

What about your passion?

The recent "Stop the War" march attracted over one million people. Depending on who you listen to this number rises to three million. Whatever the exact number, what is indisputable is the fact that these people had a shared passion which was expressed as a common concern or cause. They wanted to register that any war against Iraq was not being pursued in their name or with their consent.

I've always believed and will continue to so do, unless persuaded otherwise, that everyone has at least one personal passion. Not to have one is to have given up on hope. It requires not having the presence of mind to think or care for oneself or to be so disenfranchised, excluded or marginalised that one's reality is merely surviving the moment. Even so, the lack of tangible evidence is no proof of a lack of passion. Many people have totally sacrificed, controlled or deferred their passion for the benefit of their family, career or faith.

I have always loved debates. Within a month or two of my conversion I was part of an inter-church debating competition which discussed the role of Liberation Theology. Not that I knew anything about the subject, but while training as an electrical apprentice I was part of the winning debating team in a regional school's competition. On the day, I was my team's surprise weapon and I argued that Liberation theology was no theology at all. You've guest it, I was wrong and we lost - the judges being less than righteous!

So why haven't we mastered the art of dialogue and open discourse within the church, and especially the Black Majority Churches? I am not proposing that we draw battle lines, become adversarial wrecks by smashing into each other. However, there is an urgent need for greater dialogue. For iron to sharpen iron, they must come together, the rough with the smooth. We should be mature enough to test our thinking out on each other, without fear of condemnation.

If we are to create greater understanding and engage confidently and fairly with society and each other, then this is an art we must master. The reason for our dialogue is not about being right or getting everyone to agree with us, that would be torturous for all concerned. It is about being human, with opinions, concerns, love for God and man, and frustrations. It is the application, rather than the proclamation of our faith.

Jesus, from a tender age, mastered the art of conversation because His environment encouraged rather than stifled it. Conversation and debate played an important part in His life and ministry. It was through these encounters that He won friends, converts and touched the rich and the marginalised. Discourse, was also one of His methods to unveil the Kingdom. His passion was not an event on the cross. He lived it. And so should we!