

Pushing Back On The Culture As Much As It Is Pushing Down On Us

Objective: We are not made for this earthly experience, but rather, to bring heaven to earth. However, how often do we become distracted by the ways of the world? How much of our time, energy, and resources are devoted towards earthly items, and not heavenly?? The ways of the world seem to be too enticing as they appeal to our ego and pleasure. Too often, we don't realize how much the culture is leading us astray, so we need to develop a plan to stop our susceptibility and refocus our priorities on what really matters.

Song Suggestion: They'll know we are Christians by our love

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 8: 5-6

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Philippians 4:8

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Matthew 16:23

(Jesus) turned and said to Peter "Get behind me Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Catechism 1728

The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things.

Catechism 153

When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven" Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.

Catechism 1852

There are a great many kinds of sins. Scripture provides several lists of them. The Letter to the Galatians contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God."

Saint: St. Thomas Moore was a very successful father/husband, business man and politician. What is most

remarkable about all his accomplishments, is that he never compromised his faith. While his faithfulness cost him his life, he knew that being a servant of God was more important than being a serving King Henry VIII: https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=324

Vignette: John noticed that his You Tube feed revolved around materialistic items such as expensive cars, fancy clothes or high end vacations. While driving to work one day, he almost caused a car accident while staring at a billboard for a Maserati dealership. After slamming on his brakes and thankfully stopping in time, it took his heart a full five minutes to calm down. He then began to remember the adage “You covet what you see.” While becoming a more conscientious driver, John began to notice that most billboard, TV commercials, Magazine advertisements revolved around wealth, fame, or power. John then became more aware of the messages constantly bombarding his family, especially his children. These messages revolved measuring self worth on “how you look” or “what you have”. The materialistic and egotistical ways of the world had been creeping into his family’s lifestyle, and it had to stop.

John called for a “Family Meeting”. The first thing he told his wife and his children were how much he loved them and cared for them. He then shared his Maserati story with them, and how he failed his family in protecting them from the negative outside influences of the world. He was determined to do a better job. He then sought the thoughts and observations of the rest of the family – however, none of the kids spoke up. Thankfully, his wife mentioned how it really bothered her that most of their meals were leftovers or takeout and resolved to reinstall Sunday family dinners. She asked the kids to make it a priority so the entire family could attend, but requested that no cell phones be present.

On the way to Mass the next weekend, John said “During Mass, please find one thing – not three things, but just one thing that speaks to your heart on how you can become a better person. After Mass, I am going to ask you about the one thing on the ride back home”. While his wife rolled her eyes thinking that was the worst thing she ever heard, both her and John were blown away by the robust discussion in the car after Mass. Especially since each of the three children were moved by different things including a hymn, reading, as well as homily that the children shared.

Because of these talks after Mass, the family grew closer together. Slowly but surely, John noticed that each family member began to more time and energy on things pertains to the spiritual, and not as much on the materialistic ways of the world. John found a way to push back on the culture, as much as it had been pushing down on his family.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Reexamine the past week. Write down the items that belong in the “earthly” bucket vs. the “heavenly” bucket. How many hours and dollars (just look at last months credit card statement) were spent on earthly items, how many for heavenly?

During the past week, how was your prayer life?? Do you set aside a special time each day, in a special place to pray??? When you pray – do you use scripture?? Do you have a heart to heart conversation with Jesus??? Do you recite prayers?? How can you improve your prayer life this upcoming week??

What are the “guilty pleasures” that have sneaked into your life? Perhaps you have become obsessed with TV series that has too much inappropriate content?? Maybe you act inappropriately during boy’s night out?? What are some things in your life that take you further away, not closer to God??

Action Plan:

For the next month, make a mental note each time that the culture sends you a message that endorses the way of the world, not heaven. Most of the time, it is subtle – so have your radar up so you can become more aware.

Without being a dictator, how can you encourage your family to incorporate more spirituality into their lives?? Leading by example is the best way, however, what else can you do?? For each of your children, consider giving them a saint medal that would be special to them

Plan a “Family Time” event around an act of mercy. Gather the family once a quarter to volunteer at a soup kitchen. Perhaps write a letter to an elderly relative in a nursing home.

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