

Father Michael's Musings  
October 2023

It used to be that I complained about Christmas Creep. The intrusion of Christmas deals into Thanksgiving. This year, I notice that Halloween has also crept into September, especially for movies and television shows. My feelings about Halloween inspired entertainment runs a wide gamut. I appreciate Frankenstein as the re-telling of Adam and Eve and the Tower of Babel. Every AI movie is a rehash of Frankenstein, though without the skill of The Time Machine by HG Wells. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde share that same theme with the additional warning against self-destructive addictions. Even Dracula, in the most honest versions, opens the horror of living forever without God and as a parasite on humanity. I could never appreciate the slasher genre, no matter how much the shows are dressed up as morality plays or even comedy. I am horrified by shows like the Exorcist, which pair sacrilege with inviting the devil into our subconscious. We don't need the devil in our home to know the horror of being in his clutches.

But the real monster that frightens me most is one we live with every day and normalize as if it were harmless. We even praise it for its wonderful gifts. No reasonable parent would give their children meth and then send them to play in a place known for predators. Yet, we very easily give smart phones to our children, pretending that they aren't addictive. We give up policing those phones from terrible content that sucks away time and presence from our families and relationships because the task is unending. We despair because we can't keep up with the schemes of predators to worm their way into our children's, and even our own, lives. We watch helplessly as texting becomes the standard of communication so that our children can't write sentences anymore, let alone paragraphs or papers. We bemoan the fact that we can't have conversations at dinner, or share a night of socializing, without battling the iron clad grip of those phones on our attention and our courtesy.

The common themes of all horror stories are the destruction of the innocents and of the soul. I pray that we will be given the strength to be diligent in our fight against the destruction of relationships and simple kindness that is fostered by our little smart-phone demons. I hope fervently that we can re-establish families that love each other and pay attention to each other. That we, ourselves, can lead by example of being more present. I hope that we can prevail against this materialistic and earthly iPhone kingdom, so that the kingdom of God, which puts our service to Him first, and our kindness to each other second, can again become the standard for our community and society.

God bless you.

Father Michael