

The Challenges of the Times



Monthly Catholic Forum at St Bernadette's Parish Carlton

Archbishop Anthony Fisher kicked off the monthly forum by giving a talk on the "Seven Deadly Sins of the Contemporary World."

It was a talk that inspired and encouraged at the same time and this is what I learnt. It is undisputed that there is a decline in the influence of, and compromise in the values of the religious institutions/the Church (first estate), government (second estate) and the common people (third estate). The scandals within the Catholic Church (in particular) and its inability to attract and engage the young in any sustained and meaningful conversation; the impotence of governments and their leaders to effect any measure of progress in terms of standards of living for the people because of internal squabbling, lack of credibility and breakdown of personal integrity; the sense of helplessness and disconnectedness by the people themselves who have been made to believe that the "elite" knows best and are "too busy" just surviving from day to day in this throwaway culture with its "time-saving devices" (microwaves, washing machines etc) and "time-wasting preoccupation" (PC games, surfing the net) and has thus given up their rightful place to be the prime engine of gradual societal change, have largely contributed to this decline.

On the other hand, the unobtrusive social engineering grossly indulged in by the media (fourth estate) and big corporations (fifth estate) has been breathtaking in its scope and amazing in its rapidity. Who can forget the unapologetic promotion of one side in the "same sex" marriage debate by "big business", using their manpower and money in the campaign. The media was not shy either in proclaiming that they were on the side of "equality and love" in this debate.

There is hostility to established religion which, for the most part, targets Christianity. The practice of our Christian

beliefs are sometimes seen as impinging on the "rights" of others who do not hold to the same beliefs and therefore the practice of our Christian beliefs must be suppressed. Individuals who believe (as taught by their religion) that marriage is only between a man and a woman may find lawsuits knocking on their doors if this translates into refusal in engaging in business as has happened in other countries.

This hostility flows over to rampant secularism with the desire to eradicate signs of our Christian heritage in the public arena as well as the promotion of pragmatic agnosticism (people may identify as believers but act as if there is no God).

The promotion of so-called Australian values (living a good life; having a go; a fair go for everyone, being fair dinkum; she'll be right, mate) detached from the Christian foundation can very quickly degenerate and be found to be hollow. They are not substantial enough to replace the Judeo-Christian values which underpin Australian democracy and indeed all western democracies.

The last point is the resulting values confusion and disorientation. Having no regard for God and his plan for our lives, we have made the "self" as the final arbiter even to the point of deciding on life issues such as abortion and euthanasia.

The solution? We are an Easter people and we live in the hope and the joy of the Risen Lord. But there is work to be done. First, we must nurture the Faith within our souls, feeding it with the Sacraments, the scriptures, prayer, good works and adherence to the teachings of the Church. Second, we must acquire some measure of knowledge and understanding first of God and the Church He established, then of the world. Then, we shall trust in the Lord to furnish us with the grace and courage needed to witness to others in humility, in truth and love.

Valerie Gonzaga

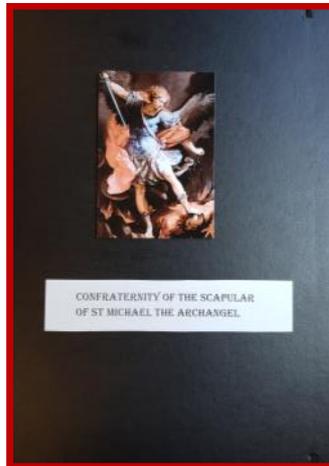


The Confraternity of the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel

In the spirit of our Michaelite charism, we continue to promote the Scapular of St Michael the Archangel. In December 2017 another group of devotees received The Scapular from the hands of Fr Janusz in a ceremony at



St Michael's Church Hurstville. There are presently over 50 people enrolled in *The Book of Confraternity of the Scapular*. However, there is a number of people, especially at Terrigal and North Ryde parishes, who received the Scapular during one of the visitations of the CSMA Superior General about 3 years ago. Please pick up an enrolment form from your



parish office to add your name to the Book of the Scapular.

The Scapular of St Michael the Archangel

is an external sign of entrustment to St Michael and belonging to the Michaelite Family.

The person receiving it is called to a zealous service to Christ and his Church. Every Catholic can receive the Scapular after appropriate preparation. Those receiving the Scapular have their

share in the spiritual goods of the Congregation of Saint Michael the Archangel (Michaelites). Persons receiving the Scapular commit themselves to wearing the Scapular (cloth or medal) or placing it in a sacred place in their home as well as daily recitation of the prayer to St Michael the Archangel issued by Pope Leo XII (The minor Exorcism).

What does the Scapular symbolize?

The part of the scapular falling on the back represents the attitude of submission to the will of God in enduring hardships, difficulties and one's cross. The part falling on the chest is a reminder that the human heart should beat with love for God and neighbour, that she has to break away from worldly attachment and, through the intercession of St Michael strive for eternal goods.

If you would like to be invested with the Scapular of St Michael please contact your closest Michaelite parish. Every priest and deacon can conduct the ceremony of blessing and bestowing of the Scapular according to the prescribed *Ritual*.

Pick up your latest copy of
The Angels,
Messengers from a loving God
 magazine in your local Michaelite Parish.