

Defend the faith without raising your voice

In October, the Opus Dei Information Office in Singapore organised a talk on defending the faith calmly, clearly, and charitably. The event was part of preparations for the centenary of the Work. This article was first published in Catholic News Singapore on 12 November 2025.

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In an age of quick tempers and instant outrage, many Catholics struggle to explain their faith without sounding defensive, said Mr Jack Valero, co-founder of Catholic Voices, a UK-based project that trains lay Catholics to explain the Church's teaching clearly and charitably in public.

He offered a different approach to the 650 people gathered at St Joseph's Church (Victoria Street) for his talk on defending the faith – speak calmly, with clarity and charity.

The Oct 21 event was organised by the Opus Dei Information Office in Singapore as part of the prelature's centenary celebrations.

Witnessing with conviction

“In a world quick to argue and slow to listen, controversy is your opportunity to speak because people

are paying attention,” said Mr Valero. “Every controversy can become an opportunity to communicate our message if we start from what unites rather than what divides.”

“We’re not here to win arguments but to witness to Christ,” he added.

Finding common ground

Mr Valero outlined a simple three-step approach in guiding conversations on the faith – understanding how others perceive the Church; finding shared values such as love, compassion, or freedom; then offering the Church’s perspective from that common ground.

This method, known as “reframing”, helps Catholics stay calm amidst disagreement.

“The danger is to become defensive, because once you are defensive, even

a beautiful message cannot be heard,” he said.

Mr Valero also suggested how Catholics could practise reframing in day-to-day life: “Read something you disagree with, analyse where it’s coming from, and think how you’d respond with empathy and truth.”

“If we learn to do this often, we’ll be ready to speak when it matters,” he said.

Learning to listen

Martin Verdejo from St Joseph’s said he appreciated the practical guidance on how to engage others about the faith.

“I sometimes focus too much on doctrine without considering where the other person is coming from,” said Mr Verdejo. “I will remember to listen first before explaining myself.”

Church of the Holy Trinity parishioner Melissa Ho found an analogy by Mr Valero useful: “Your faith is like a diamond – he had said – it’s beautiful if you show it to me; painful if you throw it at me.”

Ms Ho added she plans to start evangelising in small ways through honest conversations with friends before engaging her colleagues.

The audience, ranging from students to retirees, said they appreciated the talk’s practical tone. Some had hoped for deeper discussion on moral issues, but the evening stayed focused on the principle that genuine dialogue begins not with confrontation but with listening.

Mr Shaun Loo, who first met Mr Valero at an event for university students in Rome, said one line stayed with him – defending the faith should be done not out of opposition, but out of love for Christ.

“By embodying charity and humility, I can create space for more constructive conversations that reflect Christ’s presence,” he said.

Questions that lingered

The final half hour of questions and answers blended curiosity with humour, with topics ranging from freedom and equality to how the Church can speak credibly in a secular world.

Mr Valero smiled as he recalled how *The Da Vinci Code* — Dan Brown’s novel which portrayed Opus Dei in sensational terms — opened doors for dialogue on British television.

“If I’d gone to the BBC a year earlier asking to talk about Christ, they would have said no, but after *The Da Vinci Code*, they called me in,” he said.

The session ended with several hands still raised, a sign that the conversation was not ready to end.

Defending the faith, gently

For Mr Valero, communication was not argument, but discipleship.

“We’re all called to communicate the faith,” he said. “It’s something we practise every day, in our families, workplaces, and friendships.”

That the evening was more measured than fiery showed precisely what Mr Valero came to teach – that one can defend the faith without raising one’s voice.

In his own words: Jack Valero on faith, media and communication

- **On misconceptions about the Church:** “The Church is more interested in doctrines than in helping real people with real problems.” This is the most common negative frame about the Catholic Church. Reframing uses the positive values of love for people and care for those who suffer, and answers questions starting from those common values.
- **On the changing media landscape:** Traditional media is not as important as it was in 2010. With most getting their news online, Catholics now need to speak with the same clarity and charity on social media as they once did on television and radio. Training

lay people in communication has become even more urgent.

- **On encouragement for young Catholics:** They should get as deep and complete formation in the faith as they can, but never forget the main commandments: to love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves. Our communication must begin from values we all share – love, commission, and a desire for truth – so that it is rooted in love.

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