



## THE 'WHATEVER' GENERATION

*Yea, we ask you O Christ our God, Confirm the Foundation of the Church*  
Fr. Pishoy Salama St. Mark church, Toronto, Canada

In a recent discussion at a youth meeting about the discrepancies between different religions, a youth member said that it was suggested by her World Religions teacher at school that all religions are the same; they just express themselves differently. When she started to speak up by stating that opposite teachings do not amount to the same conclusions, one of her classmates looked at her and said **"O, WHATEVER!"**. The 'Whatever' attitude among the youth is reflective of a generation that hardly searches or is even interested in seeking any truths, but rather conforms to norms in society that may be appealing or attractive. It is a way of ending the discussion without reaching any conclusions and it leaves the ultimate decision to every person's opinion, rather than an agreed upon standard.

The Church is the bride of Christ whom He has *"loved and gave Himself up for her"* (Eph 5:25). This community of believers is very precious in God's eyes and He has built it on the Rock (Matt 16:18), and confirmed it in His faith (2 Thes 1:4). In the first century, before early Christians could own permanent buildings, the reference to the Church merely indicated a group of people who believed in our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior and Son of God. Thus, the Church acquired human attributes since it was, after all, about the people. The Church had ears (Acts 11:22), prayed (Acts 12:5), sent and welcomed people (Acts 15:3, 4), decided on matters (Acts 15:22), could be strengthened (1 Cor 14:26) and persecuted (1 Cor 15:9). This little flock obtained a marvelous conviction of faith and a passion to live a righteous life following their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They were willing to meet anywhere – underground, in people's houses (Rom 16:5, Phil 1:2), in prisons (Acts 12:1-5) or be scattered (Acts 8:2). They took Christ with them in their hearts and were willing to face discrimination and

harassment knowing that their reward was great in heaven.

Throughout the centuries, the Church confronted both heresies and persecutions, and did so gracefully and elegantly. When we look back at the eras of Nero, Diocletian and the Islamic conquest, we remember our grandparents who gladly offered their lives and shed their blood so that the Church may live. We commit to memory the fight of the heroes of faith who defended the Church against the heresies of Arius and Nestorius. Many generations have passed by and the Church is still as strong as it has even been.

Yet, today we face a new challenge – a virus that is infecting people without even realizing that it exists. There is an enemy that is slowly creeping into people's lives, and unless we are alerted to it early enough, it could potentially harm what God has been building in the past twenty centuries. First we need to define some terms:

**Post-Modernism:** is the decline of any absolute truths – the creation of relativity – the lack of purpose and direction in historical change – the fragmentation and division of all subjects into a variety of perspectives with no answers and no agreements – the fragmentation of cultural forms into a "playful celebration" of chaos<sup>1</sup>.

**Post-Modern Spirituality:** is the belief that all religions require assumptive reasoning and are therefore equal. It is the judgment of right and wrong upon agreed standards but recognizing that those standards may change – The celebration of diversity and not one particular set of beliefs – the belief that other gods and cultures can produce ultimate peace and oneness to their believers.

**Pluralism:** is the belief that reality ultimately includes many different kinds of things; it is the supposition that there are many independent sources of value and the



acceptance of a multiplicity of groups with competing interests.

We now live in a small world, what people are calling the “global village”. Globalization has broken down all the borders and barriers between countries and dissolved the uniqueness of every culture with its values, customs and religions. We can now buy a Big Mac in New Delhi, India and indulge in a fine Indian cuisine in downtown Toronto. Multiculturalism has also been on the rise. If anyone visits any major North American or European city, minority groups are highly visible and the variety of ethnic backgrounds, customs and religions is increasingly noticeable. Canada was one of the first countries around the world to encourage multiculturalism and to pass an act for its preservation and enhancement. In the midst of tolerance and pluralism, many Christians have lost their loyalty to their own religion. The Markham City Centre chapel in Ontario has been dedicated to the “great spirit” in a multi-faith gathering. Chapels in hospitals and public institutions are being renamed “prayer” or “meditation” rooms. No one can argue against tolerance, the freedom of religions or the equality of all human beings under the law. Yet we need to reconsider as a Church, the community of the faithful, if we are diluting our own faith to make everyone else feel better or even to make ourselves no different than others? We need to stand strong against the multiplicity of teachings which do not subscribe to our Orthodox Christian values. I do not see the atheists backing away from proclaiming that God does not exist, neither are Moslems refuting from confessing that Jesus our Lord was only a mere prophet, nor are Buddhists lacking faith in the Nirvana (eternal rest) through meditation and physical exercises.

Postmodern spirituality has confused people into thinking that all roads may ultimately lead to the same destination. Some people may accuse the Church of being intolerant in proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the only way. Yet, this is what we believe and this is what we confess and there isn't a force on earth that would persuade us otherwise. Our Lord Jesus said: “**I am**

***the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me***” (John 14:6).

The total number of people who identified themselves as Christians living in the USA decreased from 86.4% in 1990 to 76.7% in 2001, while the number of people who said that they had no religion increased from 13.1 million to 27.5 million during the same period <sup>2</sup>. Therefore, we are already beginning to see a shift in the way people are starting to lose their faith and deny their Christianity. The next generation of Christians is the one that will determine the future Church – its success and what will it look like. The challenge that is set before us this: Will we be able to carry the Church and the faith of our forefathers and hand it over to our children without altering or changing it, or will we crumble to pressures from society and false teachings? This challenge is not only the responsibility of the church clergy nor is it the task of Sunday School servants alone but rather, it is the responsibility of each and every believer whom Christ has loved and asked not to be ashamed of Him.

Now is the time to increase our belief and spirituality; this way we can always be ready to give a defense of our faith (1 Pet 3:15). It is necessary to live a righteous life in the midst of a generation that has strayed away from the true faith and adopted the wisdom of the world not discerning its own eternity. What would be a better place to start than the family unit which has always been the back bone for preserving the Christian faith through out all generations? Through meditations, discussions, and prime example; the family will continue to be a partner with the Church to ensure that our infallible faith continues to flourish.

Let us pray this litany whole-heartedly, as you and I join hand in hand and fulfill our calling:

Yea, we ask You O Christ our God; **confirm the foundation of the church** in this generation and forever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> ([www.hewett.norfolk.sch.uk](http://www.hewett.norfolk.sch.uk))

<sup>2</sup> [www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com)