

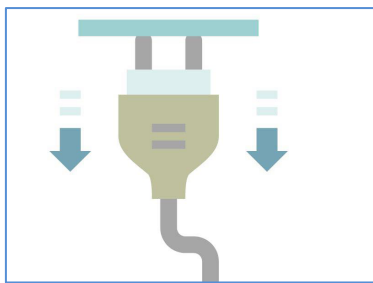
Connecting by Disconnecting

A Lord's Flock Praise & Worship Topic

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For Christians, evangelization is a grace and a vocation. We need to spread the good news - "Jesus is our Salvation." However, how do we evangelize in an identity-confused world? The young people today are "interacting with a real and virtual world that they enter alone as if setting foot on an undiscovered global continent" (Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, n.90). We must help the young connect to God amidst all the "noise" surrounding them. We need to feed their ability to be quiet, listen and reflect with God.



1. Background: Is the state of Filipino religion really healthy? "Yes, but..."

1.1. The Philippines has the highest number of citizens with strong religious beliefs at 83% among 30 countries surveyed (Univ. of Chicago Study, 1991-2008).

1.2. There are 0.04%, who have no religious affiliation (Phil. Statistics Authority 2020).

2. The impact of Western culture: our thinking is highly influenced by American culture. Thus, this has a subtle effect on our practice of religion.

2.1. In the US, 3 out of 10 adults are now religiously unaffiliated (28% in 2023 vs 16% in 2007). A lot of young people are growing up without religion in the household (e.g. Christmas is celebrated empty of its meaning about the birth of Jesus).

2.2. This thinking cascades to their literature, movies, entertainment, social media. Consequently, the American perspective slowly seeps into our minds, while we do not notice.

3. The Ireland case study is a cautionary tale for the Philippines. Ireland was a highly Catholic nation 50 years ago. In 2022, the number of Catholics declined to 69% (from 79% in 2016). Moreover, those with no religion increased to 14% in 2022 (from 10% in 2016). Today, only 30% of Irish Catholics attend weekly mass vs 90% in the 1960s (EWTN News in Depth, 2021). Thus, they are culturally Catholic (Catholics by name) but are non-practicing or nominal Catholics. This is an important warning for us. If we do not understand the trend,

the Philippines will go the same way.

4. What happened that caused the decline of religiosity? There were stages in history that impacted religion:

4.1. Pre-modern: people believed in God as the highest ideal, the center, the truth and the way.

4.2. Modern: some people began to question if God is the ideal. Man's rationale mind and science became the field of religion.

4.3. **Post-modern:** people reacted to the simplistic. They claimed that Pre-modern (God) and Modern (Science) were both false. There was an emergence of independent thinking that resulted in the "I/Me/My" mentality. "I alone will declare the truth, beauty, goodness." Therefore, there are so many versions of the "truth." This is a fallacy; there should be objective goodness.

4.3.1. "The **buffered self**" is protected and walled (Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor). They believe: "I make my life. I am the master of my soul; I am not convinced of the life beyond." And so, they do everything without considering communal and social thinking.

4.3.2. Filipinos pick up this this new generation thinking through access to netflix and entertainment.

4.3.3. We, as evangelizers, need to understand the language of the youth, but not necessarily speak their language.

4.4. Meta-modern: this is still an emerging trend among the grandchildren; it is not definitive yet.

5. The "buffered self" is being used by the enemy to deaden the voice of the Gospel.

5.1. The buffered self thrives in a noisy world – it very noisy but saying nothing; consequently they no longer hear God.

5.2. Every "Juan" needs to disengage from the noise, take time to have solitude, listen to God's voice and ponder in our heart. Mother Mary is the perfect example – she pondered everything and followed God's will.

Conclusion: We can not meet the challenge of evangelization on our own. Only Jesus can. We need to go to Jesus.

Reflection: Are you simply listening to the online world? How can you take an active stance to speak the Gospel in the virtual space?

SCRIBES Ministry

Transcribed by: Jo Advincula

<https://lordsflock.org/teachings/digests>

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