

Restoring a Culture of Life to a Digital and Jaded Generation

By Julia Rota

“Find the courage to proclaim Christ... and the unchanging truths which have their foundation in Him. These are the truths that set us free!” Pope Benedict XVI

As recently as the early 1990s, approximately 90% of adults in the US described themselves as Christian. By 2022, that number dropped to only two thirds of Americans. Then came the rise of the “nones” – a religiously unaffiliated demographic who say their belief lies in “nothing in particular.” In North America, this population increased a staggering 92% from 2010 to 2020, numbering 114 million people. What could cause such a drastic increase?

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According to Pew Research, religious “nones” give one or more of these reasons for their detachment: They question the validity of many religious teachings. They don’t see a need for religion in their life. They don’t have a positive view of religious organizations, and they’ve had a bad experience with religious people.

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lization is grounded in rights given to us by God, not human government. Without faith, culture inevitably erodes – which is easily seen in today’s epidemic of depression, anxiety disorders, addictions, crime, dysfunctional relationships, broken family structures, and abortion.

St John Paul II, recognizing this deficiency in modern life, called on the Church to re-evangelize society by leading cultural transformation. The International Institute for Culture (IIC) was founded in response to this call, and our mission is the very same: to transform culture by showcasing and promoting beauty, art, truth, and faith.

The challenge before us is like no other time because of the digital age in which we live. Teens and adults are glued to cell phones and social media. Shallow engagement replaces meaningful reflection. Negative stereotypes of Catholi-

cism and the priesthood thrive in the online environment and are all the more prevalent and far-reaching. These portrayals have no doubt contributed in part to the phenomenon

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of today’s religious “nones.”

Part of the fallout has been a Catholic priesthood under relentless attack, because the priesthood stands for sacrifice and transcendence – values not popularized in the “me” culture of instant gratification. Restoring respect and appreciation for the nobility of the divine and the dignity of God’s appointed priesthood is central to achieving cultural renewal. Today’s youth

need heroic mentors to emulate: examples of courage and selflessness, bravery and fearlessness, valor and grit. They will not find them in Hollywood or Silicon Valley.

Priests are an integral part of a culture and society that reveres the sacred and values virtue. In the words of St John Paul II:

The priesthood is linked to the broader mission of building a culture of life, where the protection of the unborn and of the vulnerable is central, where moral principles are upheld through education, pastoral care, and advocacy.

The priesthood plays a vital role in the pro-life mission by serving as a foundational force in promoting and defending the sanctity of human life. Priests and deacons are called to preach the truth about the dignity of all human life, both born and unborn, and to condemn the moral evil of abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and infanticide.

Priests fulfill this essential calling. As we gather every Sunday to hear their messages preached, we form a society built upon the solid foundation of these sacred and sustaining values.

The IIC believes the role of the priesthood has been undervalued and maligned in our modern culture. To reach today's youth with messages of truth, we must meet our culture where it is. Instead of flooding the internet with scandal and debauchery, we must engage people with a steady dose of beauty, truth, and faith. Darkness cannot exist for simply in the light.

The IIC has taken an important

step by launching the *ThankAPriest.com* initiative, where stories of heroism by today's priests are showcased and celebrated. Viewers can read stories online or watch upbeat, quick videos highlighting inspiring accounts of the daily, often hard, but always joyous work of priests. With this initiative, we are helping to correct the negative drumbeat of false messages and replace it with the melody of authentic and genuine truth.

The priest is the primary builder of a "civilization of love", directly linked to the creation and sustenance of a "civilization of life." The priest's unique mission to sanctify, teach, and govern works to transform individuals from within, beginning with the conversion of the heart, which then radiates outward to influence society and culture.

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ThankAPriest.com is one component of a larger initiative the IIC has launched, *Shepherding Future Shepherds*, to reignite young people toward vocations to the priesthood and religious life and the thrill of God's calling. Youth are hungry for something to admire and believe - something true and faithful - a counterculture that fills the emptiness pervading the negative and depressing media they're bombarded with today. It is our duty and privilege to inspire the next generation to rediscover dignity, true freedom, and the lasting fulfillment found in God's call.

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patients report hearing hospital staff discuss organ-removal procedures, with them waking up just in the nick of time.

Needless to say, I soon removed that designation from my driver's license.

We also know, from the work that James O'Keefe has done, that abortionists sell the organs of babies whom they have just murdered for various "research" endeavors.

Kennedy has announced efforts to crack down on the nation's "troubled" donation system. "Decades of ignored patient safety concerns have driven more and more Americans off the donor list." The HHS has now decertified the Life Alliance Organ Recovery Agency based in Miami FL, citing many problems with that agency.

Of course, one of those concerns is that organs are being harvested from still-living donors. The Health Resources and Services Administration, in the course of their review, discovered 28 such cases. Kennedy stated "the entire system must be fixed to ensure that every potential donor's life is treated with the sanctity that it deserves".

We also learned that under Kennedy, the Food and Drug Administration will take another look at the usage of mifepristone, pursuant to the request of 22 Republican governors. Of course, pro-abortion activists are now in a tizzy over this review. Whatever happened to "safe, legal, rare"? It appears that they care only about the "legal" part.

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