

'Priest with a Mic' takes to the streets, media

Street evangelization might call to mind images of people shouting on corners and holding apocalyptic signs. Yet, in the age of the New Evangelization and modern media, one priest is taking to the streets with a different tool: a microphone.

Father Kyle Manno is the vocations director for the Diocese of Rockford, Illinois, and parochial vicar at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Yet, on top of these responsibilities, he also finds time for his new ministry, called Priest with a Mic. Taking to the streets of Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and wherever the Lord leads him with just a microphone and a camera, Priest with a Mic provides short videos promoting authentic evangelization and encounter. Along with his company, More Cake Please, Father Manno's videos follow their mantra: delighting spiritual tastebuds one video at a time.

Follow the Ministry

To follow Father Manno and Priest with a Mic, visit:

- Social media: [@FatherManno](#)
- YouTube: [More Cake Please](#)
- Website: morecakeplease.org

After creating a video for the diocesan Youth Summit in 2016, Father Manno realized the power of film as a tool for evangelization. Their video, "Carpool Karaoke with Bishop Malloy," has received over 600,000 views and put Father Manno in contact with people around the world, even those who have never stepped inside of a church. Inspired to share the joy of the priesthood with more people, he began praying about using his gifts in a new way.

"[We] are doing incredible in social-media land appealing to primarily Catholics," Father Manno said. "Bishop Barron is

rocking it out with Word on Fire. Father [Mike] Schmitz is doing amazing. But I was wondering, are we also hitting an atheist, or people who would never look at a priest? And so, I thought, 'What could we do to reach even more outside the Church?'"

In an interview with Our Sunday Visitor, Father Manno shares the genesis of Priest with a Mic and how anyone can use his or her gifts to serve God.

Our Sunday Visitor: Could you explain your ministry, Priest with a Mic, and how it came about?



Father Manno

Father Kyle Manno: We all know social media has a power, but after [the Carpool Karaoke video] I was like, "Whoa, [600,000] people got to see the joy of the priesthood. We need to do more stuff like this." We need to not be afraid to go out there and preach the Good News on this new continent of social media. ... So, as I prayed, I thought, people are intrigued by street scenes, and they're intrigued by questions. So, why don't we just go into the street, kind of authentically go out there and talk to people?

It was coupled with that prayer but then secondly going out in the world as a priest. So, I wear my priest clothes. And, as you know, it's impolite to stare in public, unless you're wearing priest clothes. ... I would go to Walmart or Target or

Starbucks and inevitably, literally almost every time I go, there would be some fun conversation with the person behind the desk or the clerk, or I might even ask how they're doing.

...

So, I went and researched video equipment. I called up a priest friend who I'm really close to. And two weeks later we booked flights to Los Angeles. And we just went there with no plan. ... We spent two straight days filming. We went back a couple months later for a couple more days. We just, a month ago, went to New York. ... And it's been incredible just to see what the Holy Spirit does when we're out there. Sometimes we bring questions. Other times we just talk and let the Holy Spirit guide the conversation. ... Now, we post the videos. ... Each video gets around 50,000 views if not more, which is exciting.

OSV: As you were talking, it struck me how similar this is to the beginning of Christianity, of Jesus and the disciples reaching out to everyone – not going specifically to those who were considered the righteous, but going to those who wouldn't approach them otherwise.

Father Manno: What's been so exciting about exactly what you're saying, doing what the apostles did, is, all I do is go out there, and I just stand there in the streets with my microphone and the collar ... and I just go up and say, "Hey, do you have a second? Can I talk to you?" And it is cool to talk to Catholics, Lutherans, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, atheists and just have authentic conversations. My goal talking to them is not to ... proselytize them. I'm not there to shove the truth down their throat. I'm convinced that each one of us, since we are made in the image of God, has truth imbedded in our hearts. And if we ask the right questions, we can get to that truth. And we might not be able to have an extreme conversion in five minutes, but in that five minutes, we can plant a seed, and then God will water it somewhere else. So, when I'm talking to the person who is not in the Church, I just want,

God willing, for their image of the priesthood to change. ...

Basic evangelization as we see in the Gospels was Jesus just meeting people where they're at, and then conversing and loving them, and then in truth loving them. In order to truly love someone, you have to be honest. ... [F]or example, the woman at the well, who has really been the mantra for the entire ministry. He does not begin with, "Hey, lady at the well. You've got five husbands. You're a sinner, and you need to fix things." He just began with, "You're thirsty." And that's what we are trying to do in the street. You're thirsty, right? Let's open that thirst and let Christ fill you.

OSV: What is the power of stories in regard to the Faith and day-to-day encounters?

Father Manno: We are people of stories. This is why we love listening to stories, we love movies, we love books. It's like we love the drama, we love the excitement of the tension and the resolution. It's the way we communicate, through stories. Jesus Christ did it. His whole ministry was walking around, telling stories, and then teaching the truth through stories. And even his entire life is the most beautiful story. And so, I think the more we can bring the Gospel through stories that we encounter in our life, the more we can transform other people's lives.

OSV: How do you view media, and video specifically, as an opportunity to tell stories and work for evangelization?

Father Manno: One big thing is it's important to recognize that, like anything, it [can] be used for good or bad. ... Social media consumes peoples' lives. It can really become addictive. It can also be a great tool to experience the Gospel, especially for those outside the Church. Someone who may never speak to a priest or walk into a church, they'll watch your four-minute video, possibly.

It really is a powerful tool. And the reason I think these

videos are so crucial is because it puts a face to what they're experiencing, what they're desiring. ... And so, it's not just telling the story of the people in the video, but also letting people see that this Gospel is something beautiful, loving and not just for the select few but for every single person.

OSV: Not everyone is called to interview people on the streets. What would you say to people who don't know how they can witness to the Faith?

Father Manno: Definitely the first thing to do is pray over where your gifts lie. Our gifts are part of our personality, part of our essence, part of who we are. So, what are the gifts, and then how can I use those gifts on display in a good way for the faithful? ... If it's your listening ear, how do you bring that to social media? If it's [that] you can tell stories well, how do you bring that to social media? ... I think it's recognizing where we're enlivened by the Gospel and then not being [afraid] to share it through social media, and recognizing that we don't all need to share to 10,000 people. We may not be called to that, but even a hundred people who follow us, who are our friends, are going to be enlivened and encounter Jesus Christ even more through that platform.

OSV: How do we discern what our gifts are and what we are called to do with them?

Father Manno: That's a huge thing, discernment. Because even if we do discern a gift, since our gifts are part of who we are, they can be abused. And God does not remove part of who we are, so our gifts will stay. And so it's really important in discerning gifts not just to have your individual prayer but also ask other people. ... And then secondly, when you go to prayer, really ask the Lord, "Lord, where do I encounter you and find joy?" The gifts we have should also give us joy.

OSV: How do you find time to pursue your gifts?

Father Manno: ... [I]f there is not joy and peace in what you've discerned, then it will kill you. What I mean by that is, you could set aside a schedule. And the reason I say that peace and joy needs to be there is because during those times that you schedule, it should be life-giving. So, I think the big thing is scheduling it; and if it's scheduled well, it will not just be work.

OSV: Could you explain why your company is called More Cake Please?

Father Manno: I was praying through company names and I thought, if I call it Calvary Productions ... or if I call it Jesus Christ Saves Media, [if] I'm an atheist, I have my preconceived notions, nope, not going to click on that. And so I prayed, what can the name be? My big mantra was the woman at the well; she's thirsty. And then literally I spent five minutes with a friend doing word associations. ... [I] wrote down a billion things and got More Cake Please. And the reason it stuck out for me is because the premise is – based off the woman at the well and her thirst – you watch the video, this three-to-five-minute clip, and it opens up, God-willing, some spiritual hunger. And after you watch the video, you sit back and think, "Hmm. I'm intrigued. I want some more of what I just encountered."

OSV: What are your plans and goals for Priest with a Mic?

Father Manno: In December, I will be doing four weeks on Sirius XM radio; there will be a radio show called "Priest with a Mic" for an hour where I'll be live every week from Rockford, broadcasting [to] the entire nation. ... And then continuing to put out videos. Right now they are on a monthly basis, but we are trying to do that bi-weekly now with Priest with a Mic. ... And then lastly, starting in Advent, I'll be doing a weekly, not just "Priest with a Mic" but "More Cake Please with Father Manno," where I'll sample different types of cake and give a brief commentary on what's good, what's

bad, what tastes good, open up my actual bodily hunger, and then share a weekly message of the spiritual hunger.

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