

“My Soul Longs For You, O God”- St. John Parish, Little Chute
The Gospel and Culture

“The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the tragedy of our time.” (On Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI, no. 20) Communicating God’s loving plan to save us to modern culture is not easy. While there are many good and noble aspect of contemporary life, there are a number of troubling issues that make it difficult even to be heard.

(1) History is taught today from a secularistic point of view. Since God’s revelation occurred in history, a secular bias refuses to admit evidence “outside” a rational context.

(2) A culture that favors individualism, materialism and secular ideals presents an enormous challenge to us who approach reality with faith, a bias for community and a trust in spiritual values. We honor reason, but also revere faith.

(3) We live with a “culture of disbelief.” The First Amendment to the Constitution states forbids the establishment of religion by the state, but the interpretation of this amendment marginalizes religion. This makes it seem that applying religious faith to laws, legal judgments and public policy is unwelcome and wrong. Faith should be strictly a private matter.

(4) We can bring the Gospel to our culture by building on what is positive and changing what is not. We must first be evangelized ourselves. Pope Paul VI put it this way, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses (Evangelization in the Modern World, no.41).” The catechists themselves must be witnesses and encourage and equip those served to bring their brothers and sisters the life-transforming Good News of Jesus Christ.”

(5) In a culture that is puzzled by faith and prayer, we must forge ahead precisely with these two values. “The power of prayer is not about your power but the power you have allowed inside – Christ himself is the unseen power. You are fused with a power beyond anything you can imagine. St. Paul urges us to live by this faith. ‘We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.’” [Matthew McDevitt, *The Unseen Power of Prayer*, OSV, 2008, p.24]

Reflection Questions:

1. How have you experienced God in your life?
2. When you hear that religion begins with God, what does that mean to you?
3. Since God has revealed his fullness in Christ, what effect does that have on your devotion to Christ?
4. St. Teresa of Avila advises us that no matter how high we ascend the Ladder of spirituality, we should always stay close to the humanity of Christ. Why do you think she stresses that?
5. Do you feel the need for solitude in your life? What would you do with it if you had it?
6. In what way are you deepening your witness to Christ and experiencing a transformation of your life through the graces of the Holy Spirit?