

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



THE "SELFIE" CULTURE...

Recently at the Vatican, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, discussed a topic that got my attention- "selfie" phenomena." The Pope had spoken to some young people at an audience and instead of listening to him, they took "selfies." Pope Francis said, "I went to greet them, but only a few gave me their hand...the majority were with their cellphones saying 'Photo, photo, photo, selfie!' "

"Selfie" is a good word to describe not only a picture but also the way many young people are in our society today and that is very self-centered and self absorbed. We live in a generation which one writer described as the "me" generation. In other words, everything revolves around what "I" want without any reference to anybody else. In that vein, I think that we could say that overall religion and faith are in a precipitous decline today.

Just recently, for example, the people of Ireland voted in a special referendum on the Eighth Amendment which prohibited abortion in that country-a country which had been so very "Catholic" in the past. By an overwhelming number, the people voted to allow abortion. There were pictures showing Irish young people celebrating what they labelled a "victory." It is not a victory, but a terrible moral catastrophe for that small nation.

Here in the United States since 1973 and the Roe VS. Wade decision, the lives of millions of children have been lost. That decision precipitated a terrible moral fall out in this country that has not ended yet. One reason that religion and the faith are in a downwards spiral has to do with the "selfie" culture. The creed of the selfie culture goes something like this: "No religion, no church, no Pope who believes in his own infallibility is going to tell me what to do with my own life-I will do as I please!" In this culture, the Church is fine for worship, weddings and funerals but it's different when it starts to address my moral behavior.

Take another example, homosexuality. The Church contrary to what society says does not hate gay people. What the Church and the Lord Jesus object to is homosexual acts which are sinful in themselves. Of course for many, even some Christian denominations, this kind of thinking is considered politically incorrect today where freedom is often equated with license to do whatever I please instead of what pleases Almighty God. I was thinking of that recently when I saw the "Rainbow Flag" fluttering in front of an Episcopal Church in New York City!

The Rainbow Flag is indicative of the new morality-"I'm ok-you're ok!" It used to be said that the United States was a country that was guided by the Judeo-Christian ethic. This is no longer the case. For many people today the Ten Commandments have become the "Ten Suggestions," if they even advert to them at all.

In the long run, holiness means doing what God wants us to do and not what the self dictates. In the gospel, Our Lord Jesus spoke many times about self-denial and not much about self-fulfillment. "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

The Catholic Church and her teachings are not easy to live out, but we all have to try! Sometimes those teachings go against the grain-go against my own self will, my own lust and pride. But the "bottom line" is not that the Church must change, but rather me, myself and I!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome