

***Twenty-Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)
October 9, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph***

“Never before, perhaps, in the whole history of Christianity has she been so intellectually impoverished for want of good sound intellectual opposition as she is at the present time. And if today there are not nearly so many dogmas defined as in the early ages of the Church, it is because there is less controversy – and less thinking.”
(Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, *Old Errors and New Labels* p.4)

In his book, Old Errors and New Labels, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen wrote that our Roman Catholic Church loves controversy. Even though this book was first copyrighted in 1931, the logic and principles it espouses continue to be relevant in our time, roughly a century later. Permit me to offer you Archbishop Sheen’s brilliance at this critical junction where so few true modern intellectuals reside.

I begin by affirming Archbishop Sheen’s initial observation that our Catholic Church loves and needs controversy. However, let us be clear in how we define controversy. We shall seek to understand his original term “controversy” under a different term; the term “debate.” Now, we can say the Catholic Church loves a good debate. A debate born from controversy. A debate which intellectually challenges us to both define and understand our Catholic Faith.

In our time, this notion has become less appealing, for the term “controversy” has taken upon itself a more negative connotation. People, today, seek to avoid or mitigate controversy. Due to our ever-changing culture, we may find some who no longer speak out publicly. The reach of those who control our cultural conversation has grown as long as their ability to control our media platforms. A person who uses reason, logic, and proofs is now the bigot. One who either ignores or dismisses these proofs is labeled the “open minded” tolerant individual. As the old Southern saying goes: “If you open your mind up too much, then your brain might just fall out.” These new purveyors of knowledge (Corporate Media) would rather promote the ideas of certain “approved” celebrities who will regurgitate whatever nonsensical ideas they are instructed to say. As attested to by the National Synod report, our Catholic faith has fared no better. Instead of embracing and celebrating those truths, those dogmas and doctrines which make us Catholic, respondents now ask for a Catholic faith which, quoting the report itself: “*People noted that the Church seems to prioritize doctrine over people, rules, and regulations over lived reality.*” In essence, a form of the philosophy of Humanism which attaches prime importance to human efforts rather than the divine or supernatural toward solving mankind’s problems. If we are just another way of practicing religion within the brotherhood of man, then we can all play nice and one day go to paradise/heaven/nirvana.

As I asked last Sunday, is this the Catholicism our ancestors shed their blood for? Rather, our Catholic Faith loves and needs good intellectual thought; a good debate. It is through a good debate that we will define our beliefs in a more concise, clear way. Through debates, we will seek to know God in a more substantial light. We will now examine cultural thought through the lens of Catholic thought. By embracing Catholic thought, we now see how intellectually void is cultural thought has become. For cultural, thought without Catholic, thought will only impoverish a society through the exploitation of the most vulnerable. I provide as my example how children are being used as pawns to promote certain behaviors which we would classify, only a generation ago, as sexual perversions and psychological illnesses. We need intellectual Catholic thought to save our society. It must come from those who are willing to ask the probing questions of our culture that many are afraid to ask. Ones such as: “Are my Catholic beliefs and values the same as those expressed by our leaders, both religious and political?” Or, “If my personal beliefs differ from Catholic beliefs, then what am I doing to educate myself and resolve my own ignorance?” Lastly, “Can I stand before God, which I will do one day, and say that I sought to both understand and teach my Catholic faith to my children through both my words and deeds?” Allow me to conclude today with one last quote by Archbishop Sheen. He wrote, concerning the martyrdom of many Christians by the Roman Emperors: *“they killed the Christians not because they wanted their hearts, but because they wanted their heads, or better, their brains — brains that were thinking out the death of Paganism.”*