



Human Life, Sacred or For Sale?



How do we evaluate our culture in our Archdiocese today? By culture, I define it as the prevailing mentality of our total population, particularly government leadership together with media and entertainment and the internet. What do we accept as the right way to guide our married life, our business life, our recreational and entertainment life? Do we feel our values of faith in God, honesty, truth, and respect for life, even good manners, have been abandoned all around us? If we cannot see ourselves in this western culture, cannot identify what is not Christian but destructive of our values and cannot recognize the causes that generate the flood of this negative culture, we could be spiritually drowned.

Recently, in Rome, at a film festival entitled “On Human Life”, Cardinal Poupard focused on recent technology innovations and the three beneficiaries, (1) the communication media, (2) the film industry and (3) the internet. All these are fundamental forces shaping the culture we live in. We cannot dismiss them but we must understand them. The modern media and Hollywood claim to report on and entertain dramatically our cultural components and their various diversities. We should see them as a business driven to make money, lots of money, as corporations growing in size and power and concentrated in smaller numbers of owners who produce a dominating influence on public opinion.

Image-makers and spin-doctors cleverly shade our language to change the meaning of words – such as “abort”, meaning to kill, becoming a therapeutic procedure meaning “health restoration”. The media and the film industry have made their moral decisions and shamelessly flog them. The internet, while serving many

good causes, has spawned a hitherto unknown generation of infected citizens in the business of pornography, “invading houses, schools and libraries and unthought of morally weak adults, preying on children being sexually abused to make movies to make money for the unknown predators”. There is some comfort to learn that police in England and America have recently uncovered and charged some seven thousand individuals accused and prosecuted hopefully with deterring penalties.

Do our political leaders not sense the terrorism attacks by this industry of filmmakers and image-makers, selling sex, and abusing the children and youth of our nations? In Advent, the preacher of the Holy Father’s Retreat spoke of images. Father R. Cantalamessa suggested society might wisely substitute “image”, the photo image for meal, as something to give up for penance. “More than anything written the “image” has become society’s privileged vehicle for completely separating human sexuality from the meaning and purpose God gave it.” In their thinking, sexuality is a recreational entertainment and is for sale. With increasing frequency, more and more TV programs, movies and advertisements are basing their theme on sexual relationships such as dating where modesty is unheard of, permissive behaviour glorified and self-control abandoned. Pictures or poses for these pictures always focus on sexual parts exploited for maximum exposure to entice viewers of every age, to get our attention and to flog their products, in ads that now make up 50% of total time of the “show”. Again this modern media of the image, for news or entertainment, depends on the photo. It is a thousand times more powerful than the word and if it is not positive, honest and respectful of moral values, it can be destructive by the same multiple of millennium.