

PROJECT HOPE 2018

For this reflection, I want to focus on the most important thing that I would like Pope Francis to know about me and my friends. From what I've learned so far in Campus Ministry, the Pope is curious as to what is causing so many young kids to deviate from the Church. In this reflection, I can't speak for all my friends, but I can speak for me, and I will apply my own thinking to try and explain what my friends and many other kids my age may be thinking about the matter at hand.

So why are more and more young people deviating from the Church? It seems with each generation, less and less people are interested in following the path of faith and more concerned with denouncing the ideology that generations before us so heavily relied upon. Why is this happening? I believe that oftentimes people use religion to help them get through their lives when times are difficult. Faith can sometimes explain why things happen when we see no physical justification. For example, in times of war, people may resort to faith to separate themselves from the physical turmoil that they experience every day. Basically, how faithfully we follow our religion is largely dependent on our environment. What we are surrounded by, or what we surround ourselves with, is very influential on how we perceive not only our physical being, but our spiritual being as well.

That being said, I believe that the environment kids my age are growing up in is heavily influencing our spiritual journey. What is our environment based upon? Technology. Our technological world is advancing every day, whether we are aware of it or not. As technology becomes more advanced, humans will rely on it constantly to do more and more simple tasks. On the surface, this seems like a great testament to what humans have been able to accomplish, but going deeper, it can also lead to the cause and amplification of many problems.

No less than thirty years ago, if I wanted to know how far away the moon was from the Earth, I would have to walk to my local library or school, ask someone who was familiar with astronomy, or spend time searching for a book that gave me my answer. In 2018, all I have to do is press a few buttons on my phone. Yes, technology does make my life easier. I can accomplish the same task in a fraction of the time. But technology stresses something that may be more detrimental than it seems: instant gratification. Because of the speed of our technological world, even I will expect my Google search answer to pop in less than a second, and if it doesn't, then something is wrong and I have experienced some sort of inefficiency with the system. More and more children are being born into a world of instant gratification, and because of this, patience is coming in shorter supplies than before. But how does this all relate to religion?

When we are asked to believe in God, we are asked to fully devote ourselves to a being we can't see, touch, or hear. Most people who believe in God will go through life never witnessing any evidence of His existence, yet will go on believing Him all the same. When we have faith in someone here on earth, we are expecting our efforts of faith to pay off. You trust your best teammate to make the game-winning shot, and when he does, your efforts are rewarded, and you feel great. But what if he misses? Is your faith rewarded? What if you have never seen this player before, but everyone tells you he is the greatest they've ever witnessed? You've never seen him play, so do you go with the popular opinion? Or do you have a hard time having faith in someone that you have never seen in action?

God is the player in our lives that we are expected to have faith in. But if we can't see our faith paid off, then is this faith even worth it? That, I believe, is one big idea that runs through my generation's mind when the question of God is introduced. We are born into a world of instant gratification, and we get so used to this instantaneous action that when we don't see our efforts paid off immediately, we question our initial actions. When we try to believe in God, and our faith isn't immediately paid off, then we start to wonder - is it worth believing in Him in the first place? I believe that this is a common question my friends and I ask ourselves, as well as most of the kids my age. In our religious lives, we do not experience the instant gratification that we are used to, and because of this, we consider religion to be "inefficient".

So how do we fix this? In my honest opinion, I don't think the solution is easy at all. This dependence on instant gratification is ingrained in us at an early age, and because of this, kids my age have already been shaped into the people they will grow up to be. It will be difficult to change our ideology after so many years of dependence. In other words, it's hard to break our old habits. However, it is definitely not impossible. I believe that for me and kids my age, the best way to approach this is to keep an extremely open mind. Never consider just this and that, but always consider this that and what comes in between. When we keep an open mind, we can get used to approaching situations in a different light. We can get used to letting God into our lives, and letting God answer some of the questions that we ourselves can't answer.

This could be a good solution for the present, but what about future generations? What about our kids? Or our grandkids? If my generation can commit to keeping an open mind, then this could aid a religious revival in the generations to come. When my generation has kids, we can instill the values of open mindedness into their lives from a young age, so instead of them being dependent on instant gratification, our kids can grow up to rely on using multiple lenses to approach a situation, so that patience can again become more common and children can use God as an outlet or as a provider in times of need. I'm not saying that we will eliminate this feeling of instant gratification that comes with technology, because technology will keep evolving no

matter what happens. But, if we are aware of it from early on, we can take action against letting it control our children's decisions when they grow up.

What I'm suggesting is not an immediate solution whatsoever, but then again, how could anything that applies to millions of people now and in the future be done in an instant? Right now, the best thing we can all do as humans is to consider every approach to anything. We can all understand each others way of thinking so that maybe we can enrich our own lives. We can look up to those who have dedicated their lives to a religion, and admire their faith and willpower in a field that, as we have seen, has become less popular. The narrow mindedness that plagues humanity today doesn't only apply to religion either. If we abandon such an approach, many of the worlds issues could be solved without conflict, but with reasoning. So in the end, what is it that I want the Pope to know about me and my friends? I want him to know that we can sometimes lack the patience to accomplish some of our goals, and I think this is the most important thing that I can communicate to the Pope, because lack of patience is the only thing that separates us from who we are and what we are meant to be, not only as individuals, but as a common identity in the human race.