



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: The Battle for Our Children *Part II: The Impact of Secular Values on Our Children*



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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican, which is also known as the Order of Preachers, and she, along with her husband Dan, are engaged in youth catechesis and music ministry. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone by now knows, I am simply here to ask questions. The burden of providing the answers falls to our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Discussion:

Last time, we discussed that parents have the first responsibility for the teaching of faith to our children, but, we also discussed that we all have a role towards looking after the youth of our day. We must recognize that we succeed or fail in this role by what we do and what we fail to do.

The battle for the generations began with the first man and woman and continues to this day. Whether we are aware or not, each of us is engaged in this battle, not just from the perspective of our soul, but the souls of those whom we love and those who surround us. It should not surprise us that the evil one works tirelessly to capture the souls of our children, for it is the way of the predator to target the weakest and most defenseless first.

The question before us is, “How will we choose to engage to protect the weakest among us?” If we are uncertain, we should look to God to guide us in what He asks of us. In prayer, we should ask God to help us see the opportunities we have to help teach and protect our children. Let us pray God will guide us to the work He desires we accomplish so His will may be done.

Today, we are going to take on a rather large and controversial topic and that is the impact of secularism upon our children. To understand the subject, we need to start with its definition.

“**indifference** to or **rejection** or **exclusion** of religion and religious considerations”
(Merriam-Webster)

(Question 1: As we examine this definition we see a spectrum of nouns in relation to the consideration of faith. What are these nouns and what does each imply as to the relationship of a secular society to people of faith?)

Secularism appears to be our friend; protecting us from a government imposed religion, especially one which persecutes or own, but it is also our enemy; prohibiting us from the free exercise of our faith, especially when the “rejection” and “exclusion” nouns are applied to the implementation of the ideology. On the surface, it appears benign, or maybe even protective, in that religion is not allowed to dominate government or government to dominate religion, for when people of different faiths come together in society, the question arises, **whose faith or morality is taught and practiced?**

We might attempt to answer this question by stating we will apply the “indifference” standard and we simply won't talk about matters of faith within the halls of government or within their service organizations, such as our public schools. The problem is, it is impossible to divorce society from the history of our faith or the morality which God commands.

(Question 2: The challenge we face arises when secularist society develops morals inconsistent with the teachings of our faith. What are some of the secularist values which conflict with what we are taught by God?)

- Abortion and Contraception
- Euthanasia
- Marriage
- Family
- Chastity
- Gender
- Science
- History

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One of the battle grounds for the hearts and minds of our children is the educational system. Here, secularism, under the banner of “separation of church and state,” makes the case for applying the “rejection” and “exclusion” nouns to accomplish a notion of “freedom from religion.” Virgil C. Blum, an American Jesuit and professor of political science at Marquette University, writes in *Crisis Magazine*:

This is what is meant by the secularization of our public schools: the suppression not only of the teaching of religion but also of religiously-grounded moral values. Forbidding the teaching of such values is virtually the same as teaching that those values are false, or at least irrelevant to man’s affairs. But **Secularists in state education have taken a big step beyond suppressing the teaching of religiously-grounded moral values. They have effectively censored from text books virtually all references to the place of religion in Western civilization and in American history.** (Blum)

(Question 3: For those who were educated in public schools, we were taught reading, writing, math, history, and various forms of arts and science. Is it possible to teach these subjects without any mention of God? What is the impact to teaching history, for example?)

The well-known Protestant theologian, Robert McAfee Brown of Stanford University, is quite candid that it [secularism] is, in essence, a kind of faith: “**Secularism is itself a ‘faith.’** The *object* and *content* of Secularism’s faith may be, and indeed are, very different from the object and content of the faith possessed by a Catholic or a Protestant or a Jew, **but a faith it is and a religion it is.**” (Blum)

[Sir Walter Moberly observed] On the fundamental religious issue [the existence of God], the modern [school] intends to be, and supposes it is, neutral, but it is not. **Certainly it neither inculcates nor expressly repudiates belief in God. But it does what is far more deadly than open rejection; it ignores Him It is in this sense that the [school] today is atheistic.** (Blum)

Dr. Luther A. Weigle, former dean of the Yale Divinity School, agreed when he said, “**The ignoring of religion by the schools inevitably conveys to the children a negative suggestion It is natural for them to conclude that religion is negligible, or unimportant, or irrelevant to the main business of life.**” (Blum)

(Question 4: One of the “alleged” goals of secularism is the elimination of discrimination based on faith. As we face the silencing of faith in our schools, what message is sent to our children about their Catholic identity? How might we help our children to contend with such societal messages as well as discrimination they may face for identifying as Catholic?)

(Question 5: In a free and diverse society such as that of the United States, the question for schools becomes, how to teach children without imposing or offending religious beliefs? The answer of atheistic and various secularist organizations is that schools must be free from

religion. If a school is sanitized of God and His teaching, what religion is left on the desks in the schools? What influence might this have upon our children?)

(Question 6: If we are wealthy enough, we have the option to send our children to a Catholic school where the teachers are not forced to talk around religious beliefs and the role Catholics played in history and scientific advances. Additionally, in such schools the traditions of our faith may be integrated into daily activities, such as prayer, religious artwork in the classroom, faith related literature and references, holiday parties, as well as discussions concerning the role of Catholics in history, science, and the arts. What are we to do if we do not have the resources to pay for private schooling and our only option is public schools?)

Ironically, it was **fear of Catholics**, not court rulings on the separation of church and state, **that did the most to secularize public schools**, said Haynes [senior scholar for the First Amendment Center in Washington, D.C.]. (Wisniewski)

(Question 7: A reality we must consider is that what our children face in public schools today is only a portion of what they will face in their adult life. There will be the constant question as to how to engage secular or other religious beliefs that we, as Catholics, hold to be in error. In what ways might we help our children to be socially responsible, civil, and responsible Catholics? How can we help them to civilly live their faith within a society which may be hostile to their beliefs?)

Quotes:

Today, in Europe, it is more important than ever to emphasize the spiritual and religious dimension of human life. In a society increasingly marked by secularism and threatened by atheism, we run the risk of living as if God did not exist. People are often tempted to take the place of God, to consider themselves the criterion of all things, to control them, to use everything according to their own will. It is so important to remember, however, that our life is a gift from God, and that we must depend on him, confide in him, and turn towards him always. Jews and Christians have the blessing but also the responsibility to help preserve the religious sense of the men and women of today, and that of our society, by our witness to the sanctity of God and human and life. God is holy, and the life he has given is holy and inviolable.
– *Pope Francis (Meeting with delegation of Conference of European Rabbis)*

We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think that the wide circle of the American Society, or the whole wide circle of the Christian Community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-church, between the gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the Antichrist. The confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God's Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously.
– *Saint John Paul II*

Final Thoughts:

During our discussion today, we touched on some very complicated issues. It is a challenge which is faced by any diverse society. The founders of the United States sought to prevent the

abuses of government against the people, but, over time, we have seen the right to freedom of religion, enumerated in the First Amendment to our Constitution, to become interpreted as the right of freedom “from” religion.

While we may disagree with the way the freedom “from” religion standard became the dominant standard, such that our public schools are declared God free zones, we must be realistic that we must take a role no matter to whom we turn to educate our children. To defend the souls of our children, we must work with them to review what they learn and help them to understand the relationship of what they are taught to what God asks of all of us. We have the same responsibility in relation to all which influences our children.

Especially when secular values are in conflict with the moral values of our faith, we must help our children understand the values God directs and how our children may live their faith within a society which does not believe as we do and may even persecute us for our beliefs.

As I pointed out during our opening, Secularism appears to be our friend; protecting us from a government imposed religion, but it is also our enemy; prohibiting us from the free exercise of our faith across all our daily activities. To prevent the spectrum of secularism from becoming the justification for the total silencing of faith in the public square, we must engage to ensure that Supreme Court rulings on faith are not over interpreted such that they restrict the free exercise of our faith. We must also know our faith such that we are not only able to live it as God asks of us, but also to defend it against those who would take it from us or our children.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: [The Battle for Our Children - Part III: Entertainment Media](#)

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