

NEWMAN ON SECULARISM - OUR CRISIS IN FAITH
By Deacon Jack Sullivan

PART I - NEWMAN'S LIFE AND SPIRITUALITY

Right from his earliest beginnings, even up to today mankind has sought to re-create for himself a humanly designed Heaven on earth to replace Almighty God's eternal Kingdom. Hence, the rise of secularism. Unschooled in the essential doctrines of our faith, vast numbers of our laity have fallen victims to religious apathy and indifference, generated almost exclusively by the allurements of secularism. As a result of this insidious ideological movement, the Church is currently experiencing a crisis in faith of unprecedented proportions! But our holy Church lives on and is constantly renewed, in a very special way, by those called by God as His servants to guide, inspire, and revitalize Her. One such a person, called for this purpose was Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman. So many people in Blessed Cardinal Newman's time in 19th century Victorian England, indeed so many people today still seek to criticize the Catholic Church as being antiquated, out of touch with modern worldly realities. The results have also left a devastating mark upon the Church, buffeted by a giant wave of aggressive secularism and militant atheism on the outside, as well as religious apathy and spiritual indifference from within.

I firmly believe that both of these formidable forces, working in tandem are most responsible for our current crisis in faith as seen by diminished Church attendance, and the practice of the faith. Foreseeing the dangers to our Church and culture, which secularism represented, Newman prophetically sounded the alarm. This treatise contains his unique warning and personal message to the modern world.

Inasmuch as orthodoxy is our greatest defense against the modernist or secular movement, Newman once wrote in his battle with the forces of religious indifference, "Religion has two sides to it, a severe side and a beautiful side. And we all will surely stray from the narrow path that leads to life, if we indulge ourselves only in what is beautiful, while casting aside what is severe." Only by engaging in what is severe, can we acquire true faith.

PART II - NEWMAN'S ANALYSIS OF MODERNISM OR SECULARISM

As a Catholic thinker and writer, Newman tried to address the issue of our crisis in faith in our western culture brought about by secularism - that difficult zone of controversy and concern where religion and culture fuse and overlap. Newman anticipated and foresaw so much of what our present day Church is experiencing, as well as sounding an alarm to warn off the coming crisis.

A. Newman's Views on Christian Religious Indifference

Speaking of this crisis of faith, unfolding in his day, Newman delivered his memorable sermon and essay in 1870, entitled "the Infidelity of the future." In it he described indifferent Christians as follows: "Many people are searching for the divine, or at least, some transcendental meaning in their lives. And yet, these same

searchers feel they must be in control and are not willing to allow anyone, not even God Himself to question their values and lifestyles." Newman warned his fellow Christians about the dangers of spiritual liberalism leading to a human, self-designed religion, without firm doctrine or religious depth. He insisted that "God shouldn't be interpreted according to personal and individualistic preference, for divine revelation challenges each person to both accept the divine message, and to live it - fully!" He also criticized the external posture of so many Catholics without any interior commitment or conscientious conviction. He prophesied that this liberal, progressive, secular movement, which was appearing on the horizon, would someday "swallow them up alive, without a firm and vibrant faith to protect them!"

B. Newman's Views on Secularism

Bl. Cardinal Newman once said of secularism, "The secular world seeks to set the state up as a substitute for Almighty God." He later added, "Those of the religion of this world try to make life more carefree and expedient for the preservation of human institutions. They indulge themselves in what is beautiful, while casting aside what is severe. They give us no solutions because you can't get rid of vice and wickedness simply by human expedients." To them, religion is merely a value system to soften the impact of the world's harsh realities, or a self-centered ideology for a person to get the best he can out of himself."

But the thought process that so infuriated Newman were the views on subjectivism and relativism espoused by the secular modernists. He said in his essay, *The Infidelity of the Future*, "They teach that there is no real truth or doctrine in religion. It is merely a matter of each person's subjective perception or opinion. If there is no objective truth, then it follows that one doctrine is as good as another. No one is answerable for his opinions, and may safely trust in himself, with no need for Church guidance. They insist that man is the master of his own destiny because of his superior intellect, entitling him to even re-create Almighty God in man's own image!" Newman said of his time, "Man has discarded any notion of the unseen or supernatural because of his religious enslavement to his senses!"

PART III - THE RISE OF SECULARISM IN OUR WESTERN CULTURE

Now I should like to pick up where Newman left off by applying his analysis of secularism in a more timely fashion, as it has had a definite impact on our present day crisis in faith in our Church. Secularism is nothing more than anti-religious worldliness at odds with God's Kingdom. For at the heart of his humanity lies mankind's malignant inclination toward self-centeredness. This tendency toward self-preference leading to self-exaltation gained even greater momentum since the period of the "Enlightenment" in continental Europe. Arising out of the French Revolution in the early 1800's, it was a philosophical movement characterized by rationalism, skepticism, and empiricism in both social and political thought, and directed precisely at undermining religion. Since then mankind, in varying degrees has sought to assume God's sovereignty unto

himself.

In this essay on "Modernism - our Crisis in Faith," I will also attempt to shed some light on just what secularism is by analyzing four (4) of its major component parts, or pillars supporting its ideology. The first pillar or mainstay of secularism represents an attack upon the concept of "Truth," as applied to our daily living. The second a distorted definition of the concept of "Freedom," and thirdly an artificially contrived interpretation of the traditional meaning of "Equality." The fourth and last principal component of secularism is the introduction of what the liberal modernists call the "Doctrine of the Separation of Church and State." Although the title sounds reasonable enough, the words in its title were specifically chosen to disguise and camouflage its true meaning. It was designed to banish religion from all facets of public life, in order to make room for a more secular society.

A. The Secularist's Denial of "Truth"

How do the secularists seek to dismantle, as they must, this vital and transforming concept of "truth," thereby diminishing the quality of faith in our people? Truth, correctly defined is nothing more than God's revelation of Himself to humanity, as spoken by His Word, the Son of God. But so many in our secular world strenuously maintain that there is no such thing as objective truth or factual authenticity outside of ourselves! Truth, they say is only what a person subjectively perceives it to be. It is merely a matter of personal opinion or random choices. As a result, everything becomes relative, with no fixed systems, and no standards to guide our conduct. In a spiritual sense, there are no ups and downs and no fixed measuring points.

What modern man views to be direction is merely based on worldly expediency. Within such a context, our sense of morality and the deadly nature of sin ceases to be of any concern. And each person has a right to determine his/her own standards of behavior without Church interference! When life finds greater meaning and satisfaction by conforming to social convention, then man's thinking becomes reduced to his/her own subjective and superficial convictions. And the less depth the better!

Its practical effects are that this type of society soon becomes dismantled and lost! As a result of this tidal wave of liberalism, subjectivism, and relativism, our culture has deteriorated to a point best described as a "culture of death!" It has left in its wake the senseless killing of over fifty million of the unborn, the systematic undermining of the sanctity of marriage and of human sexuality, and a giant wave of permissiveness which has had devastating effects on both our family life and our human identity. With our identity all but lost, our society has gravitated toward more pleasurable distractions and artificial stimulants to fill the void; stimulants such as alcohol, drugs, and irresponsible sex.

As a consequence of this deteriorating sense of God, the family, and Christian values, we have seen a corresponding increase in incidents of extreme violence, both on our streets and in our homes. Today our public school children are taught the politics of the godless, as the religion of the future! Novelties now serve a

substitute for happiness. Political correctness now serves as a substitute for common sense. Our Crisis in Faith is therefore rooted in our Crisis in Truth! Newman once observed that "Christianity would certainly have been reduced to mere moralism, if no message which surpasses man's thought and actions were discernable."

B. Secularism's Misuse of the Concept of Freedom

The most accurate definition of the word "Freedom" is the God given ability or capacity to do good and avoid evil. To seek to do what is morally right. More accurately, the capacity to both perceive and acknowledge the truth about humanity's true relationship with God and one another. Secondly, to then seek to do what is right by these relationships. It involves the desire, through divine grace to choose the good, despite more attractive alternatives and pleasureable options. The practical effect of one who humbly chooses to do God's will over more pleasurable alternatives is his transformation to newness of life; his transformation into the very likeness of Christ. Only then does he attain true freedom!

Unfortunately, our worldly minded secularists have sought to re-define its true meaning to bolster their own liberal agenda, also contributing to our crisis in faith. Therefore, freedom to the worldly minded results from being set free from truth, set free from Church authority that propounds it, and set free from religious conformity. They say that the Church intrudes upon modern notions of free will and self-expression by imposing archaic rules and moral restrictions on man's conduct and behavior.

In our contemporary culture the definition of the word "freedom" has been altered to justify unrestrained, unbridled, and often irresponsible license for self-assertion, whose only goal is self-exaltation! It amounts to undisciplined and limitless permissiveness in our behavior, which seeks to overshadow God's sovereignty. Furthermore, to the secularist, self-interest is most often disguised as a right, and always undertaken in the name of freedom! This brand of freedom inevitably leads to serious levels of sexual promiscuity in our society. Is it any wonder why the numbers of unwanted pregnancies and abortions have sky-rocketed? Don't these facts reveal why the pro-choice people have become so protective of their ideology? When a person becomes immersed in sin and self-preference, he then becomes addicted to the self destructive and unbreakable habit-forming properties of sin. As a result he loses the element of freedom of choice, by compromising his ability to choose the good. So by embracing his own brand of freedom, doesn't he actually become it's slave? Freedom can never mean that a person can do whatever he pleases, because it always involves the ability to do what he should!

C. Secularism's re-defining meaning of "equality"

The third essential element or pillar supporting secularism is the fabricated and artificially contrived view of the word "equality." The traditional and accepted definition of the word "equality" as found in Webster is a "balance of similar objects, things that are the same or alike." Of late, however, the secular

movement, in order to bolster its liberal agenda has seen fit to artificially refashion the meaning of equality by blending things together which are definitely not the same or alike, as if they were. This major deviation from the norm occurred when various states, at the instigation of many liberal progressives saw fit to change the definition of traditional marriage, so as to include same sex or gay unions. The reasoning was that the partners in gay unions, based on their concept of "equality," should be afforded the same rights as those in traditional marriages. And those who, even for legitimate reasons, would deny its equality with traditional marriages were publicly branded as being unsympathetic, bigoted, and homophobic! They were charged with practicing unlawful discrimination by denying them their basic civil rights! Therefore, many fell into line because of the seriousness of these charges.

The notion of "Equality," on its surface at least sounds good. But at this juncture, an important distinction must be made, with reference to the standard definition of equality. There are many things in this world, which on their surface at least appear to the same, when clearly they are not! For example, the nature of man and woman. While they are indeed equal in terms of their respective stature, dignity, and value before God and humanity, still they are clearly not the same. They differ in their physical, emotional, and spiritual characteristics. And this is as it should be. Each gender possesses its own essential distinctiveness and special perfection, replicating the image and wisdom of God. In Genesis we read, "And God created woman from man to be his perfect partner." Distinct as to their respective genders, they are joined by God Himself in marriage for life, inaugurating the human family.

And right from the beginning, the family formed the basic building blocks supporting all civilized societies - until now! By saying those of the same sex are the same as men and women in traditional marriages and therefore should enjoy equal status is to defy the laws of nature and common sense! My point is that it is the differences in their gender that sets them apart and makes them different from same sex unions. It is the differences in their gender that prepares their children to develop their own emotional identity and parenting skills. When joined together as husband and wife, because of their differences, each supplies what the other lacks, thereby broadening their mutual horizons, their personal perfection! Distinct as to gender, they are endowed with the capacity to express self-giving love and to pro-create children, in accordance with God's will. Traditional marriages require persons of the opposite sex. Those who comprise gay marriages are limited to one and the same sex! How then, can gay marriages possibly be considered the same and thereby equal to traditional marriages?

D. The Concept of Separation of Church and State

The fourth component of the Modernist's agenda or pillar supporting the structure of secularism is their frequent use of an expression borrowed from Thomas Jefferson called the doctrine of "Separation of Church and State." While we hear this expression frequently today, it has only appeared on the scene in the US

relatively recently.

The First Amendment to our Constitution guarantees religious liberty to all our citizens. Our founding fathers wisely sought to prevent our government from intruding upon our religious institutions, or suppressing our religious beliefs. Furthermore, the anti-establishment clause would prevent our newly formed government from establishing an officially sanctioned state religion, as was the case in England with the Anglican Church. Many came here fleeing from its persecutions!

Lately however, the liberal progressives have seen fit to use this expression of "Separation of Church and State" in a different and most sinister way, to violate and subvert the true meaning of these constitutional protections. Indeed, to use this doctrine to actually inhibit religious freedom - to do exactly that which the first Amendment expressly forbade! In order to give it greater popular appeal, while disguising and camouflaging its true meaning, the secularists borrowed this expression from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to a convention of Southern Baptists in New Haven, CT. in 1803. Some of its leaders expressed deep concerns to Jefferson that the new government seemed to officially elevate the Congregational Church as its official state religion. Jefferson wrote back re-assuring them that the new federal government would never violate the anti-establishment clause, by setting up an official state religion. To best illustrate his reasoning, Jefferson used this expression of "Separation of Church and State" to make his point, because it appeared to be consistent with our first amendment protections. In fact, he borrowed it from a patriotic cry arising out of the aftermath of the French Revolution, which was being waged during his presidency. And this expression was probably familiar to him because of its popularity among the French, our closest ally.

It actually served as the rallying cry to crush the French monarchy, replicating our own revolution by dissolving our ties with the British monarchy. But, what Jefferson didn't realize was that it also served as the justification to crush the Catholic Church in France, which was seen as being closely allied with the monarchy. This doctrine, therefore was applied for entirely different reasons from those intended by Jefferson! The original purpose of the doctrine of "separation of church and state" was to create a totally secular state and society by first isolating and then separating or severing the Church from the affairs of the state, thereby freeing the state from any of Her so-called "adverse influences."

At the heart of this patriotic movement was the motivating principle of "Laicite" or "secularism!" In a burst of patriotic fury this expression served as their rallying cry to create a totally new secular state. And if "Laicite" or "secularism" was their goal, then this newly devised doctrine of "Separation of Church and State" would now provide the means for its attainment. This liberal, secular movement was initially spear-headed by the recognized French philosopher Voltaire. His rallying cry, "Ecracy L'Infame" was heard throughout France. Literally translated, it meant "Crush the Infamous One," which was directed not only at the king and nobility, but also at the Pope and the Catholic Church. Because the Church was considered closely allied with the nobility, the revolutionaries considered Her an enemy of the state as well. Their strategy was

to first denounce and demonize the Church, blaming Her for all the evils in France. And then to separate, or more to the point, segregate the Church from society, thereby preventing Her from exerting any further influence over the affairs of the state or its citizens. When fully implemented, the Church was not only separated from the state, but was also totally excluded from the domain of all political thought. In fact, its influence was extinguished completely! By reason of this doctrine, all people had a right to be free from the Church's so-called antiquated moral demands. Although it excluded the Church from society, this doctrine did nothing to prevent bold governmental intrusions into its religious practices. Because the Church was considered an enemy of France, serious reprisals were justified for "the people's protection." And this doctrine of separation of Church and state soon became established law in France!

When applied, thousands of clergy and religious lost their lives for rejecting the compulsory oath to the new government, called "The First Republic." It then withdrew recognition of all the Catholic universities. All religious orders were commanded to recognize the new government or face dissolution. All religious instruction in public schools was suppressed and most churches and monasteries were burnt to the ground. And all religious signs and symbols were forbidden. "Laicité" or secularism is still robustly proclaimed even up to this day by many French politicians.

When the state assumed mastery and sovereignty over the Church, it necessarily had to assume its role as the people's new provider and social guardian. The state would now provide for all the humanitarian needs of its people, especially the poor and disenfranchised in society. So out of the secularist movement, the principles and ideology behind "socialism" or the "welfare state" were born. Aren't we witnessing this same thought process today? Which leads us to the obvious question whether these charitable concerns of the state should be best left to our churches and charitable organizations generally to avoid an environment of dependency and ultimate subjugation?

These radically secular, liberal views spread rather quickly throughout all the rest of Europe. And this anti-clerical philosophy soon found its way to the US in the early 60's, together with its closely guarded, secret ideology! Therefore, is it any wonder that our modern-day secular progressive remains steadfast in terms of applying this same definition of separation of Church and state, as he did in 19th century France? True to its founding principles, it still proclaims that religious institutions must be excluded from the affairs of the state, thereby preventing any moral criticism thereof. But that directive still does not preclude the state from making serious and bold incursions into Church practices, thereby subordinating the Church to the interests of the state. We have recently witnessed this device effectively deployed, depriving the Catholic Church as well as other religious institutions from exercising their God-given rights and constitutionally protected religious freedoms! These governmental incursions began with state funded abortions. Then banning of school prayer or other religious displays, even assailing the statement "under God" in our pledge of allegiance. Recently the Department of Health and Human Services

required that all religious institutions including the Catholic Church provide coverage for contraception, sterilization, and abortive drugs in their private health care plans. As of late, many people of good will and religious conviction have become well defined targets of their anti-religious hostility!

Another glaring example of secular, anti-God intrusions occurred when the memorial to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was erected on the National Mall in Washington, DC. It contained 14 inscriptions of his most famous quotations. And not one of them contained any reference to God. Can you just imagine how difficult it must have been for it's designers to find 14 quotes from Dr. King without any reference to the Almighty? Ironically, just a few feet away on the Jefferson Memorial we read, "Can the liberties of a nation be considered secure, when we have removed any conviction that these liberties are a gift to us from God?" The importance of religious liberty in the minds of all Americans, which the first amendment sought to protect was underscored in George Washington's farewell address, "Religious worship and the practice of Christian morality which flows from it are the 'Indispensable Supports' to our political prosperity." He also warned us that "reason and experience doth forbid us to expect that national morality can be retained without religion!" When they banished religion from the public domain, didn't they also expel any sense of morality and accountability as well? Subsequently, John Adams was quoted as saying, "A truly successful representative government can survive only when its citizens are both well informed and firmly grounded in religious principles!"

PART IV. - Conclusion

Newman once said of his time, "Man has discarded any notion of the unseen or supernatural because of his religious enslavement to his senses!" Unfortunately, without the defense of authentic faith and firm doctrine on the part of many Catholics, this worldly ideology has successfully compromised both the Church and our culture. Newman suggested that Christianity has found itself in a life/death struggle with secular, anti-religious forces on the one hand, and so many indifferent Catholic Christians on the other. Both movements he called the "great multi-headed beast." (symbol of Satan in the Book of Revelation) The Church, Newman wrote, "Ought to combat the spirit of Modernism by making use of its "infallible teaching authority" to throw back the immense energy of the ARROGANT, CAPRICIOUS, AND UNTRUSTWORTHY INTELLECT." The problems Newman encountered in the Church of his day are still very much with us today, leaving our western civilization plummeting in steady decline because these problems remain largely unaddressed and therefore, unresolved!

Finally, it was Cardinal Newman, living in 19th century Victorian England, who was the first to witness this dark, menacing figure of secularism appearing on the horizon. His essay, "The Infidelity of the future" from which this treatise was inspired, represents Bl. John Henry Cardinal Newman's "Precious Gift of Untold Value" to our modern world.

PART VI - PRACTICING THE NEW EVANGELIZATION
WITHIN OUR SECULAR CULTURE

Bl. Cardinal Newman in his sermon entitled "The Infidelity of the Future" attempted to evangelize a society, which at that time was drifting toward worldly skepticism and religious indifference; warning its members of the intrinsic evils associated with the rise of secularism. And his premonitions were not only limited to his own time and place but ours as well. Recently, this insidious movement has crept into our own contemporary culture, as witnessed by vast numbers of our laity, not only abandoning their practice of the faith, but the entire concept of religion as well! I use the term "insidious" because most people have only a foggy notion of its essential features and character. In addition, most people have failed to associate our deteriorating cultural climate and crisis in faith with secularism - failed, as it were, to connect the dots!

Deeply concerned about the tragic loss of so many souls adversely coerced by the fallacies of secularism, I've attempted in my essay to pick up where Newman left off, applying his findings to our present-day infidelity (faithlessness), our present-day crisis in faith. And Newman's appeal for evangelizing souls unduly prejudiced and swayed by the evils of secular worldliness truly represents his most precious gift to our modern world!

As a counter measure to combat this crisis in faith, the Church has recently re-instituted a strategy or series of measures called "The New Evangelization." And what is this strategy, this plan of action? In October of 2012, Pope Benedict XVI called for a World Synod of Bishops in response to the "profound crisis in faith" which the Church was experiencing. Again as a counter measure, he inaugurated a special year of reflection for re-discovering our faith through a process he called the "New Evangelization for the transmission of our Christian faith." He further described it as a "summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord."

The Holy Father noted in his homily three complementary aspects of the New Evangelization as follows:

1. The mission of ordinary evangelization within the confines of our Christian communities.
2. The mission of announcing the Gospel to non-Christians.
3. The re-evangelization of the baptized, who have drifted away from the practice of the faith.

To attain the above, he advised that in practicing the new evangelization it is "essential that we first re-discover and reflect upon the meaning of our own Catholic faith, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and minds, before we hope to share Christ and his Gospel with others." The Pope added, "We seek to grow in an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, as well as greater understanding of the teachings and principles of our Catholic faith. In doing so, we will become better prepared to participate in the work of the new evangelization. In addition, Catholic social teaching helps us to form our consciences, allowing us to see how our faith can transform the public square for the common good of all. Our Catholic social doctrines: the right to life, role of the family, and religious liberty articulates how the Church relates to our society, even in the face of growing discord in both our culture

and political landscape." The Pope concluded, "We as Catholics are called to learn, reflect upon, and live the Gospel message, consistent with Christ's own example. We are then called to share this 'Good News' with others."

I've found that witnessing the faith while encountering the first group or the "ordinary evangelization in our own Christian community" readily achievable. But I have experienced serious opposition and major resistance in the latter two categories of people; either non-Christians or Catholics who have drifted away from the practice of the faith. How do we practice our Christian responsibility of evangelizing those in the latter two groups, representing, by far, the largest portion of those described by the Pope? How do we practice this responsibility, when almost uniformly they refuse to even discuss the subject of religion? Most of them protest that the teachings of the Church are not politically correct or relevant - out of step with modern worldly realities. For most, returning to the practice of the faith is therefore, decidedly out of the question! I've also found most to be terribly defensive or even down-right hostile about this prospect, insisting that the practice of their faith is a private affair, insinuating "I'll do it my way!" Some even viewed my efforts at evangelization as humiliating them by questioning, at least in their minds, the quality of their moral character, their sense of goodness, or self-worth. Others considered my efforts as a personal affront for even choosing to question their belief system! Their usual abrupt responses intimated that I should mind my own business or with an air of progressive superiority, "your religion is completely out-of-step with science, reality, and modern-day thinking!"

So, how then should we go about the business of evangelizing them, as we must? While writing my essay on the dangers of secularism, it occurred to me that before attempting to witness and share the blessings of our faith with those in the latter two groups, we must first seek to understand the principles and ideology supporting this secular, progressive movement - seek to understand the rationale and motivations that lie behind their attitudes of religious apathy, indifference, or in most cases, down-right hostility toward religion! We must first explore why they think as they do before attempting to change their attitudes on the subject.

The secular movement was initially a philosophical phenomenon seeking to undermine religion, but it has since taken on both political and cultural characteristics. As a result, most people are totally unaware that their attitudes and outlook have been dramatically influenced or adversely prejudiced by its brazen, liberal ideology. Those who disagree with them, in their minds, are decidedly outside the political mainstream of prevailing or commonly accepted thought! And at the heart of their objections is the liberal notion that the Church seeks to impose its archaic rules and obsolete regulations upon them, best characterized by "Thou shalt not!" To them the Church's efforts at evangelization amounts to a blatant intrusion or flagrant meddling into their personal affairs as well as interfering with their constitutional rights of free expression!

Before attempting to engage this demonic enemy of the Church, and neutralize its armament, (Newman considered secularism the embodiment of the anti-Christ) we must first investigate its nature,

probe its inner workings and principles. Again, most don't realize that they have actually been brainwashed by these prevailing liberal, modernist views, leaving them outside the mainstream of right reason. My point is we can't connect with those coerced by secularism or bring about some meaningful dialogue with them unless we first attempt to dissect its principles, to uncover and expose its flaws and deceptions! So rather than pointing a disparaging finger of reproach at them, doesn't it make more sense to re-direct their attention to the disastrous consequences and obvious atrocities secularism has visited upon our Church, our culture, and our nation?

Our new Holy Father, Pope Francis recently focused the Church's attention on the evils of secularism during his recent trip to Assisi. (the first Pope to visit Assisi in 800 yrs) And he used this occasion to emphasize the very real dangers of secularism. The Pope recalled the image of his name-sake divesting himself of his worldly clothing which he considered to be an impediment to true spiritual growth and loving service to the Lord. In like manner, the Holy Father suggested that the Church must also divest Herself from the spirit of worldliness which has been plaguing Her as of late. "The Church," he went on to say, "must divest Herself today of a very grave danger which threatens every person in the Church...the danger of secular worldliness which leads us to vanity, arrogance, and pride. May the Lord give us courage to divest ourselves of the spirit of the world, which is leprosy, it is a cancer on society...it is Jesus' enemy!"

In conclusion, may I say that the contents of Newman's exposé on secularism will convincingly speak for itself. To my way of thinking this approach is the only instrument capable of breaking down the walls of defiance which modern man has erected between himself and God's kingdom! And I sincerely believe that by first exposing the intrinsic evils of secularism, holding it up to the light of day, we will then begin to break through the twisted belief systems of so many of our spiritually impoverished brethren. And who indeed is best equipped to direct us in this spiritually enriching effort than Newman himself, having been personally responsible for the conversions of thousands to the faith! Furthermore, don't these graced efforts perfectly reflect the salvific mission of Christ Himself, restoring the world of His day and ours from its deeply embedded affinity for self-preference and worldliness?

As we read in Ephesians 2:13, "Now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ. It is He who is our peace, and who made the two of us one, by breaking down the barriers of hostility that kept us apart." Amen.

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