Secularity and the Gospel
Being Missionaries to Our Own Children
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Session One ...

Part One – Secularity and the Gospel – Being Missionaries to our own children

Outline

1. Highlight the problem
2. Defining Secularity
3. The Complex Face of Secularity
4. Secularity as the Child of Judeo-Christianity
5. Trying to be Missionaries within Secularity

II. Highlighting the problem

i. A story – “Being a missionary, by leaving the 99”

ii. The problem

- Emptying and graying church
- The growing marginalization of the churches in the mainstream culture
- The reluctance of so many of our own children to walk the path of explicit faith with us

III. Defining Secularity

A) On Secularity

i. What is it? Towards a definition

- Secularity as “Modernity”
- What is Mondernity, Modernism?

- Four eras in Western Intellectual/Philosophical history

- 0–400 AD–The Ancient World
- 400-1600-The Medieval World
- 1600-1950s-The Modern World (Secular)
- 1950s-The Post Modern World

- What defines each?

- The Ancient World-Prior to St. Augustine (354-430)-Divine Authority is the final arbiter of all things and the principle around which life is organized-but it largely animistic, polytheistic, and prone to superstition.
The Medieval World-St. Augustine to Rene
Descartes (1596-1650)-Divine Authority, purged of
polytheism, animism, and superstition and maily
wedded to the Judeo-Christian tradition becomes the
final arbiter of everything and the organizing principle
for common life.

Modernity, the Modern World-From Rene Descartes
to the 1950s-Rationality, critical reason, becomes the
final arbiter for all things and the organizing principle
for common life.

Post-Modernity, Post-Modernism-from 1950s today-
Equal skepticism of both divine authority and
critical reason as the final arbiter and the organizing
principle for common life

- Hence today we have four kinds of people meeting within the
  same generation
  - Pre-Modern
  - Modern-“Secular”
  - Post-Modern
  - Anti-Modern

IV. The Complex Face of Secularity

- Neither fully a culture of death nor a culture of life e.g. The country of Holland
- Is more post-ecclisial” than “post-Christian”
- Various generations within the same generation
- Inside of sea of non-secularity

V. Secularity as the Child of Judeo-Christianity

i. Is the child of Judeo-Christianity
ii. Is our child, not our enemy-the opposite of secularity is not the church but the Taliban.
iii. But is often an adolescent, grandiose, belligerent child, not bad but not finished.-an
    image-the17 year old!

Session Two ...

IV. Trying to be Missionaries inside of Secularity

a. The essential Catholic Approach – A biblical and “catholic” attitude towards secularity

- “Love the world, as God loves it”
- Love the world in spite of its opposition and sin
- Be in the world, but not of the world
- Be careful that in our challenging the world we are not fighting God
- Remember the Catholic principle: The world is flawed but not corrupt.
- Live in hope and faith in the Gospel: “The Gospel can stand up to secularity!”
B) Struggling to be Missionaries Inside of this

1) Being non-combative and non-defensive – this is our child not our enemy.
2) Witnessing to a new maturity
3) In solidarity with the poor, vulnerable, dis-privileged
4) Trying to re-inflame the romantic imagination
5) Giving special witness to fidelity
6) Carrying the tension between love of the world and love of God
7) Having a wide, Catholic, inclusive embrace.
8) Being a prophetic voice within secularity

*For forgiveness and reconciliation
*For unity beyond ideology and polarization
*For the non-violence of God
*For simplicity of life
*For the integrity of creation

9) Giving nuanced witness to both the “Kenotic” and the “Triumphal” Christ
10) Re-imagining our ecclesial structures
11) Living in prayer and hope

Session Three …

Part Two – Sowing the Seed within Secularity Today – The Soil, The Sowers, and the Sower

Outline

i) The Soil – The Western context
ii) The Sowers – At their worst and at their best – Liberal and Conservative approaches
iii) THE SOWER – Some perspectives from Jesus

I. The Soil – The Western Context today – In terms of its receptivity and it resistance

• Its receptivity –
  o an interest in spirituality
  o the staying power of God, religion, and church
  o some major moral gains – racism, sexism, tolerance

• Its resistance
  o Is not friendly to the churches
    😂 Emptying, graying churches
    🌺 a growing marginalization of the churches by the culture
strong anti-ecclesial and anti-clerical streams inside the culture
the church perceived as old, tired, tired, and lacking
adolescent grandiosity inside of secularity

- The death of public life in the culture, fueled by an excessive individuality.
- The culture itself as a “narcotic” – its powerful intoxicating elements
  - Lack of contemplativeness and interiority
  - A conspiracy against interiority

II. The Sowers – At their worst and at their best – Liberal and Conservative Approaches

- Two taboo subjects, two jokes – religion and politics
- Moral: God isn’t liberal and God isn’t conservative

A) Conservatives at their worst: “Mean-spirited, narrow, and grandiose”

- see secularity as the enemy
- sees secular culture as “the culture of death”
- sees secular culture as godless and “a tyranny of relativity”
- its instinct is to protect, circumscribe, re-entrench, reduce all ambiguity, have clarity trump all else

- Its litmus test – abortion and sexuality
- Prone to – fundamentalism and intolerance
- Its major fault – mean-spirited and “power-prone”, solve things by authority
- God is a hammer!

B) Liberals at their worst – “Naïve, adolescent, and arrogant”

- sees secularity as having the moral high ground
- sees secularity as the exclusive agent in having brought about the liberation of human freedom,
  freeing it from animism, superstition, and false authority
- sees secularity as being the exclusive agent in the struggle against racism, sexism, and other forms of inequality and social injustice.

- Its instinct: Open up everything, there are no taboos
- “Its litmus test – “Pro-choice and Gay marriage”

- (Complaint of a young Democrat in Boston: “In the Democratic party today you can openly say you’ve had an abortion or are gay, but you can’t say you are a Christian who takes the bible seriously.”)

- Prone to – secular fundamentalism, and to be blind to its own roots.
- Its major fault – Intellectual intimidation and adolescent grandiosity
God should be excluded from public discourse.

C) Conservaties – at their best (instinct)

Its insight...

i) Energy isn’t friendly
   - Taboos exist for a reason
   - It is not good just to go into dark places because we can

ii) Every kingdom needs to be protected
iii) Sexuality is not unimportant and is not an exempt area and the protection of the family is critical
iv) There are some absolutes
v) Deep archetypal structures should not be tampered with irresponsibly

D) Liberals – at their best (instinct)

i) Freedom is a divine gift
   - has been bought at a great historical price
   - should never be denigrated in God’s name

ii) There are equal risks in being too safe.
iii) Historically the church and the culture have been too anti-erotic, and too unfair to non-white races and to women
iv) The opposite of secularity is not the church, but the Taliban.
v) Catholicity means a wide, inclusive embrace

III. THE SOWER – Some perspectives from Jesus.

i) Evangelization today as a call for a new maturity
   - deeper freedom calls for deeper maturity
   - Jesus as exemplar – “To go into all dark place, but not sin and take God’s light and grace there”

ii) The challenge

   • To hold a great tension – to love the world and to love God
     - Teilhard de Chardin as an example
     - To hold “energy” and “wisdom” in proper tension
   • To stand with Jesus on the Boarders of Samaria
   • Step forward rather than to look over our shoulders – You are the one that you’ve been waiting for! Be the one to change the water into wine
   • Witness to hope – not just wishful thinking
   • Live out a more personal mysticism – and an affective relationship with God.
   • Be FOR what you are more than AGAINST what you are against
   • Be compassionate, gracious, and understanding, even as you hold your moral ground
   • Witness to health – calmness, life, gratitude, forgiveness, and humor
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