

Cardinal Tagle on Social Media, Human Connection, and Silence



The purpose of this post is not to engage in conclave speculation. It is just a coincidence that the texts below are from a talk by someone who might be the next pope. I have been interested in the Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, Luis Antonio Tagle, for some time.

I've watched him quite a bit on YouTube. The Philippines is a pivotal place for the future of the world and the Church. Filipinos are a great people who are presently under assault by the demographic imperialism of the secularized West. (That point deserves a post of its own sometime soon.)

If Cardinal Tagle is elected pope, it won't be because he's "Asian" or because he's "young" or because he has extraordinary personal charisma (all of this is true).

The exciting thing about Tagle is simply this: He's the real deal! He loves Jesus and the Church. Yes,

he has "superstar" appeal and he knows instinctively how to use it, but he doesn't care about it. He cares about adoring Jesus in the Eucharist and finding Him in the poor. And he knows how to work with the 21st century media. If he does become pope, he will knock the secular Western opinion-makers completely off balance, but that's not what this post is about.

Regardless of whether he stays in Manila or moves to Rome, Cardinal Tagle is worth listening to. But all I want to do in this post is point to a few of his remarks on social networking, something that is huge in the Philippines. Catholic Filipinos have some experience with trying to use social media as tools for evangelization. Filipinos are online, big time.

These are some excerpts from a conference the Cardinal recently gave on the "spirituality of social media." These words were preached, with enthusiasm and ardor and warmth, moving freely back and forth between English and Tagalog. Of course I only understood the English parts, but insofar as I did understand, I was struck by what he said, and I transcribed some of it. He spoke about the possibilities of the media, the importance of one's own immediate human environment, and (in a point that I found particularly impressive) the fundamental role of silence at the root of any authentic communication.

Here are a few of his words:

You proclaim what you believe in. You proclaim the joy of being a follower of Christ. You proclaim and you hope to be 'viral'! To 'contaminate' others with the joy that comes to someone who has discovered Jesus. 'Contaminate' others, be a 'contagious disease.' Contaminate them with the joy of being a promoter of the Kingdom of truth, justice, and peace. Go 'viral'! This is the fundamental cause of Christians: the Kingdom of God, the Gospel....

But let us not forget that even in the absence of the gadgets, even in the absence of the cell phone, the computers, we can still connect. Let us not forget the basic human relationships that are always available: a smile, a recognition of the other person, a manifestation of compassion; these are all 'communicative,' and they are palpable. People can feel your touch. People can see your tears. People can hear your voice cracking out of compassion. People can hear your 'contagious' laughter, and in all of this, you are connecting.

The Holy Father says, 'the best communication happens in silence.'... the silence of attentiveness... the silence of prayer. In prayer, we listen, we learn the art of listening. So before I utter my word, I know I have listened to God.... Silence prepares us to utter a meaningful word. Silence is the fertile ground for the communication of God's word. Only those who can be at home with silence can utter a meaningful word... I have to go back to silence... [put] the iPhone in silent mode. Only people who are capable of deep deep silence and communion can learn how to commune with others.

Reporters - Whitburn