NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

New Evangelization? You must be kidding

Robert McClory | Mar. 8, 2013 NCR Today

Every time I?ve heard about the New Evangelization and now learn that the cardinals are talking about it as a likely major project under the new papacy, I start to gag! What could they possibly be thinking about?

NCR Vatican Correspondent John Allen has provided a primer on the New Evangelization [1], likening it to ?salesmanship,? the promotion of a wonderful product by countless enthusiastic users who want to share its benefits far and wide. And I have to ask, is this the time for a happy-face, upbeat campaign, when the church by any measure is in deep crisis, barely able to continue operations in some parts of the world?

Consider for a moment what the reaction would be if you were a stockholder and customer of a major international corporation that was considering such a campaign but had the following characteristics (based on a similar analogy I made in my book, *As It Was in the Beginning [2]*):

> Skilled managers have left the company in droves over the past 40 years, and upper management has been unable to interest sufficient recruits to even enter its male-only management training program. As a result, many offices and showrooms have been downsized, closed or merged with others.
>
> The company has been forced to pay out almost $2 billion to U.S. customers, whose children were sexually abused by company managers over the years. In fact, in many instances, upper management refused to cooperate with investigations of these crimes and actually moved guilty managers to distant offices instead of firing them.
>
> Several branches of the company in the U.S. have been forced to declare bankruptcy and others are expected to follow suit. More recent revelations of employee sex abuse in numerous other countries is keeping the level of public outrage hot and high throughout the world.
>
> Millions of customers have lost interest in the company?s products, taking their business elsewhere. Others decline to visit the company outlets or showrooms, many publicly expressing their disgust at upper management.
>
> Meanwhile, accounts of mismanagement and corruption at senior levels of the company, including its international headquarters where the lone president/CEO has just resigned, continue to make news.
>
> Although most top executives have denied the company is in trouble, some acknowledge the problems are serious. But reform efforts cannot easily be made since, due to alleged reservations initiated by the founder, all upper level decisions are exclusively the province of the president/CEO. Hence, the great public interest in the choosing of a new head, who is to be elected by a special assembly of super-super managers, all appointed by the resigned president/CEO or his predecessor. By rule, stockholders have no voice in these procedures.

Now if this company were to announce at this point a new ?salesmanship campaign? to bring in new customers,

the reaction would be laughable. You and other stockholders would rise up and demand major structural changes in the operating system as the absolutely first item on the agenda.

Of course, the Catholic church is not a company, but there is much about its operation that is comparable to a corporation. That?s why I find the New Evangelization with its invitation to lapsed Catholics to ?come home? so incongruous. Are people likely to return to the very institution they fled from unless it has re-examined and rethought those features of its identity they could no longer tolerate?

What is called for in the opening years of the new administration, I believe, is humility and sincere repentance along with the beginnings of wholesale reorganization from top to bottom. Only after that could this New Evangelization make sense and have a chance of success.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/08/2013 - 15:44*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/new-evangelization-you-must-be-kidding

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/whats-new-evangelization-thing-anyway
[2] http://ncronline.org/books/2012/09/changing-feudal-church