

When I called ahead to inquire about a restaurant reservation on West 7th Street, occasionally I was dissuaded, citing a large concert at the Xcel. I started checking the schedule on my phone; too often, the group's name meant nothing to me, though it certainly did for the thousands of fans.

In our second reading Saint Paul urges the brothers and sisters not to be conformed to this age. It is a great line to be sure, but at the same time somewhat vague, perhaps even deliberately so. People of faith and good will interpret some of these passages differently. How attuned are you to the present age? What does it mean to be conformed to the age?

For years I avoided purchasing a cell phone, believing them unnecessary. After becoming a pastor in 2006, I changed my tune. Have I now conformed myself to this age? I do not maintain a Blog, though I post homilies and columns online. I am intrigued by Twitter, though choose not to use it largely because I believe that not all thoughts need to be published. Still, I do not criticize people who make use of social media. But where does one draw the line? Furthermore, what is of this age?

Being "conformed to this age" is distinct from making use of advances that our modern age affords. Vatican II produced a document entitled, "The Church in the Modern World," *Gaudium et Spes* in its Latin title. History progresses, and the Church is neither the enemy of technological progress nor does she turn up her nose at scientific advances.

However, these advances are judged against the backdrop of their conformity to the apostolic tradition. We have seen the negative results when science and human learning are divorced from faith...think of the enlightenment, man's pride at its zenith. Reason became the god for some. In today's society, politics has become like unto a god for many.

They believe that the problems will be solved by the policies they espouse. But if people are not properly disposed, rather quickly can a situation devolve, especially if there is no grounding in understanding human nature. Conversion of heart is the most effective agent of change and sincere conversion to the ways of the Lord would transform our society more quickly and effectively than any particular political program.

Our nation is bitterly torn and for the past three months, destruction has befallen cities all across this nation from Portland to Chicago, to Kenosha and New York, and of course right here in our cities. We face serious issues of community and race relations, economic challenges brought about by a pandemic, social isolation of a significant portion of the population and a general mistrust of traditional institutions, including the Church and the Christian faith. Honest and respectful dialogue appears elusive, if not nearly impossible. Still, we do not fear or shrink. Having discerned God's will, we are transformed and share truth in love.

We were blessed with our very first visiting group visit to the Cathedral since the Covid-19 shutdown. It is a group of young people from the parishes in Stillwater who came here on pilgrimage- on foot! That is more than 22 miles and we welcome them. Their sacrifice is a perfect example of not being conformed to this age-they did not take the easy way but through sacrifice and I suspect some discomfort, they sought to walk with the Lord in prayerful pilgrimage. He will richly reward them, and the lessons learned will remain long after their sore feet recover! Congratulations and welcome to your Cathedral!

Shortly after being elected pope in 2013, Pope Francis confirmed 44 young people, including two Americans. In his homily for that 5th Sunday of Easter, he encouraged the young people to hold fast to the faith:

Listen carefully, young people, swim against the tide; it's good for the heart, but it takes courage.... The Holy Spirit is truly transforming us and through us, he also wants to transform the world in which we

live... There are no difficulties, none, no trials or misunderstandings to fear if we remain united to God.¹

These words could just as easily be said to all of us here for Mass today. Let us pray for the grace to be ready to make important distinctions about those areas of progress that are compatible with our faith and those that are not. It was in this moment that the Lord sent us. He has told us that “We are in the world, even while we are not of the world.” With our eyes focused on the Lord, that is a right place to be.

¹ Pope Francis, *Saint Peter's Square Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, 28 April 2013*