

## Our Outdated Church

By Ron MacInnis

The Catholic Church is antiquated and outdated. Everybody knows that. Anyone who reads the newspaper, watches television, or chats at the water cooler knows that. After all, the Catholic Church is two thousand years old. Two thousand years! We are a society that demands the “new and improved” version of everything. How could we possibly value something that is two thousand years old? We are a people that discount and discard things that are old. We dynamite and bulldoze a multimillion-dollar, thirty-year-old stadium because it is obsolete. We even seem to be on the brink of discarding people because they are old. How can we possibly venerate something very, very old?

To compound the offense of simply being old, the Catholic Church has steadfastly refused to change its basic values and precepts to keep up “with the times”. Our society has undergone profound changes in its values and behaviors over the years, especially in just the past few decades. Other church denominations have embraced many of these changes and revised their teachings and practices accordingly, but not the Catholic Church. It continues to stubbornly cling to its two thousand year old values, even when they are so clearly out of step with our progressive, modern society.

What a pity, because the transformation we have brought about in our society in just a few generations is truly nothing short of remarkable. Let us take a closer look at the dramatic progress we have made:

- In 1939, the makers of *Gone with the Wind* encountered enormous opposition to the use of the word “damn” in the final line of dialogue in the film. Today, we spend literally billions of dollars producing and viewing films filled with language that we would not think of using in conversation with each other, and which we would punish our children for using.
- In 1960, there were 288,460 violent crimes in America. Just 36 years later, in 1996, there were 1,688,540 violent crimes. Of course, there was a greater population in 1996 than in 1960, so we need to look at the *rate* rather than the *number* of crimes. In 1960, there were 161 violent crimes per 100,000 people. In 1996, there were 566 violent crimes per 100,000 people.
- In 1925, there were 91,669 people in prisons (a rate of 79 people per 100,000 population). In the year 2000, there were 1,321,127 people in prisons (a rate of 478 people per 100,000 population). Today, there are a total of 6,467,200 under some form of correctional supervision (probation, jail, prison, or parole).
- In 1940, 76% of households in the United States involved a married couple. In the year 2000, only 52% of households involved a married couple.
- In 1940, there were 264,000 divorces and annulments in the United States. In 1990, there were 1,182,000 divorces and annulments.
- In 1916, When Margaret Sanger first founded the American Birth Control League, now known as Planned Parenthood, contraception was illegal in the United States, and it was

also condemned by every major religious denomination. In the year 1999, it was estimated that 64% of the 60 million women ages 15 through 44 practice contraception.

- In 1940, 3.8% of births were to unmarried women. By 1999, one third of all births were to unmarried women.
- In 1936, when welfare began in this country, there were 534,000 recipients of TANF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Sixty years later, in 1996, there were 12,648,859 recipients of TANF.
- Two generations ago, the term Sexually Transmitted Disease, or “STD” had not even been coined. Today, an estimated 65 Million people in the United States, one of every five people, are infected with growing varieties of STD’s many of which are incurable.
- Earlier in this century, there was no such thing as income tax, and other taxes represented a very small impact on the earnings of workers. Today, it is not uncommon for more than one half of an individual’s income to be taken in the form of federal income tax, state income taxes, Social Security taxes, sales taxes, city payroll taxes, excise taxes, property taxes, estate taxes, luxury taxes, gasoline taxes, and tobacco taxes. But this should not necessarily be viewed as a negative, since a substantial portion of these taxes go to promote and support these changes in our society, or to deal with their consequences.
- Two generations ago, the terms AIDS and HIV had not even been coined. Today, 36.1 Million people are living with AIDS, and 21.8 Million people have died from AIDS.
- In 1965, all 50 states banned abortion, with a very few exceptions. In 1973, the United States Supreme Court legalized abortion. In the 18 years since then, 38 Million unborn children have been killed in the United States.
- Finally - in the last 45 years, suicide rates have increased by 60%. Suicide has become the third leading cause of death among those ages 15 through 44. This is a very puzzling statistic, considering how we have reconstructed our society on new, state-of-the-art values.

Wow! What an amazing transformation of our society in such a short time. It is truly remarkable. To think, we have accomplished all this without the *support* of, and in many instances despite the direct *opposition* of, the Catholic Church. Just think - what might we have accomplished if we could have persuaded the Catholic Church to get into the 20th century and support our transformation efforts? It boggles the mind.

But wait - it may not be too late! Even now, we might still be able to convince the Catholic Church to change with the times and support the transformation of our society. If we could only do that - the changes we could bring about in the *next* few generation would make the changes of the past few generation pale in comparison. Think about it!

Think about it. In fact, as Catholics, when we are prodded to change and when our stodgy Church is challenged to get “with it” and “up with the times”, that is exactly what we need to do - *THINK ABOUT IT*.

September 17, 2001