

Recently I experienced a week of passion in Italy. This was neither to do with Holy Week's meaning of passion, nor last month's remarks about Sophia Loren. Rather, my observations about the Italians: passionate about two-wheeled transport, either bicycles or scooters or motorbikes (especially Harley-Davidsons, for unknown reasons); shopkeepers passionate about their wares; passionate about their ice-cream; and, of course, passionate about pasta.

They are presumably not passionate about absolutely everything, though, judging from the state of the roads and their indifference to the rules thereon. Nonetheless, a seemingly passionate nation, entirely enthused and invigorated by the things about which they are passionate.

It made me think, as I climbed up to the 100th Tuscan hilltop town of the week (the wife's passion, not mine!), of Jesus' message to the church of Laodicea: this church, conversely, lacking a bit of passion to get on with things it seems. Recorded by St John in the book of Revelations, Jesus tells them that they ought not to be lukewarm in their life as a church; be hot or cold. Many commentators attribute this to that church's lack of zeal for the Gospel, while some archaeologists point out that the local water system resulted in lukewarm water for the town, therefore being much less useful than either hot or cold.

It seems to me, however, that it could simply be that Jesus is referring to complacency or indifference, which, amongst the predominately passionate people of the Mediterranean countries, would not be a worthy attitude.

The principle applies anywhere. Complacency is not and can not be part of the Church - and certainly indifference is the kiss of death to any community. We can applaud, then, our youth club volunteers, bowls team, hospital drivers, teachers, newsletter team, local councillors, *et al.*, for being one thing or another - regardless of whether or not you might agree with how they do it. Or, if not already, be one thing or another yourself. Yet another way to love our neighbour, to be the people of God.