

Preserving the Faith at the Campus

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What happens to the faith of our young people when they leave home to enter a college campus? Do they take faith along with other belongings and necessities of life or, do they leave faith behind at home? This is partly related to the degree and type of faith practiced at home.

In deed parents who practice their faith at home along with their children prepare them in a better way to deal with secularism at the campus.

Though in the early years of life, childrens faith is more like a blind faith following the faith and tradition of their parents and older siblings. During the teen age years, they develop their own personalized faith which may be similar or somewhat different than the faith of people around them. Nevertheless, efforts at home directed toward strengthening the faith of the child, makes that child strong in character.

When one throws a diamond in the mud, it still remains a diamond. Thus the blind faith dies when young people leave home. However, some of them have a re-birth of their faith during campus life.

Many young people and their young faculty during college years take a vacation from religion because they see religion regulating their lifestyles. The new freedom includes freedom from God because without God "everything becomes possible in their desires and behavior".

Religion is given a tertiary place in life, the primary being science, and the secondary being social pleasures. The downsizing of religion is due to the elimination of God from daily life. At campus they have new friends and they gain new experiences and adventures. They learn from older students and they have a challenge to be accepted and to belong to a particular social club. Their lives are busy and they have deadlines to meet and appointments to keep.

They are under peer pressure and "beer pressure". Thus they have no time for God at least in the first year of campus life. This is mostly true for those who did not come through a strong religious background or affiliation at home.

How do they return to religion in the latter part of campus life? By observation and experience they realize that religion has some influence on morality and thus it has a role in shaping their future. Is it not their religious morality which keeps them out of trouble as otherwise, they might be a victim of violence, theft, drug

abuse, alcohol, date rape, etc. prevalent in campus life. Sometimes even a minor encounter with the law in the state of innocent fun can ruin their record and career. Some of this fun is much below the intellectual level of decency. Recently we have had two cases of death due to alcoholic binge drinking and also a case of a scavenger hunt in one of the fraternities at Indiana University which was directed toward racism against women and minorities. Sometimes even good kids get involved in this because they do not have an alternative club of decency that they can join.

This is why I propose a Religious Social Club. This Religious Social Club whether it is Muslim, Christian or Jewish, should be more flexible in terms of gender equality, social mixing, and it should place more emphasis on morality than rituals of the religion and indoctrinization.

They must be supervised by sincere adult faculty to give them guidance and direction. In classical religious campus organizations like campus ministry or Muslim Student Association (MSA) there is more emphasis on didactic religious teaching. As a result, many young people stay away from such groups for the fear of being labeled as fundamentalists. I also propose that the faculty has a role to play in supporting such Religious Social Clubs with whatever means they have because these will be good kids who will try to have the best moral behavior and therefore, it is in the best interest of the administration and faculty to see more of these kids.

Lastly I propose that religious campus associations instead of opposing each other should join forces against secularism and have a network among themselves of an interfaith nature that they can meet together on occasion and share their faith with someone else and learn from others too. In this way, the religious forces even coming from different backgrounds will be on the same side of the fence as compared to the secular and dominant forces on campus. However, as these Religious Social Clubs and Interfaith Networks will progress, they are more likely to have a greater influence on faith life on campus.

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