



Institute For Theological Encounter With Science and Technology

Volume 51 - #1

Winter 2020 Bulletin

The Nones Are Gaining! What Should We Do?

Over the last several years, Pew Research has shown that people have left the Catholic Church, often due to their belief that science and theology conflict. The Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (ITEST) has promoted the principle that science and faith can co-exist and that they do not conflict.

In addition, books such as *Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents are Raising Their Children* by Christel Manning have been recently published to explore the reasons that people give for leaving their Church and/or their faith. Science is not always the reason for leaving the Church.

Who are the Nones?

The “Nones” are the fastest growing “religious” group in the United States. They are those who claim no religious affiliation.

Also, an article entitled “Can Religion Still Speak to Younger Americans?” appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* on November 16-17, 2019. The article by Timothy Beal provided some additional insight into

the Nones category. Thus, we should explore who the Nones are and why they have left the Church in which they were raised.

A review of Manning’s book and Beal’s article provide the lead story for this issue of the ITEST bulletin. A survey was given to a group of first year students at a mid-western non-denominational university. The results support Manning’s thesis which will be outlined in the lead article for this bulletin. So the question is, what should we do to change this?

In Bishop Robert Barron’s June 2019 talk at the General Assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, he identified one of the five primary causes for religious disaffiliation and even the loss of faith. When it comes to areas of reason, science, and academic inquiry, our young people have a poor sense of our Catholic history. A short review of his talk addressing the root causes that lead to disaffiliation can be found later in this bulletin. The lead article will examine Manning’s findings. A supporting article will delve into Bishop Barron’s talk.

Dr. Ralph Olliges
ITEST Secretary

In This Issue...

Announcements and Letters to the Editor.....	2
<i>The Nones</i> by Dr. Ralph Olliges	3
<i>Reaching Nones through Reason</i> by Lauren Lester	5
<i>The Contemporary Poll</i> by Dr. Ralph Olliges	7
<i>Science, the Unaffiliated, and History</i> by Patrick Panozzo.....	9
<i>Opinion: Why Do They Fall Away? Will They Return?</i> by Sr. Marianne Postiglione, RSM	12

Announcements

Faith-Science 2020

Volunteer to assist ITEST in the third decade of the third millennium.

Follow the link <https://faithscience.org/membership-information/>. Please complete the survey questions to register as a member of the planning team for Faith-Science 2020, an ITEST initiative that seeks to frame the faith-science conversations that will occur in the third decade of the third millennium.

Letters to the Editor

Sister Marianne received many letters of appreciation with her last edition as editor of the ITEST Bulletin. Here we will share some of the thoughtful sentiments.

Dear Sr. Marianne,

Having a bit of peace before our Thanksgiving dinner, I sat down to enjoy this Bulletin and saw that you are retiring from the task of editing the Bulletin (and running ITEST). I want to thank you for a job well and lovingly done. I know Bob's spirit was always involved - we have been blessed by what he brought into being with ITEST. May it continue to bear much fruit. Thank you for giving so much of yourself to this work.

Prayers and love,

S. Hanna

Hanna Klaus, M.D., Bethesda, Maryland

Dear Marianne:

Thanks for your fine work over the years.

Joe Bracken, SJ, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Bravo, bravo, bravo, Marianne...! You have indeed gone out with a bang...! What a splendid issue... so rich and full of marvelous data...! Thank you...!

Carla Mae Streeter, OP, St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Marianne,

As always, I opened your mail (and the Bulletin) with joy and interest! And thanks that you put a foto of yours at the end of your message! Of course, I do not "like" that ITEST will miss your expertise in the future and I personally the contact with what you are doing. But I also know that you "deserve" - and more than that - a "retirement"; may it become one of enjoyable and fruitful new activities, and God's blessings in abundance!

My own 'retirement' includes much of this. There is - besides the 'aging problems' - always something to read, comment, or 'create' for my (Schoenstatt) community, and in this regard I gratefully also use the ITEST Bulletin.

With heartfelt sisterly greetings - in Jesus and His Holy Mother—yours,

Eva-Maria - M. Mattia, Vallendar, Germany

Dear Sister,

The Bulletin will never be the same without you.

But we and time move on. I turned 90 this year. I have slowed down but I'm still trying to produce one or two books a year.

I don't think people like you and me ever retire. Good luck, God bless, and by the way, happy Thanksgiving.

Rocky

Dr. Rocco Martino, Villanova, Pennsylvania

My dear Marianne Postiglione,

So stupid I did not realize that you cannot go on for ever. Of course, there always is a time to resign.

I appreciate that you chose your own moment to do this.

And now you give me the opportunity to thank you for all you did for ITEST, and for me in my position at Delft University of Technology. To be aware that other people face the same challenge and try to formulate answers has always been a great comfort and support to me.

So, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Dr. Ton Meijknecht, Delft, Netherlands



Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology
Cardinal Rigali Center • 20 Archbishop May Drive • St. Louis, Missouri 63119 • USA
314.792.7220 • www.faithscience.org • E-mail: ITESTfaithscience@gmail.com

ITEST Bulletin - Ralph Olliges, PhD, Editor, S. Marianne Postiglione, RSM, Senior Editor
ISSN 1073-5976 • Copyright © 2020

The Nones

Ralph Olliges, PhD

For many decades, while the majority of Americans have affiliated with organized religion and seek to transmit that tradition to their children, parents with no religion comprise a significant and growing segment of the population. Recent nationwide surveys show that one-fifth of Americans now list their religious affiliation as “None” or their religious preference as “nothing in particular.” (Pew Research)

Recently, the numbers of Nones rival that of major religious denominations. One statistic that should be of significance to ITEST is how many of these people are under the age of 30. One statistic used stated that Nones comprise one-third of adults under thirty. This is the segment of our population that is poised to be parents and will influence the next generation.

A vast majority of Americans are affiliated with organized religion. Most of them will raise their children to follow in their footsteps. However, Nones is a growing category. The Nones tend to be young males. They include more atheists and agnostics. Nearly 75% were raised in a religious home. More often they are residents in the Pacific Northwest, New England, and the Mountain States. (Manning, p 4)

Today, “a young adult is more likely to feel social pressure to justify being religious than being None.” (Beal, 2019) Furthermore, marriages that result with parents of mixed religions tend to expose their children to various faiths. When children must decide which religion to adopt, they often choose neither (Beal, 2019).

Let’s look at the reasons that Nones give for losing their religion. Several scenarios from Manning’s book follow. One female stated, “I no longer believe in God, much less a personal deity who incarnates in human form, and neither does he (her husband). Both of us were raised Christian but left the church as teenagers and have not returned since, except for friends’ weddings, baptisms, and funerals.” (Manning, p1) Whereas, another person stated, “I wanted Sheila to have what I had. Even if I had rejected it later in my life, why hold a child hostage to my own doubts? Although I could not pretend to convey the faith my mother had, maybe I could have my daughter baptized and enroll her in Sunday school, as my sister did with her children. But when I ran the idea by my husband he was adamant: ‘I don’t want Sheila indoctrinated in all that. Besides it would be

hypocritical.’” (Manning, p 1) Thus, one person lost faith, another had not found one that yet fits, and one never really had faith to begin with.

Others give the reason that they felt as if their parents indoctrinated them and that they do not want their children to be indoctrinated. Some leave their Church and have not found another church in which they feel comfortable. For others religion did not seem relevant. “Some Nones profess belief in God or a higher power but do not attend religious services or engage in any kind of spiritual practice such as prayer or meditation.” (Manning, p 27) The vast majority did not attend services at all. However, about one-third pray regularly (at least once a week).

Leadership scandals, rules that seem out of touch with contemporary morality, or too much emphasis on fundraising are all reasons that the unchurched believers provide for being identified as Nones. (Manning, p 28) Some others look to science and empirical methods to pursue truth and justice, thereby rejecting a personal deity. Many Americans see religion as an important source of moral values.

For others, organized religion no longer met their needs—either because of a personal crisis or more often because they moved away from home, got busy with other things, and “religion just didn’t seem relevant anymore.” (Manning, p 38) Those that have become more independent from their parents, especially if they leave home to attend college, may feel freer to question their religion and identify as Nones. They often pose questions such as: Do you believe in God? But what about love? What about ideas of forgiveness? Do you believe in hell? In addition, they do not believe homosexual activity is a sin. Yet another explanation for the recent growth of young Nones points to the fact that more people are raised without religion.

Sometimes, 18-29 year olds question the religious teachings of their parent’s church. Often they do not like the position that a church takes on political or social issues. Frequently, these issues involve sexuality and science (Beal, 2019). Their views often conflict with their church’s position on same-sex marriage and transgender rights.

Continues on page 4

Reclaiming Religion?

Nones leave religion in their teens, and most report the experience of starting a family causes them to reexamine that decision. One reason may be accommodation to a religious spouse. Even when both partners are unaffiliated, some Nones may claim religion for the sake of their children. Nones who start a family may also claim religion because of the community it offers.

Starting a family compels Nones to confront the issue of worldview identity (religious or otherwise) as they interact with others in that family: the child, a co-parent, and extended family members. In the process, Nones begin to articulate the boundaries of their worldviews and determine how important they are in their lives. (Manning, p 58)

For example, some feel that religion is a good way to teach morality and values. A second reason commonly cited for returning to church was that religion connects children to a family history. A third reason None parents gave for going back to church was the desire that their children experience rituals like First Communion or bar/bat mitzvah. Finally, None parents cite the supportive structure and community offered by organized religion.

Not all None parents are comfortable with going back to church. This is particularly true for those Nones who have adopted nonconventional worldviews such as the Philosophical Secularists and Spiritual Seekers. Some consider outsourcing the religious experience for their children in order to preserve a family tradition. Thus, some enroll their children in a Catholic school to learn about religion. Often grandparents take charge of introducing children to family and religious heritage.

Recent generations of Americans are much less likely to maintain lifelong loyalty to a particular denomination. Instead, they experiment and explore, go church shopping to find what they like. Parents may outsource religious instruction. (Manning, p 136)

Conclusion

Not affiliating with organized religion is about asserting the right to make one's own choices. None parents make different kinds of decisions. Some go back to church, some join a community that welcomes doubters, some self-provide knowledge about religion or secular philosophy, some outsource religious instruction, and some do nothing. Yet regardless of which path they choose, the decision is

always framed as a way to help the child make his or her own choices. (Manning, p 138-139)

Most Americans believe that religion should be a matter of personal choice, a view that has held steady for nearly half of a century and that is reflected in high levels of religious switching and intermarriage even among the church population. Before then, religion was something you inherited rather than selected, something that determined whom you would marry and how you raised your children.

While we have limited control over their choices once they leave the house, the hope is that the values that parents have provided for their children will either keep them attending Church or lead them back to Church.

Nones' worldviews are characterized by a great deal of fluidity over time and are shaped by their relationships with others, especially their children. Having children compels them to think about what being a None means, to articulate what a None's worldview is rather than what it is not. Childrearing also pushes parents to discuss that worldview with those who are close to them—partners and extended family—and who may themselves have a stake in what will be transmitted to the children. (Manning, p 185)

References

Beal, Timothy. (2019). Can Religion Still Speak to Younger Americans? *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/can-religion-still-speak-to-younger-americans-11573747161>.

Manning, Christel. Losing Our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents are Raising Their Children. New York University Press. 2015.

Pew Research Center. (2018). How Does Pew Research Center Measure the Religious Composition of the U.S.? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/07/05/how-does-pew-research-center-measure-the-religious-composition-of-the-u-s-answers-to-frequently-asked-questions/>

Follow ITEST on Social Media



**Institute for Theological Encounter
with Science and Technology**



@faithscience



Itestfaithscience



ITEST FaithScience

Biography of this Issue's Editor

Ralph H. Olliges is Professor of Educational Technology at Webster University in Saint Louis. Also, he is the Educational Technology Coordinator with over 60 students in the master's level program. He coordinates the Masters of Educational Technology (M.E.T.), the Masters of STEM Education (M.A.), the Certificate in Online Teaching and Learning, the Certificate in Mobile Technology, and the Robotics in STEM Education Certificate. Dr. Olliges possesses over thirty-eight years of teaching experience in the classroom and online. His area of expertise deals with how to successfully integrate technology in the classroom. He teaches courses on educational technology in the classroom, building websites for teachers, and the use of many different software packages in the classroom. He is a nationally recognized technological educator and researcher in the field of web-based and web-enhanced learning.

His recent research program focuses upon web-enhanced and distributed learning in higher education, and in particular technology-based education. Dr. Olliges has published articles in professional journals and has presented on various topics at regional and national conferences. He has numerous publications and presentations with regards to using technology in the classroom and with student learning styles.

Dr. Olliges is a long-time member of International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Also, he is a member of the Society of Philosophy and History of Education (SOPHE), International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA), the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), and the Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (ITEST).



Dr. Ralph H. Olliges

Reaching Nones Through Reason

A review of

Philosophy Fridays: Armchair Philosophy Sessions From a High School Physics Teacher

Author: Matt D'Antuono Reviewed by: Lauren Lester

For young people who are questioning the intersection of faith and science, philosophy is a missing link. It is the tool that provides a framework for thinking about and understanding the nature of truth. As a high school teacher incorporating faith and reason into my physics classes, I've seen firsthand how students struggle with this. I once had a student (who was very intelligent and well-read) write in a reflection, after viewing the documentary *Cosmic Origins*:

“Comparing physics to metaphysics is like three little kids stacked on each other's shoulders wearing a trench coat and a mustache in an attempt to look like an adult. They're (hopefully) not fooling anyone and they lack stability. Metaphysics isn't even

physics, it's a branch of philosophy. The scientists being interviewed were clearly biased otherwise they would not have approached it as a legitimate science.”

A striking dismissal of philosophy as illegitimate and unstable, but one that is becoming all too common. However, a recent interview of physics teacher Matt D'Antuono as part of the ITEST and WCAT Radio “Faith and Science in Catholic Schools” series, gives some insight into how philosophy can be shared with teenagers in an engaging and compelling manner. D'Antuono is a physics teacher in a public school, but uses his philosophy background to challenge his students to think more deeply about what they know and believe. Though he can't directly evangelize his students in a public school setting, D'Antuono sees

Continues on page 6

what he does as “pre-evangelization.”

D’Antuono lays out this process of pre-evangelization in his book *Philosophy Fridays: Armchair Philosophy Sessions From a High School Physics Teacher*. While having a conversation with students in his AP Physics class regarding the nature of science, D’Antuono pointed out that what they were discussing was not actually science, but rather philosophy. The students began to ask questions and wanted to learn more; this gave rise to D’Antuono’s classroom tradition of “Philosophy Friday.” Each week D’Antuono poses a philosophical question or problem to the students for discussion. This book is a collection of the conversations his class had each week for a school year.

In Week 4, for example, D’Antuono takes his students through a discussion of how we know what we know by asking them “how do you know the Earth goes around the sun?” He points out to students that though they think they have seen evidence that the Earth goes around the sun, they haven’t actually taken the measurements that demonstrate this, and their belief that the Earth goes around the sun is really just a matter of faith on their part. They have chosen to believe the teachers that have taught them this information. He uses this surprising realization to point out to students that fact vs. opinion is a false dichotomy and the real question is whether something is true or false. Does it conform to reality?

Week 5 begins with the students being asked what is logically wrong with the statement, “Science is the only way to know what is true.” D’Antuono points out to his students that this statement is a very common yet subtle idea in society. He then leads them through a discussion to illustrate the point that it is a self-refuting statement. The statement itself says the only way to know what is true is to experimentally test it, thus invalidating all other areas: math, philosophy, history, etc. However “Science is the only way to know what is true” cannot be tested experimentally and therefore is a philosophical statement, which it specifically denies as truth.

Weeks 23, 24, and 25 introduce the students to three common logical fallacies: equivocation, chronological snobbery, and ad hominem. D’Antuono uses a syllogism from Peter Kreeft’s *Socratic Logic* to illustrate the idea of equivocation:

“Knowledge is power.” -Francis Bacon

“Power tends to corrupt.” -Lord Acton

Therefore, knowledge tends to corrupt.

The students come to recognize that the definition of the word power changes throughout the argument, thus invalidating the argument. A discussion ensues on the meaning of the word power, and students tie it to their own experiences with the power that media has to affect their opinions.

In their discussion of chronological snobbery, D’Antuono points out, “By calling an idea old or out of date, we excuse ourselves from having to think about it or be challenged by it. This fallacy is a thought-stopper, which is the opposite of clear, critical thinking. At least bad thinking can be corrected.” Illustrating an ad hominem fallacy begins with the argument “Hitler believed in progress. Therefore, we should not seek progress” and moves into a discussion of our society’s current often-blind acceptance of any idea put forth by a respected scientist.

Philosophy Fridays serves as a light-hearted introduction to basic philosophy for the novice, or a fresh perspective through the eyes of students for the more experienced in philosophy. The conversation format of the book gives the reader insight into the preconceptions of an average teenage audience, which may serve as a useful guide to any who find themselves in a discussion which requires “pointing out what’s wrong with the other person’s argument.”



Lauren Lester is a physics teacher and robotics coach at Rosati-Kain High School in St. Louis, Missouri, a member of the ITEST Board of Directors, and a mother to five spirited and beautiful kids.

The Contemporary Poll

by Ralph Olliges

A ten question poll was created with questions based upon the issues raised in Manning's book.

Some freshman students from a private mid-western, nondenominational college were asked to complete the survey. The list of questions follows.

1. What is your gender?
2. What region of the country are you from?
3. Do you consider yourself religious?
4. What religious faith do you consider yourself?
5. How often do you currently attend church services?
6. If you no longer regularly attend church services, how long has it been since you last attended?
7. Why did you stop attending church services?
8. How often do you pray?
9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Religion in our culture is perceived as a personal choice, rather than a duty or a tradition."
10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Science conflicts with religion."

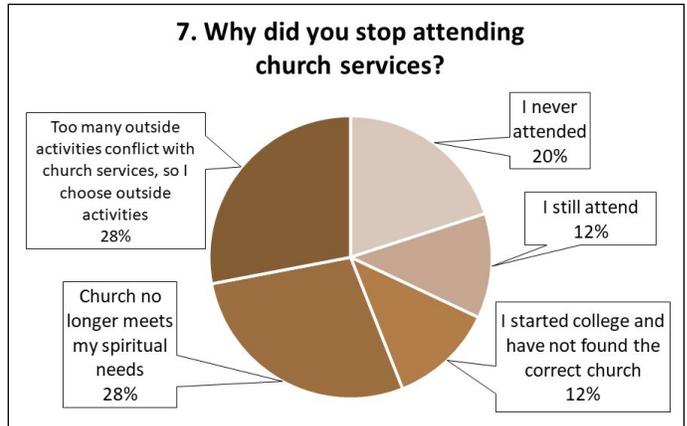
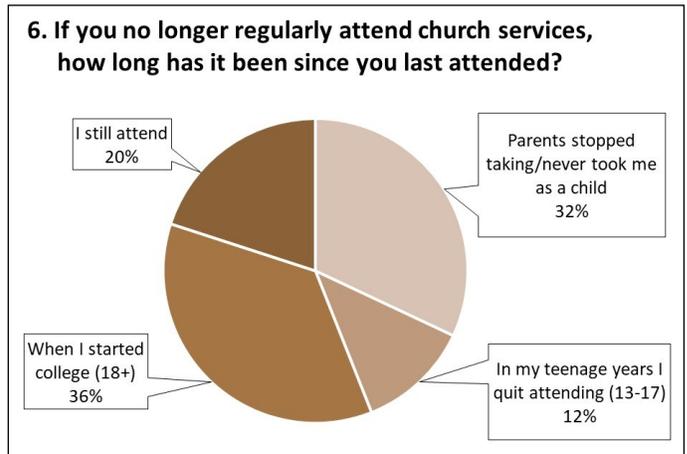
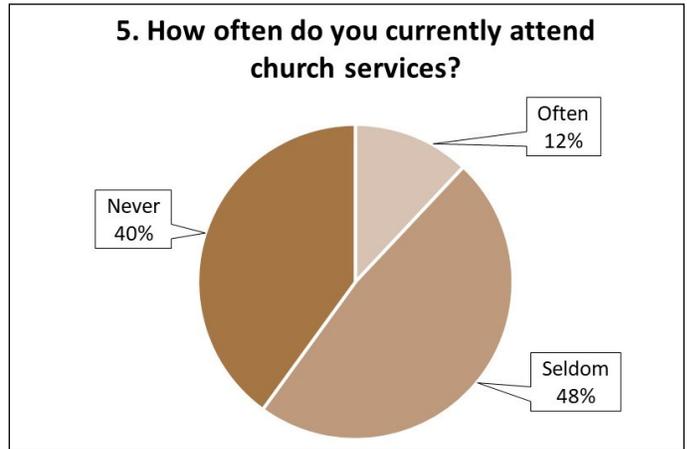
The survey results were as follows.

1. Gender: 52% Female; 40% Male; 8% Other. Other was an option since this non-denominational university allows for LGBTQ students.
2. All but one student was from the Midwest. Note: Manning's focus included the entire United States.
3. Some considered themselves religious: 52% No; 48% Yes.
4. Their religious faith included: Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, Nondenominational, Baptist, Other, and None. However, the largest group was None.

The last six questions are presented in graphical format as follows.

Most of the students seldom or never attend church services. While a few still attend church services, they indicated that they have not found the correct church after starting college. Others said that they never attended church in the first place. Those who stopped

attending church selected the following reasons: the church no longer meets their spiritual needs, or outside activities conflicted with church services and so they would rather go to the outside activities, such as playing sports or outings with friends.

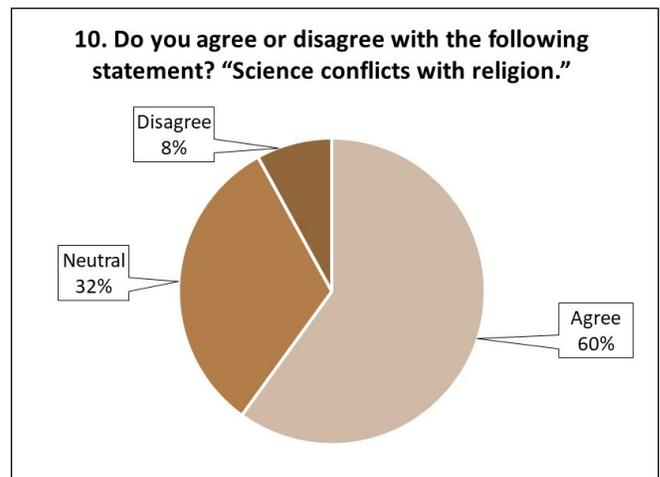
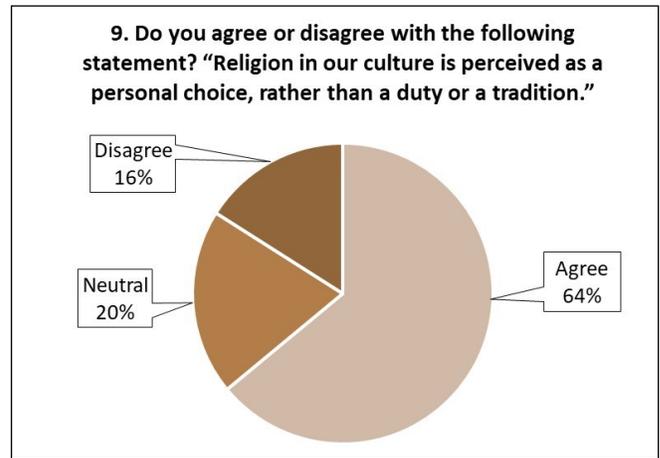
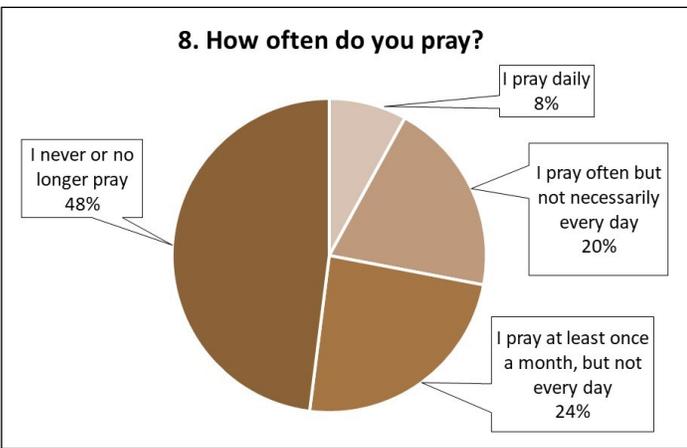


Continues on page 8

About half of the students never pray or no longer pray. Almost half pray at least once a month or more. Few pray daily.

Most agree that religion is a personal choice rather than a duty or tradition. This is not necessarily a bad choice. We tend to be a culture where we make personal choices depending upon what is important to us.

Most agree that science conflicts with religion. Few disagree that religion and science can co-exist. The question is how to change this to show them that science and religion do not conflict.



At the November 19, 2019 ITEST Board of Directors meeting in St. Louis, we decided to take a photo of the members who were present.



Left to right: Dr. Ralph Olliges (Secretary), Patrick Panozzo, Dr. Tom Sheahen (Director), Dr. Mariette Baxendale, Sr. Marianne Postiglione, RSM (Associate Director), Sr. Carla Mae Streeter, OP, Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP (Treasurer), and Sr. Marysia Weber, RSM.

Science, the Unaffiliated, and History

by Patrick Panozzo

In the Spring 2019 General Assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert Barron gave an address to the entire assembly concerning the “nones.” His initial objective was to offer some explanation for the phenomenon of broad disaffiliation from religion in our culture generally, and away from the Catholic Church more specifically. For Catholics, particularly those born after 1980 (millennial generation and younger), leaving the Church is the most urgent crisis facing the Church, second only to the sex abuse scandals, according to Bishop Barron. His talk identified that one of the primary causes for religious disaffiliation and even loss of faith is the perception by many that faith is illogical or unscientific. In the November 2019 meeting of the USCCB, Bishop Barron was asked to follow-up on his presentation with ideas and suggestions for a way forward in addressing this cause and others that lead to abandoning religion. What follows here is a short review of each talk, followed by a brief analysis of the proposals made, particularly concerning science and its perceived opposition to religious faith.

Bishop Barron’s June Presentation

A brief summary of Bishop Barron’s June presentation to the USCCB begins with his desire to answer three questions: Who are the religiously unaffiliated? Why are they leaving the Church? and How do we get them back? This first talk addressed the first two questions, and he returned in the November general assembly to address the third. Much research over the past ten or fifteen years has given us a pretty clear indication of who the unaffiliated or “nones” are, so Bishop Barron cited a few of the more sobering statistics in order to underscore the level of severity. 50% of Catholic millennials no longer identify as Catholic and one out of every six millennials in the United States is now a former Catholic. Half of those leaving the Church become religiously unaffiliated and no longer claim any religion at all. Another quarter of this cohort leave Catholicism in order to identify with an evangelical Christian church, and the final quarter begin to identify with an entirely different faith.

Having painted a fairly clear picture of *who* the unaffiliated are, Bishop Barron focused most of his talk in June identifying why so many (especially the young) are leaving the Church. He provides five main reasons that appear consistently over more than a decade of time and in numerous surveys. The first reason frequently given is the loss of belief. The dogmas, doctrines, and fundamental teachings of the faith are determined to not have any truth claim for those disaffiliating. Bishop Barron’s analysis argues that after Vatican II (not necessarily because of it) the faith was “dumbed down” by elevating feelings and emotion (Jesus loves you and that is all that matters) over reasoning and inquiry in the presentation of the faith. Several generations of this emphasis have produced horrendous results and the surveys reveal it. People who do not understand the faith can much more easily reject it or claim that it is found wanting in believability. Reason #2 for those leaving the Church is relativism, and not just in the area of morality. Young people today broadly respond to almost any strong statement of truth, particularly in religion, with great discomfort and suspicion. The third reason cited by Bishop Barron he calls “the culture of self-invention.” By this he means an extreme individualism that only permits a person’s identity to be defined by himself through personal choice. The fourth area is the persistent perception that science and reason are opposed to religion. Divine Revelation is perceived by those disaffiliating from religion to be more like irrational superstition while the advocates of scientism successfully steer the culture into accepting that the truth can only be known through the modern sciences. The fifth and final reason most given for leaving the Church is the Catholic teaching on sexuality and all the issues to which that is related.

Before concluding his presentation to the Bishop’s Conference in June, Bishop Barron did offer four “signs of hope.” The challenges facing the Church are great and the battlefield is likely to worsen before it gets better, but there are some silver linings among the clouds. The first hopeful sign is that most of the unaffiliated are not fiercely opposed to religion or the Church; they have simply drifted away. Breaking through indifference or malaise seems more the challenge than any kind of embedded

Continues on page 10

atheism. A second sign of hope is what Bishop Barron called the “Jordan Peterson effect.” By this he references the rather large and devout following acquired by the mostly mild-mannered Clinical Psychologist and Professor of Psychology from the University of Toronto. Peterson quotes Nietzsche and expounds on the archetypes within Bible narratives, relying more on intellectual meaning than charisma to find his audience. Bishop Barron proposes that this is due to a wide and deep desire for meaning among the youth unable to find it elsewhere. A third sign of hope are some shining examples of campus missionary groups that evangelize with impressive success. And the last sign is the level of online engagement to be found. Each forum that invites discussion of religion seems to find a rather quick and expansive audience eager and willing to talk about religion, religious meaning, and issues of theological pertinence.

Bishop Barron’s November Presentation

The bishops responded with great interest to the presentation in June, so Bishop Barron was invited to present again at the annual meeting of the USCCB in November to further the discussion. In this second presentation he proposed five recommendations elevated by the Evangelization and Catechesis Committee most likely to help draw young people back into participation in the Church. The first proposal is to recognize the appeal of the Church’s social teaching to younger generations and pursue more opportunities for getting young people involved in the works of justice. The second is what each of the last three popes have called the *Via Pulchritudinis*, or the “Way of Beauty.” This is simply to acknowledge that in many cultures today beauty should enjoy a privileged place in evangelization as an inroad to the good and the true. In this way we are not just telling others about the faith, but truly showing them, all while using a less threatening manner. The third proposal is something Bishop Barron calls the “intellectual path.” The “dumbing down” of the Sacred Tradition in education and catechesis is perhaps the area most responsible for the perceived fault line between science and faith. The fourth proposal is to turn every parish into a missionary society. The suggestion here is that the parish as traditionally understood cannot afford to simply maintain any longer. Young people are not and will not come to the parish, rather we must think in terms of mission

work by going out to find them. Finally, proposal number five is to creatively use the new media. Bishop Barron and the committee see the relatively recent invention of the internet along with the even more recent tool of social media as God’s Providence at work. The Church could never have devised a better or more effective set of circumstances to get the message out and find an audience willing to listen.

Analysis and Conclusion

In this last section I wish to present some analysis of the suggestions presented by Bishop Barron and the Evangelization and Catechesis Committee of the USCCB, particularly applying some of my own experience teaching high school students and responses they have given me. The following survey results are more specific to the Catholic culture than those found elsewhere in this bulletin as most of my students grew up in and live in homes identifying as Catholic. I surveyed 129 sophomores and juniors (ages 15-17) attending the Catholic high school in St. Louis where I teach. The school has a college prep curriculum and is all girls. 68% of my students identify as Catholic, while 15% chose the label of “no religion.” 94% were baptized. Only 7% denied any belief in the existence of God, while an additional 19% said they were “not sure” about God’s existence. Only 21% said they attend Mass weekly. 57% said they either never attend Mass or only attend on rare or special occasions. Despite this, a whopping 89% of my students either somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement “I can be a good Catholic without going to Mass every Sunday.”

The first of Bishop Barron’s “paths” toward bringing young people back into the Church would find fertile ground with my students. 72% said participation in the works of mercy and performing service for others inspires them toward greater faith. The challenge of presenting the faith as intellectually coherent and consistent with reason is also evident. 33% of my students said faith and science “sometimes” disagree, 16% said faith and science are opposed more often than not, and another 21% said they were “not sure.” Fewer than one-third (30%) answered that science and faith are “complementary.” When asked if science presents a “serious challenge to your faith” 40% agreed with another 33% responding “not sure.” Hesitation, if not confusion, reigns judging by their

Continues on page 11

response to whether “the great dogmas and doctrines of the Christian faith (the Resurrection, the Incarnation, the Trinity) are credible and not opposed to reason.” 43% of my students answered “not sure” while another 23% disagreed with the statement. Finally, I asked whether “truth can be revealed or discovered using methods other than the modern sciences.” To this statement 59% actually agreed, suggesting “scientism” is not as pervasive as imagined (at least in my sample), though 29% were not sure and 13% did disagree with the statement. More apprehension is found on the question of relativism. I asked whether they agreed that absolute truth can be known and that an objective right and wrong exist, and 43% answered “not sure” while another 21% disagreed with that statement.

Two responses surprised me and seem to indicate an opening that could bear fruit in promoting the complementarity of faith and reason. Despite recent polls of Catholics nationally (Pew) on the issue of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, among my Catholic students a remarkable 78% said they “believe that Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist” (11% said it was “just symbolic” another 11% answered “not sure”). On another matter requiring more than merely rational thought, 64% acknowledged a belief in the supernatural (angels, ghosts, the soul) with 31% saying “not sure” and only 5% denying a belief in such things. It is not clear how to interpret these numbers considering 40% agreed that “science and reason present a serious challenge” to faith, but I think it suggests there is more openness than opposition.

My final piece of analysis is something not particularly raised by Bishop Barron or the work of the Evangelization and Catechesis Committee. The negative presentation of religion and people of faith in the secular media today is surpassed only by the negative presentation of the Church and religion in the teaching of history. Read almost any history textbook used in either Catholic or secular schools and you are likely to find the scandalous and more negative influences of religion and the Church highlighted, while many of the heroic and saintly figures will be absent or downplayed. I was not surprised to see the results of my question concerning the Church and history. When asked “My view of Christianity’s (Catholic Church or otherwise) role in history is...” 41% answered the Church has been “at least as sinful as it has been

holy” and another 18% said the Church has actually “contributed more suffering to the world than goodness.” Only 21% said the Church has “made the world a better place” (20% said “not sure”). Additionally, a more general attitude toward religion revealed that 24% of my students believe “organized religion causes more harm than good when it comes to understanding God” while only 25% disagreed and 50% answered “not sure.” One fascinating piece of evidence counter to this negativity toward the role of the Church in history is that 63% of all my students (not just those identifying as Catholic) said they believe “the Holy Spirit has guided the Church through its history and continues to dwell within the Church today.” 24% answered “not sure” to that description of the Holy Spirit in the Church while only 12% disagreed.

Whatever these numbers may portend, it is clear that the crisis of disaffiliation from the Church today is real and significant. There is much to consider from Bishop Barron’s work with the USCCB, but without the prioritization and focus of the bishops, this critical work of evangelization will struggle. Behind many of the suggestions lies a clearer and more vigorous engagement with the challenges and questions people bring to the Church. Whenever obscure, confused, or unsure responses are given by those representing the Church, they fail to meet the seriousness of the question. However, when drawing upon the illustrious history and Tradition of searching for God using the intellect and as well as cultivating and promoting the natural sciences, the Catholic Church can face this crisis with a resounding faith and hope for the generations entrusted to us.

Patrick Panozzo is currently in his 18th year as a high school teacher of theology, predominantly focused on Scripture, ecclesiology, and the Sacraments. Born in Muskegon, Michigan, his family moved to Grand Junction, Colorado when he was 10. He received his B.A. in the Liberal Arts from Wabash College in 1993. After a short stint in youth ministry he received a Master of Divinity from the Aquinas Institute of Theology in 1999. He lives in St. Louis, Missouri with his wife and three children (ages 4, 2, and 1). Patrick has been an ITEST board member since 2014.



Opinion: Why do they fall away? Will they return?

The two studies featured in this issue of the ITEST bulletin sound a clarion call to all of us. What do those studies signify at least anecdotally? On the one hand there is reason to hope that the generations of young people (13-25+) represented in these studies, will not only remain faithful people, but will influence others by living their faith. “See how these Christians love one another.” On the other hand some of the results from the same studies definitely display an ignorance or a rejection of the truths of the faith that most elders among us have long burned in our memories.

Other statistical studies have been carried out on this topic. We all know of the Pew studies and the designation of the “nones” as “spiritual but not necessarily connected to the institutional church.” Yet educators like (physicist, theologian) Father Robert Spitzer, SJ, founder and director of The Magis Center, have masterfully led and convinced enthusiastic young people in conferences about the “reasonableness” of belief. Another speaker and writer, Bishop Robert Barron is literally a household word, not only in Catholic families, but in others as well. Bishop Barron, founder and director of Word on Fire, accents the beauty of the faith quite convincingly through professionally produced film and videos. We sincerely pray that their efforts will continue to produce fruit.

However, after observing the scene for many years, I have come to the conclusion – remember it is my

opinion — that the main reason young people fall away from the church lies not necessarily in the perceived conflict between science and faith/religion, but pure and simple **apathy**. Gathering together with the parish or other community on a Saturday or Sunday no longer is a priority nor attractive to many.

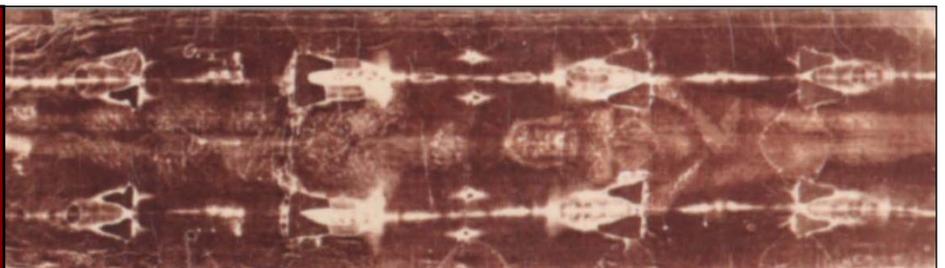
There is an abundant amount of blame to share -- we’ve heard it all -- the culture, the media, the clergy, poor homilies, dull liturgies, demanding family responsibilities, parents (of course) and a host of others.

Father Robert Brungs, SJ, founder and director of ITEST, firmly believed and taught that we have to start with the youngest: “If we can help by teaching children of God’s love for us and of his desire that we love him as well as of the mystery and beauty of creation – and yes, its utility for humankind—we shall have accomplished much. We shall have set them on the road to a life fulfilled in their thanking, their praising and their glorifying him who made all things for our benefit as well as his glory”

A vain hope? Pie in the sky? Pure naiveté? Not for those who love, teach and model the love of God. Let’s make that a reality in our lives. Then all the “nones” will have no choice but to follow Christ. “See how these Christians love one another.”

Sister Marianne Postiglione, RSM
Associate Director, ITEST
Senior Editor, ITEST Bulletin

The Shroud of Turin



ITEST is joining the St. Louis Archdiocese Office of Consecrated Life and the St. Louis Catholic Medical Association to host a webinar/conference on the Shroud of Turin on Saturday April 25, 2020. ITEST members will receive **free** admission to the conference/webinar. Register at www.archstl.org/turin. Details available at www.faithscience.org/shroud.