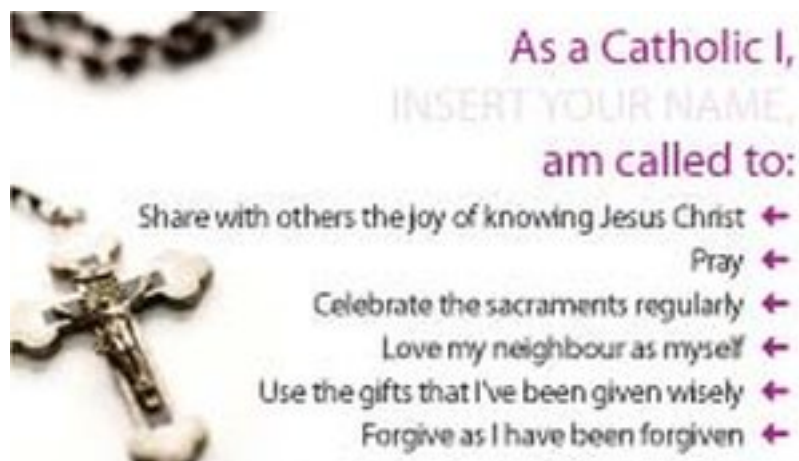


Catholics in England and Wales offered new faith card

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The card is designed to be a daily reminder of the carrier's religion. Catholics are being encouraged to carry a "faith card" to remind them of their faith responsibilities. One million credit card-sized cards are being printed to be handed out in dioceses across England and Wales.

It features a space for the owner to sign, a clear statement that the carrier is a Catholic and a list of six things that Catholics are called to do.

There is also a sentence which asks for a Catholic priest to be called in the event of an emergency.

The other side of the card has a quote from the recently beatified Blessed John Henry Newman, which states that everyone has a mission.

Rt Rev Kieran Conry, chairman of the bishops' department for evangelisation and catechesis, said: "We all carry a variety of cards in our purses and wallets which reflect something of our identity and the things that are important to us.

"The faith card for Catholics aims to offer a daily reminder of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. We can't summarise the whole of our faith in bullet points, but we hope that the card simply inspires people to do, read and learn more."

Following the visit of Pope Benedict to the UK in 2010, Catholics were urged to make their faith more visible by the Archbishop of Westminster. He said they should be more ready to make the sign of the cross and say "God bless you" to people.

Pope Benedict has warned that religion - and Christianity in particular - is "being marginalised" around the world, with believers keeping their views private. He has announced that 2012 will be a "Year of Faith" in which Catholics should do more to spread the Gospel.

Bishop Conry said: "The card is also designed to give Catholics confidence to share their faith - often people need help knowing what to say. Faith is a not a private matter.

"We hope that Catholics will use it to witness to their faith. If someone asks a question about Catholicism, a starting point could be to show the card and to take it from there."

BBC