

Let's enjoy this Word of God now, in song. We will sing it in two ways: we will learn a new song, and then we will sing the same scripture in a way familiar to us. First the new song...

A. Music:

Sh'ma Yisrael, Sh'ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

Sh'ma Yisrael, Sh'ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

(Repeat with harmony)

Verse 1. (Cantor)

Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and all your soul and all your might.
And teach your children to love the Lord. For all generations, Sh'ma Yisrael.

All:

Sh'ma Yisrael, Sh'ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

Sh'ma Yisrael, Sh'ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

(Repeat with harmony)

Verse 2. (Cantor)

Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and all your soul and all your might.
All day, every night, when you sleep when you wake, surrender your heart, Hear O
Israel.

All:

Sh'ma Yisrael, Sh'ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.
Sh'ma Yisrael, Sh'ma Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.

(Repeat with harmony)

As we strive to love God and love one another in Antioch, we can pray this scripture
deeply in our hearts and with our voices.

And there is another way we can pray that same scripture. You know it already. It goes
like this...

B. **Music:** Love the Lord! (Antioch style)

[Share how this awareness of Jesus' Jewishness, and of your spiritual ties with the Jewish
people, affects you. Did the thought surprise you at first? How does it make you feel?
How does it change the way you think about and relate to (a) Scripture (b) singing
Antioch songs (c) Jewish people in your friendship circles (d) etc.]

III. Conclusion

Conclude by summing up and reinforcing the basic point: E.g.,

- Antiochians, we who take our name from the place where the believers were first
called Christians, let's be proud of our name: Christian! Catholic! And let's not ever
forget the name by which Jesus was proud to be called: Jew! Israelite! Son of David!
- Let's delight in the fact that our baptism makes us sons and daughters of God. And
let's not forget that this same baptism makes us sons and daughters of Abraham and
Sarah.
- Let's be really proud that Antioch is so much part of this people called by God; how
blessed we are in Antioch to share our Catholic faith and our Jewish heritage.
- Let us sink our hearts and voices deeply into the Scriptures – the Gospels, the New
Testament, yes! And also the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. Let God's Word
show us how to live as a people and how to witness as God's people so that indeed
(as the prophet Isaiah says):

The nations shall stream to the house of the Lord
Many peoples shall say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob.'

[Song: Straight into one rousing refrain of “Unto the House of the Lord.”]

Liturgy

Leader:

We enter a time of prayer. As we do so, we will sing a refrain that appears often in the psalms, psalms that Jesus knew and loved and would have prayed many times. Let’s join now in prayer to the Father with hearts of love united with Jesus, with the Jewish people, and of course with Christians everywhere.

(**music** to Taize ‘O Lord Hear My Prayer’ starts up softly)

Readers come forward and each read two prayers of praise and intercession:

(Note: The **sung** response ‘O Lord hear my prayer...’.

Reader 1:

Reader 1a. We give praise for the gift of God’s love. May we love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength.

Reader 1b. We give praise for the gift of God’s Word. May we treasure the Scriptures throughout our lives.

(Sung Response)

Reader 2

Reader 2a. We give praise for the community of the Church, for her people, her leaders, especially Pope Benedict. May we always love one another in Jesus’ name.

Reader 2b. We give praise for our ancestors in faith, for the saints and martyrs and holy people who have gone before us. May we be inspired by their lives.

(Sung Response)

Reader 3:

Reader 3a. We give thanks for the gift of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and for the Jewish people, whose fidelity to the covenant brought forth the gift of our Saviour. May we learn from their witness what it means to live as a chosen people, chosen to keep the Lord's Name alive for the sake of all peoples, for the sake of all nations. Lord, hear us.

Reader 3b. We give praise that the Word was made flesh, and we pray for peace in the Holy Land where the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

(Sung Response)

Reader 4

Reader 4a. We give praise for the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. May our hunger for God draw us ever closer as one body of Christ.

Reader 4b. We give praise for our Antioch communities. May we treat our brothers and sisters in Antioch with love and respect.

(Sung Response)

Reader 5

Reader 5a. We give praise for all Christian apostles who have borne witness to the Gospel in many lands and cultures. May we too bear witness to the Gospel by word and example.

Reader 5b. We give praise for the gift of WYD. May our witness as sons and daughters of Abraham, and as disciples of Jesus Christ, bring fire to the earth and peace to hearts.

Vince:

Lord God, heavenly Father, hear our prayers,

Fill us with the love of your Son

And the grace of your Spirit.

Send us forth to be true witnesses to the Gospel,

Joyfully proclaiming the Word of Life

And inviting people to be immersed in the depths of our sacred tradition,

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Aaron's Blessing:

And may the Lord bless you and keep you

May the Lord's face shine upon you

May the Lord bring you his peace.

Amen.

Psalms Medley

Sing a new song (Psalm 96; 98)

Sing a new song unto the Lord;
let your song be sung from mountains high.
Sing a new song unto the Lord; singing alleluia.

A trusting psalm (Psalm 130)

Lord let your mercy be on us
As we place our trust in you.

The word of the lord is faithfulness and love.
His love can never be measured.
His beauty is like nothing we have ever seen
So let us place our trust in him.

You are near (Psalm 139)

Lord, I know you are near,
Standing always at my side.
You guard me from the foe,
And you lead me in ways ever lasting.

Hear O Lord (Psalm 27)

Hear O Lord, the sound of my call.
Hear O Lord and have mercy.
My soul is longing for the glory of you.
Hear O Lord, and answer me

Prophets Medley

Come to the Water (Isaiah 55)

Come to the water, you who are thirsty
Though you have nothing I bid you come
And be filled by the goodness I have to offer
Come! Listen! Live!

Like a Shepherd (Isaiah 40)

Like a Shepherd He feeds His flock,
And gathers the lambs in His arms.
Holding them carefully, close to His heart
Leading them home.

Isaiah 49 (Isaiah 49)

I will never forget you, my people;
I have carved you on the palm of my hand.
I will never forget you; I will not leave you orphaned.
I will never forget my own.

Be not afraid (Isaiah 43)

Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come follow me, and I will give you rest.

Torah Medley (Themes from Genesis, Exodus)

Father Abraham

Father Abraham had many sons
Many sons had Father Abraham
I am one of them, and so are you
So let's all praise the Lord!

Rock my Soul

Rock my Soul in the bosom of Abraham x 2
Oh Rock my soul.

So high, can't get over it
So low can't get under it
So wide can't get 'round it
Oh Rock my soul.

God Said to Noah

God said to Noah there's gonna be a floody wuddy x 2
Get those children out of the muddy wuddy
Children of the Lord
Rise and shine and give God His glory-ory
Rise and shine and give God His glory-ory
Rise and shine and give God His glory-ory
Children of the Lord

Pharaoh, Pharaoh

Pharaoh, Pharaoh, ooh baby let my people go, yeah yeah yeah x2
Burning bush told me the other day,
Gotta go take God's people away.
Got to take them out of Pharaohs hand,
Got to lead them to the Promised land.

Pharaoh, Pharaoh, ooh baby let my people go, yeah yeah yeah x2