



THE PASTOR'S PAGE

My dear People of St. Mary's:

On May 25, 2018, the people of Ireland went to the polls and became the first nation in history to approve the legalization of abortion by popular vote. They did so by a margin of 66% to 34%, with 84% of all 18 to 24 year-olds voting in favor of abortion.

On Sunday, September 30, 1979, Pope St. John Paul II held a special Mass for 300,000 young people at Ballybrit Racecourse, in County Galway, Ireland. Here is what he said to them on that day:

This is a very special occasion, a very important one. This morning, the Pope belongs to the youth of Ireland! I have looked forward to this moment; I have prayed that I may touch your hearts with the words of Jesus. ... When I look at you, I see the Ireland of the future. Tomorrow, you will be the living force of your country; you will decide what Ireland will be. Tomorrow, as technicians or teachers, nurses or secretaries, farmers or tradesmen, doctors or engineers, priests or religious—tomorrow you will have the power to make dreams come true. Tomorrow, Ireland will depend on you.

When I look at you assembled around this altar ... I see the future of the Church. God has his plan for the Church in Ireland, but he needs you to carry it out. What the Church will be in the future depends on your free cooperation with God's grace. When I look at the thousands of young people here before me, I also see the challenges that you face. ... You carry in your hearts the treasures which Irish history and culture have given you, but you also share i

I know that you, like other young people of your age, are facing challenges that are happening in society around you. Although you still like to hold on to moral principles, you have to realize that these principles are being tested in many ways. The religious and moral traditions that have been challenged by the temptations that spare no society in various parts of the world, you will be told that changes are necessary for freedom, that you should be different from your parents and you alone.

The prospect of growing economic progress, and the goods that modern society has to offer, will appear to you as a path to freedom. The more you possess—you may be tempted to think—the more you will feel liberated from every type of confinement. In order to make more money and to possess more, in order to eliminate effort and worry, you may be tempted to take moral shortcuts where honesty, truth and work are concerned. The progress of science and technology seems inevitable and you may be enticed to look towards the technological society for the answers to all your problems.

The lure of pleasure, to be had whenever and wherever it can be found, will be strong and it may be presented to you as part of progress towards greater autonomy and freedom from rules. The desire to be free from external restraints may manifest itself very strongly in the sexual domain, since this is an area that is so closely tied to a human personality. The moral standards that the Church and society have held up to you for so long a time, will be presented as obsolete and a hindrance to the full development of your own personality. Mass media, entertainment, and literature will present a model for living where all too often it is every man for himself, and where the unrestrained affirmation of self leaves no room for concern for others.



You will hear people tell you that your religious practices are hopelessly out of date, that they hamper your style and your future, that with everything that social and scientific progress has to offer, you will be able to organize your own lives, and that God has played out his role. Even many religious persons will adopt such attitudes, breathing them in from the surrounding atmosphere, without attending to the practical atheism that is at their origin.

A society that, in this way, has lost its higher religious and moral principles will become an easy prey for manipulation and for domination by the forces which, under the pretext of greater freedom, will enslave it ever more.

Yes, dear young people, do not close your eyes to the moral sickness that stalks your society today, and from which your youth alone will not protect you. How many young people have already warped their consciences and have substituted the true joy of life with drugs, sex, alcohol, vandalism and the empty pursuit of mere material possessions.

Something else is needed: something that you will find only in Christ, for he alone is the measure and the scale that you must use to evaluate your own life. In Christ you will find your own humanity; he will make you understand your own dignity as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God” (*Gen 1 :26*). Christ has the answers to your questions and can lift up your hearts. He keeps calling you, he keeps inviting you, he wants you to follow him (*Jn 14 :16*). Yes, Christ calls you, but he calls you in truth. His call is not a trap, but a liberation. Do not let yourselves be “captured” by him completely, so that your whole life is spent in his service. He is the Son of God, who reveals to you the loving face of the Father. His teaching does not pass away, the only one who teaches with authority. He says, “I am no longer do I call you servants ... but I have called you friends” (*Jn 15 :15*), laying down his life for you.

His call is demanding, for he taught us what it means to be human. You must build on the foundation which is Christ (cf. *1 Cor 3 :11*); only with him your life will be meaningful and worthwhile.

You come from Catholic families; you go regularly and meet Christ in Holy Communion on Sundays or even during the week. Many of you pray with your families every day; and I hope you all will continue to do so throughout later life. And yet it can happen that you will be tempted to walk away from Christ. This can happen especially if you see the contradiction in the life of some of your fellowmen between the faith they profess and their way of living. But I wish to insist and to plead that you always heed the call of Christ, for he alone can teach you the true meaning of life and of all temporal realities. ...

Sometimes, one could have the feeling that, before the experiences of history and before concrete situations, love has lost its power and that it is impossible to practice it. And yet, in the long run, love always brings victory, love is never defeated. And, I could add, the history of Ireland proves that, if it were not so, humanity would only be condemned to destruction.

May the Lord Jesus be always with you! With his truth that makes you free (cf. *Jn 8 :32*); with his word that unlocks the mystery of man and reveals to man his own humanity; with his death and Resurrection that makes you new and strong.

Let us place this intention at the feet of Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Ireland, example of generous love and dedication to the service of others.

Young people of Ireland, I love you! Young people of Ireland, I bless you! I bless you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was more than a homily; it was a prophecy. And they did not listen. *St. Patrick, pray for us!*

—Fr. McCartney

