

Respect Life Bulletin – October 9, 2022 Approaching the Nones and Others

Short of a miracle, changing laws and practices hostile to life will require a change in culture. This is true not merely for “Nones” – those who don’t identify with any religion – but also for those who profess Catholicism but reject its teaching on central matters of life such as abortion, assisted suicide and family.

How’d we get to this? That’s for another day.

What to do? An even tougher question. Consider just two schools of current thought.

One is to provide more effective catechesis. A prominent proponent is Bishop Robert Barron whose Word on Fire apostolate, <https://wordonfire.institute/> and <https://www.wofdigital.org/>, reaches around the world. This ministry offers splendid catechetical and apologetic material designed to reveal the beauty and cogency of the the Catholic faith.

A second approach, while not downplaying the first’s contribution, argues that people do not “choose their actions and identity *primarily* on the basis of theological belief.” <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/misunderstanding-the-rise-of-the-nones/> Phil Davignon, Associate Professor and Chair of Sociology at Union University explains:

[T]hose who become religious Nones are likely to draw on common critiques of religion to explain their new non-religious identity, but ultimately their ***disaffiliation was only possible because their imagination***—formed through a lifetime of experiences—***was already thoroughly secular***.

George Weigel makes the same point. The Church is swimming against a furious and vicious secular tide. Today’s cultural signals are ubiquitous. They form and lure the Nones and offer believers a justification for dissent.

Not surprisingly, both approaches recognize the key role we laity have in changing culture by ***personal witness in the way we live our everyday lives***. Nothing attracts more than a life well lived in conformity to Christ. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is an exemplar. Of her likes, even the stones cry out: “See how they love one another.”

Many of the canonized lived holy lives but weren’t famous like Mother Teresa. But you don’t need to be canonized to influence culture (or get to heaven). We all know good people like that.

Our witness can help change the secular to a Catholic imagination which even today's dominant post-modern media won't be able to suppress.

