



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: The Battle for Our Children
Part III: Entertainment Media



Public Domain

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. Our panelists get the dubious pleasure of answering them, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Today, we would like to give a special welcome to our new iHeart Radio listeners. Armor of Faith Radio is now available via iHeart Radio. To find our show, go to iheart.com and enter “Armor of Faith” in their search box, then, scroll down and look for us under podcasts. All of our episodes are available on demand. We invite you to share your favorite episodes with friends and family. You can simply copy and paste a link into email, chat, or social media to help us in our efforts to encourage the faithful in how they may put on the armor of faith.

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:

During our last discussion, we touched on some very complicated issues. As we mentioned, how to address religion is a challenge which is faced by any religiously diverse society. The founders of the United States sought to prevent the abuses of government against the faithful, 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 help balance the education of 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, such as our entertainment media, news media, social relationships, and faith formation.

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 last time, 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. Contrary to the belief of secularists, the First Amendment does not restrict our freedom of religion to the confines of our homes and parishes.

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 religion are not over interpreted such that they restrict the free exercise of our faith in public life. 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 and our children.

Last time, we focused on secular values. We must recognize that what dominates in our government regulated school system becomes a dominant source of values grooming for our children. While it competes with other values grooming systems, such as peer pressure and parental guidance, schools play a significant role given simply the sheer number of contact hours schools have with our youth. The challenge is helping our children exist within these competing values systems without allowing their impact to erode the strength of our children's faith and the values to which our faith in God leads them.

We send our children to schools to learn and build their knowledge. Schools can be parental allies in many ways, but we must also recognize that schools can be an independent influence on the values systems of our children in a manner that requires significant parental awareness and attention.

Public schools, in the perception of compliance with the First Amendment, turn to secularist curriculum, which is often framed through the eyes of Progressives or others with anti-Judaeo-Christian agendas. Another system which has a daily influence upon our children is the

entertainment media whose content is also largely framed by secular and increasingly Progressive interests. In the name of “offending no one,” (with the exception of Christians), the media endeavors to dictate the rules of our behavior as they assume their perceived role as the police force of political correctness.

This not to say that all media is bad or that everyone in media has dark agendas. Media is simply a tool to transmit content. Those tools can be used by the faithful as well as the faithless. What we must examine is the content to which our children are exposed and through which their value system may be influenced.

Today, we are going to talk about the influence of the entertainment media upon the youth of our day.

(Question 1: The first step to our discussion is to define what we mean by “entertainment media.” What media might we include in the reference to “entertainment media?”)

- Movies, Television, and Theater
- Music
- Art
- Literature (print and digital)
- Video Games
- Social Media

(Question 2: One of the most controversial media forms which captures the attention of our youth is video games. What are some pros and cons we might associate with video games?)

- Hand eye coordination
- Problem Solving
- Education
- Fun
- Language
- Violence
- Culture of death
- Eroticism
- Incivility
- Anti-Christian Values
- Addictive activity

In an essay by Jason Craig, who is engaged with mentoring young men, he wrote:

“...someone brought up video games, and suggested that perhaps young men should put those aside in order to grow in maturity. Outrage! The roar in the room and the backlash was astounding...The fact is, the staggering and nearly all-male world of “gamers” is

thriving off of our bored and suppressed young men. We keep taking the expectations and experiences of power, danger, and adventure away and gaming companies offer a (sic) imitated substitute and sell it to them.” (Craig)

(Question 3: While video games are an occasional past-time for some, there are others for whom game play can become an addiction. What do we think video games might offer which real-life does not? How might we help our youth gain a proper balance between reality and virtual reality?)

(Question 4: While parents do have the choice as to what is allowed in the home, our children may encounter undesirable media in places outside the home. In what ways might parents deal with such exposure?)

So, let's talk about other media forms which capture the attention of our children. As we discussed earlier, these might include: movies/television/videos, music, literature; all of which may be found either on or off the Internet.

(Question 5: As we mentioned earlier, media conveys content. What content might be of concern to us?)

- Language
- Violence
- Incivility
- Gender relationships and behavior
- Culture of death
- Substance Abuse
- Satanistic culture
- Anti-Christian agendas

(Question 6: Media celebrities present an influence and are often given a media megaphone. Children often look up to celebrities and may desire to imitate their behavior. What issues might parents face as they discuss the celebrity culture with their children?)

- Celebrities define the “cool” crowd
- Celebrities as social examples (behavior)
- Celebrities as they speak on political agendas

Saint Pope John Paul II stated:

Parents, as the primary and most important educators of their children, are also the first to teach them about the media. They are called to train their offspring in the “moderate, critical, watchful and prudent use of the media” in the home. When parents do that consistently and well, family life is greatly enriched. Even very young children can be taught important lessons about the media: that they are produced by people anxious to

communicate messages; that these are often messages to do something - to buy a product, to engage in dubious behavior - that is not in the child's best interests or in accord with moral truth; that children should not uncritically accept or imitate what they find in the media. (Saint Pope John Paul II)

(Question 7: As Saint John Paul II mentioned, parents are “the primary and most important educators of their children.” As parents prepare to constructively engage their children in relation to media influence, what is one critical element of understanding required if parents are to engage effectively?)

(Question 8: While parents are “the primary and most important educators of their children,” they are not the only ones with a responsibility. Elders of the family, along with educators and youth ministers can assist. What are some tips we might share towards helping children form their value system?)

- Don't nag – engage and encourage – conversation teaches
- Arm with values of faith
- Discuss good alternatives
- Consider impacts of peer pressure
- Engage activities (with and without friends)
- Engage in service activities (make community service fun)
- Allow age appropriate independence, but check in – don't disengage
- Focus attention
- Consider the example we present
- Let them know who we were when we were their age
- Teach them how to vet sources (or bring to you with questions)
- Faith as guide to what is right and just (age appropriate social issue discussion)
- Explain dangers of extremism
- Conversations of trust keep doors open to the hearts of our children

Quotes:

With these words I wanted first of all to evoke the many paths along which man walks, and at the same time to emphasize how deeply the Church desires to stand at his side as he follows the paths of his earthly life...Among these many paths, the family is the first and the most important.

– *Saint John Paul II (1994 – Letter to Families)*

Faith is not reciting the “Creed” on Sunday, when we go to Mass; it is not only this. Faith is believing what is the Truth: God the Father who sent his Son and the Spirit that enlivens us. But faith is also entrusting oneself to God, and this you must teach [your children], with your example, with your life.

– *Pope Francis (Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, 8 Jan 2017)*

This year's theme [Year of the Family] is also a reminder to everyone, both communicators and those whom they address, that all communication has a moral dimension. As the Lord himself

has said, it is from the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks (cf. Mt 12:34-35). People grow or diminish in moral stature by the words which they speak and the messages which they choose to hear. Consequently, wisdom and discernment in the use of the media are particularly called for on the part of communications professionals, parents and educators, for their decisions greatly affect children and young people for whom they are responsible, and who are ultimately the future of society.

– *Saint John Paul II (23 May 2004 - "The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness ")*

It is not so easy to resist commercial pressures or the demands of conformity to secular ideologies, but that is what responsible communicators must do. The stakes are high, since every attack on the fundamental value of the family is an attack on the true good of humanity.

– *Saint John Paul II (23 May 2004 - "The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness ")*

Final Thoughts:

As we examined the question of the entertainment media, we noted it can have both good and bad influences upon the perceptions and value systems of our children. We also noted, as expressed by Saint John Paul II, that parents have an important responsibility as the primary and most important educators of their children. We should also note that we all have a role towards influencing the values systems of our youth. Our objective should be to enable the youth of our day to develop the values system which will not only prepare them for their place in adulthood and as leaders of generations to follow, but also to prepare them with the values system which will enable them to protect their very soul.

We know the evil one will work day and night to take faith away from our children. As parents, mentors, and leaders, we face a fierce battle for the souls of our children. The only way we can win the battle is to spend time with our children and engage them. We must provide them the opportunities to be active, to accomplish, to experience failure and how to learn from failure. Still, we must also watch over and protect them from dangers they may not perceive.

If we are to hold the attention and trust of our children, we must observe, as best we can, through the age of their eyes. We must assess what they see and help them with perceptions, analysis, and problem solving. We must help them see how entertainment media influences them, and how they may use their faith values within their own decision making process to make choices which are right and just. What we do or fail to do in the education of our children will determine not only how they will face the world on their own, but how they will be able to put on the armor of God by which to defend their soul.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we discuss news media influence.

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 IV: The News Media

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