***The New Commandments of the Culture***

I must confess that as a child reciting the Ten Commandments at the beginning of Mass, I wondered if we would ever get to the Collect for the Day. I recognize that living in the Sound Byte world of today that there is even less patience in saying and participating in the recitation of the Decalogue.

So, a logical question is, do people still take the Ten Commandments seriously, and isn’t it possible that if on a given Sunday, we asked everyone in the church to write down the Ten Commandments — and in order, that there could be some embarrassment. Even those who love Liturgy are already saying, “We do the Decalogue every (fill in the blank) in my church!” The problem is, even if we do it liturgically and also know the Ten Commandments in order, do they really have a central role in the culture? I know that this is a silly question, because we already know the answer.

Not too many decades ago it was common for some to say, “Remember, it’s the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Suggestions.” I think that decades ago this was semi-witty, but today, I believe, we are in a much more serious set of circumstances since the culture not only does not know or even care, about the Ten Commandments, but without even necessarily knowing it, the culture has created its own Commandments. These replacement commandments are articulated by the media, the Congress, the entertainment industry, educational institutions and elsewhere. At the heart of these Commandments is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but the “god” of secular humanism. In the end we now have before us an entirely new secular religion, that can occasionally find a Church that reflects the new understandings. Attendance at the secular events is somewhat mandatory and the “Prayer Book” of social media platforms informs and shapes the beliefs of the new religion. The result is not a disagreement with traditional Christianity, but rather, even worse, rendering Christianity as irrelevant and simply one Religion among other ones.

The increased narcissism of the culture also means that any history before I was born is an unnecessary diversion, since the new religion is a never-ending progressive evolution. The “saints” are those in the various industries who reflect the new religion, and they are even “canonized” at various media award events and halls of fame. The Church Calendar is completely irrelevant, and secular Holy Days and Feast Days are clearly obvious, even with an occasional nod to past Christian festivals and saints’ days. St. Valentine’s Day, for example, is now simply Valentine’s Day, and Christmas and Easter breaks are simply “Winter Break” and “Spring Break” along with a Winter Concert and a Spring Concert thrown in. This demonstrates one of the new secular Commandments - no matter where you live, all religions are equal, and anything we do must be evaluated in terms of whom we may offend. Not offending someone is one of the secular Commandments. Another subtle introduction is that titles are no longer used; clergy are on a first name basis (“call no man Father”) but if we fail to refer to another person in the way in which they insist on being called, we have broken another Commandment.

Obviously, the list goes on, and I would encourage people to have a list of the Ten Commandments in column number 1, another column for your own personal “Commandments,” and column number 3 for the “Commandments” of the culture.

Religious sociologist, Robert Bellah, pointed out decades ago that in the culture there are “liturgies” and when the Church fails to celebrate her Liturgies the culture will happily provide “liturgies” that demonstrate passion for the culture.

I recently saw a large “non-denominational” church advertise that they have no Creeds. The list goes on as they articulate what they don’t have as a part of their belief system, and, of course, it ends with the usual new articulation that “all are welcome, in spite of………..”. In many ways that becomes a pseudo religious celebration of who and what we are, without talking about central elements of our Faith, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and the need to celebrate a Savior who died on the Cross for our sins is not central. Even the eminent psychiatrist, Karl Menniger, wrote a book five decades ago entitled, “Whatever Became of Sin.” Therefore, if our lives are not in a state of sin because we are simply victims of whatever is currently the enemy, then the culture offers us salvation as an advocate, rather than having a Savior, who is Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

As I waded through a number of current articles regarding the evils of the inherited culture, and the enemies were named, it became clear. Secular humanism and its adherents do not believe in an after-life; they neither anticipate with joy, being in Heaven, nor do they fear Hell. You’re born, you die, and that’s it (unless “universalism” is adopted and everyone goes to Heaven anyway). This raises the question, if we did not wish to worship God in churches and keep his Commandments, why would we want to spend time with Him for all eternity in never ending worship? Churches even reinforce the “here and now” style, with worship designed to entertainment the people, with an occasional punctuation of prayer.

I have reviewed the Creeds: Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian and I have finally seen what can be extracted from them as the Creed of the culture. It is “I.” That’s it. I am the beginning and ending of all things, and my feelings are the gauge of all that is.

No one wants the bad news, unless they are purveyors of news as a source of income, but I intend to spend the rest of my life more fervently praying daily for the conversion of the culture: for the unchurched and the **dechurched,** and for those who have been mesmerized by the narcissism of the culture. This does not mean that the adherents of the new religion are not nice; many of them are VERY nice - again: another Commandment. I am reminded of the significant quotation, **“He who marries the zeitgeist (the spirit of the times) in this world will be a widow(er) in the next.”**