

The Positive Influence of the Catholic Church on the Culture in the United States
in the Past, Present, and Future

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The Catholic Church has had a far-reaching and lasting impact on the culture of the United States since the country was founded. From the earliest days of the country's existence, Catholics have left a visible legacy that continues to shape our society. Catholics explored the New World, showing the importance of their faith in the names of the cities they established, such as St. Augustine and Los Angeles. Catholics converted Native Americans to the Faith, signed the Declaration of Independence, fought to protect our nation and its freedoms, and played a major role in the civil rights movement. The Church has established orphanages, schools, hospitals, and homes for unwed mothers. Most recently, the Catholic cultural impact can be seen through organizations such as the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) that is broadcast around the world and provides orthodox Catholic teachings that have reached and changed millions of lives. The Church also provides a solution to current social problems such as radical feminism, materialism, and moral relativism.

The first social problem is radical feminism. In many non-Christian countries, women are regarded as inferior to men while their rights as humans are overlooked. Judaism and Christianity denounced this degrading view of women for centuries, and today the Church still stresses the message that women are not objects to be subjected by popular culture. Throughout history the Church has striven to elevate the status of women and ensure equality of the sexes. However, the Church realizes that men and women were created differently. The differences between the sexes help them to complement each other. The rise of radical feminism during the last fifty years has contributed to confusion on what exactly the role of women in today's world is and what the differences between men and women mean for society. In fact, many say there are no differences. Many of these radicals support a woman's right to choose an abortion and other social changes that are degrading to women and lose sight of their dignity. The Church,

however, fights against the realities of pornography, sexual trafficking, the exploitation of women by scientists who wish to use their eggs for experiments, and other issues that radical feminists should be concerned about but tend to overlook in their desire to “liberate” women. Real liberation does not come from casual sex, abortion on demand, and having power over others, but rather from following the will of God.

The second social problem is materialism. While capitalism has tremendous benefits, there is a downside when people become too materialistic. When materialism takes root, people lose sight of God. There is too much concern with possessions and the here and now as opposed to a focus on other people and a concern about the hereafter. Materialism leads to a degradation of people while a premium is put on mere material goods. The Church teaches that true happiness lies not in the accumulation of wealth but in pouring oneself in service to one’s fellow man.

The problems of feminism and materialism seem to stem from a third social problem, moral relativism. Moral relativism preaches that there are no moral absolutes, no right or wrong. Under this theory, if right and wrong are determined by each person, one can justify nearly any evil act in the name of individual choice. The Catholic Church teaches that there are objective truths, and right and wrong are not up to the discretion of the individual.

The Church has the answer to these problems, just as it has solved problems throughout history. John Paul II called on us to reject lifestyles that live apart or even in opposition to God. Recently, a Vatican Congress was held to discuss themes from John Paul II’s 1988 Apostolic letter “On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman.” Pope Benedict XVI gave an address at this conference that called on women to use their faith to defend their dignity. The Church is concerned about the problems Catholics face and is striving to make the world a more just place

by impacting popular culture in our country. The Church remains a firm foundation in a world that is rocked by change. It continues to address current and relevant topics as they arise, and will continue to do so into the future.

Welcome Paragraph

On behalf of the Catholic Church in the United States, I would like to welcome you to America. It is an honor to have the Vicar of Christ present to strengthen and encourage members of the Church. It is an awe-filling thought to consider the unbroken line of succession of the leaders of the Church from Peter to the present, and as the early Church welcomed Peter so we welcome Your Holiness. You come here at an opportune time in our history. While America is a nation of great hope, we will not reach our potential as a nation until we recognize the dignity and value of each human life, and realize that some things are objectively right or wrong and that people are more important than property. These are innately Catholic teachings. You are our leader and shepherd. The flock needs to hear the Truth as only someone with your authority and exalted position is capable of delivering. I ask that you be bold and courageous. We are told to speak the Truth both in and out of season. With relativism spreading like an epidemic, the Truth is out of season. Speak the truth as only you can. In the words of your predecessor, words which I have taken to heart, "Be not afraid."