

JESUS IN THE QUEBEC PSYCHE

Two staff members of the Archdiocese of Montreal, Sabrina Di Matteo and Brian McDonough, offered their insights on the results of a recent poll of Quebecers and their knowledge of Jesus. Following is a translation of their comments, published in the March-April 2010 issue of Présence Magazine, in an article by Louis Lesage, titled « Jésus dans le psychisme des Québécois ».

Sabrina Di Matteo, editor of the diocese of Montreal's formation magazine *Haute Fidélité*, found the respondents' disinterest (48%) in learning more about Jesus to be unsettling.

"This marked disinterest can probably be explained by a sense of irrelevancy for many where Jesus is concerned. The same might be said for beliefs surrounding Jesus and the Church as an institution," she said.

She was also troubled by the percentage of respondents who acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God (37%) and by the percentage of those who relate to Jesus as simply a role model (29%). She wondered whether their images of Jesus "are not watered down compared with the Jesus of the Gospels, who calls for a profound social transformation benefitting those people who are the most marginalized."

Di Matteo pointed out the immense challenge facing the Church amid the confusion that exists regarding Jesus: "The Church has to show the relevance of Jesus today."

Survey results also indicate that the Internet is a popular medium for learning about Jesus (43% for 18-to-35-year-olds; 48% for 35-to-54-year-olds, and 26% for 55 and over). The anonymity offered by the Internet partly explains its popularity, said Di Matteo.

"Anonymity allows people to timidly draw closer to the Christian tradition," she observed. "However, on the Internet, any information can seem legitimate."

"We often hear the word 'evangelization' when we speak of pastoral initiatives on the web, Facebook or Twitter," she added. "There is nothing wrong with using technology to reach out to as many people as we can. But before launching web-based evangelization projects, I would ask: 'What is evangelization?'"

Brian McDonough, director of the Social Action Office, pursued this line of reasoning. "The Gospels remind us that responses given to the questions about the identity and mission of Jesus raise fundamental questions about those who would dare answer them," he said. "The CROP-Express poll of January 2010 is not an exception to this rule."

"Three-quarters of the respondents affirmed that they know who Jesus is, but what do they really know of him? This preliminary question forces us to take a closer look at ourselves and our claims," he offered.