

Challenges of globalization on catholic youth

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



Introduction

The very title, “ Challenges of Globalization on Catholic Youth” seeks to elaborate the challenges posed by globalization on our catholic youth today and tries to seek answers in the context of globalization as to why the youth of today avoid the Church. Is it Globalization that is to be blamed or the Catholic Church? The younger generation today is much ahead and advanced due to Globalization. It has made the lives of the younger generation look like heaven and it has also created a secret hell that the young are slowly moving towards to. Today globalization poses a great challenge to the youth of today as individuals or as a group which directly or indirectly affect their life; for instance their personality, identity, purpose and faith. This paper seeks to bring to light some of key effects of globalization on today’s young catholic generation and how the Catholic Church as a universal family can accompany these youngsters to face such challenges.

1. Who are the Youth?

“ Youth is the pollen that blows through the sky and does not ask why.”

Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence. The United Nation defines Youth as those persons between the age group of 15-24 years. Youth is also defined in terms of appearance, freshness, vigor, spirit.

Youth is a stage, where in young people undergo very disturbing changes at various depths of their personalities- physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. This transition means surrendering the ownership by parents and

entering into ones one's self – possession – a period of searching, questioning, doubting and fraught with its successes as well as failures. Youth is also the age of rebellion and experimentation where the youth are easily carried away by social pressure, peer pressure and various other factors. There are age old clichés viz. they want to change everything and start from scratch, they don't accept authority very easily, they want to destroy institutions and despise the traditional moral norms.

2. What is Globalization?

Globalization is described as a process of interaction and integration among people, companies and governments of different nations, a process driven by trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on environment, on cultures, on political systems, on economic development and on prosperity, and on human physical well-being in the societies around the world. Gabriela Illie says, “ Globalization is like a butterfly which flaps its wings in one part of the world only for the flow on to affect the weather patterns elsewhere.”

The Term Globalization entered popular media and advertising in the early 1990's. Globalization has brought in lot of reforms and development in and around the world but it has also harmed the world in so many different ways. This is a hard core reality and it is difficult to avoid. All of us are part of this phenomenon may it be the old generation or new, rich or the poor; we are all encompassed in this web called globalization.

3. Effects of Globalization on the Youth

Before I proceed any further let me make my stand very clear that I am not against globalization neither I support globalization. It has its own pros and cons. Globalization in a way has helped the youth and has also affected the youth in numerous ways. I would like to focus on some of the vices that globalization has brought in the lives of today's youth.

3. 1 Consumerist Culture

Saint John Paul II describes consumerism as a “ life directed towards having rather than being.” In a way a person who is concerned solely or primarily with possessing and enjoying, who can no longer subordinate his instincts and cannot be free. Consumerism is a movement that promotes the interest of buyers of goods and service. With the advent of Globalization the consumerist culture has flourished to the nook and corner of

the world. In a consumerist culture, consumption becomes the main form of self-expression and the chief source of identity. In a way a person seeks for an external identity in a consumerist culture and this is very prominently seen among the youth of today.

The jargon of the youth today seems to be: “ Have money and spend; and their philosophy of life is to enjoy life as it is.” Globalization has created lot of Jobs and opportunities for youth through the IT sector. Today the youth are spenders and at the same time earners. As per a study conducted, 70 % of the youth say that money and glamour are influencing them negatively when it comes to saving. When one has money in hand nothing else seems important.

3. 2 Online Spirituality

The concept online spirituality was inspired and derived from an article that I read on Spirituality and Electronic Communication by Bishop Pierre DuMAine. He says, “ The very concept may strike a contradiction. Spirituality after all, directs us inwards towards personal union with God, whereas electronic media turns us outward, engaging us with the world, diffusing our energies and exposing us to manipulation by forces at best compatible with, and at worst hostile to our inward orientation to God.”

Well Globalization has made electronic technology so accessible today that everything is sought online, even answers for our spiritual life. Today technology is shaping spirituality. In such a context the Youth today are seeking answers to their questions about life on internet. They have various questions for instance one's existence, one's destiny, meaning and purpose of one's life, all of it is sought everyday on the internet. Online spirituality is now being experienced all over the world.

The Internet today has opened up a spiritual market for spiritual goods and services. Today we have so many false prophets which use the modern technology to sell their pseudo-spiritual merchandise. This drives away the youth from scriptures to the new pseudo-cultic literature.

3. 3 Changes in Family value system

Family is one of the oldest and the most common human institutions. The term family commonly means a group of related people who share a home. It is also an institution wherein our physical, spiritual, emotional and financial

needs are taken care of. Therefore family plays a very important role in our lives but today the concept of family is slowly deteriorating with the advent of globalization.

Pope Francis in one of his interview on family said, “ Family is important – for the survival of humanity. Without the family, the cultural survival of the human race would be at risk.” No doubt Globalization has made distance communication very easy but it has given rise to a phenomenon called the Generation gap. It is defined as occurring “ when older and younger people do not understand each other because of the different experiences, opinions, habits and behaviors.” This has led to various family issues between the parents and the children. Children become self-centered, parents feel discarded, lonely and unwanted; sacrifices made within the family are not appreciated etc. Thus the value system in the family is affected. The Youth of today do not listen to their parents because they think that the parents belong to the older generation and as a result we see many of the youth fallen in trap to drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual misconducts, etc.

3. 4 Digital Addiction

The term Digital Addiction is a concept that takes into purview internet addiction, Gaming addiction, mobile phone addictions etc. Digital addiction is very prevalent among today’s younger generation. It reminds me of a caption that I came across a few years back, it read, “ Sar utake woh chalta hai jiske pass smartphone nahi hotai.” No doubt globalization has made technology and innovations possible and accessible but it has also given rise to digital addiction.

This year the World Health Organization (WHO) in its draft of the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) included “ Gaming Disorder” as a problem related to mental health. This is very true because we see today so many people on the streets, buses, at home, in the offices all of them glued to their screens and specially the younger generation either playing games, watching movies, video chatting or simply swiping. This is almost turning to what is called the “ Digital Addiction”- a phenomenon where gadgets take precedence over other interests and daily activities among the youth.

3. 5 Social, Religious and Political Crusade

A crusade will be defined as a campaign for political, religious and social change. This has been a latest trend that is seen escalating among the youth of today. “ Totalitarian ideologies that the youth come across through social media and other electronic platforms seduce the youth to turn every battle into religio- cultural crusade.” Today the youth brought up amidst these chaotic socio political and religious issues find it difficult to draw a line. This in fact has led a way to youth activism which has resulted in lot of violence and turmoil. Some of the recent protests by the youth are the Hakkolorob (make some noise) in west Bengal, Support FTII in Pune, Justice for Rohit in Hyderabad, Stand with JNU and Students against ABVP in Delhi, Save Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu.

4. Role of the Catholic Church

The Modern Globalized world is often leading the youth astray. “ Like the Golden Calf of the Israelites, the tools of globalization are often looked upon by the youth as their new Gods and worshiped.” Amidst such circumstances the Catholic Church cannot dream of staying dormant. It has to respond and accompany the youth to face challenges posed by globalization. So how can the Catholic Church accompany the present generation of the youth to face Challenges? Can the Church Help?

4. 1 Church and the Youth

St. John Paul II wrote in the World youth year in 1985, “ The Church looks to the young; or rather, the church in a special way sees herself in the young – in you as a group and in each of you as individuals.”

The youth according to the church are the future and also the present. She shows a lot of interest in shaping the lives of youth today. The church is constantly striving and devising ways to accompany the youth. But amidst all the good work done, issues such as sexual scandals, abuses, corruption in the church cannot be neglected. Such issues in the Catholic Church are shunning the youth away. Today young people are longing for an authentic church that is open, transparent, honest, inviting and interactive. The church should be open enough to accept its faults and wrong doings as an institution capable of human errors and strive to achieve its sanctity.

4. 2 Process of Accompaniment with the Youth

Pope Francis while addressing the youth on the World Youth Day at Rio, 2013 said, “ Go, do not be afraid and serve.” Similarly Pope Francis in one of his

tweets addressed the Youth saying, “ Dear young people do not bury your talents, the gifts that God has given you! Do not be afraid to dream of the great things.” In a way the church is constantly accompanying the youth in great and small ways. The church is successfully carrying out youth ministries at international, national or at domestic levels. Below I wish to present as to how the Catholic Church could accompany the youth.

4. 2. 1 Down to the Roots

The minds of our youth are indoctrinated with the evils of globalization. Under such circumstances the focus should not be devising strategies to attract the youth to the church but the focus must be to win the minds and hearts of the youth. In order to do this the church must go down to the roots. We expect the youth to come to the church but as pastors and priest we fail to know them, to visit them and to encourage the encourage them. The fault lies here. Therefore under such circumstances the need of the hour is that the church should focuses on two main aspects. They are as follows:

Acceptance and Participation

Incarnational Approach

4. 2. 1. 1 Acceptance & Participation

In order to win trust of among the youth the today the church first have to alter not just the outlook but also their attitude. For this the church must focus on:

Acceptance: Instead of criticizing the youth, church has to accept the youth as they are. When their generation's culture is honored, more and more youth feel drawn to the church. Accepting them will open up ways to mingle with them and help them shift from gullible consumers of media market complex to informed participants.

Participation: Youth prefer participation to preaching. Involvement of their talent and gifts for the good and practical causes draw them closer to the like-minded peers. They quickly get involved in social, environmental and talent activities. Talent groups like poetry, reading, craft making, music, dance etc., can further serve the purpose of engaging the youth. Such initiatives can become bridge for many youths and bring them into the church.

4. 2. 1. 2 Incarnational Approach

Incarnational approach is a concept derived from the incarnation of God becoming man. " The central fact of incarnation is that while we were still sinners, Christ came to save us (Rom 5: 8) He did not wait for us to find him. He did not wait for us to ask him to save us. He took the initiative to come to us." The youth of today will not make the first step today because for many faith and religion are alien concepts. They have vague ideas like, " Why do you need to go to church to pray? God is everywhere! Who says you have to make confession? I do my own confession when I pray; I don't have to go to a priest."

The Catholic Church therefore should seek ways to incarnate its approaches and must take the initiative to venture among the youth. In the final document of the Pre – Synodal meeting 2018 mentions some of the aspirations of the youth. They said,

“ We would like the church to meet us in various places in which she currently has little or no presence. Above all, the places in which we wish to be met by the church in the streets, where all people are found. The church should try to find creative ways to encounter people where they are comfortable and where they naturally socialize: bars, coffee shops, parks, gyms, stadiums and any other cultural centers. Consideration should also be given to less accessible spaces, like in the military, the workplace of the rural areas. As well as these environments, we also need the light of faith more difficult places such as orphanages, hospitals, marginal neighborhood, war ton regions, prisons, rehabilitation centers and red- light districts.”

Conclusion

As I conclude my paper I would like to summarize briefly. Firstly we dealt with topic of defining youth and secondly the concept of globalization. Then we proceeded forward with the topic of how globalization is affecting our catholic youth and finally we discussed ways as to how the Catholic Church could accompany the youth to face challenges posed by globalization.

In my final evaluation I would like to comment saying, Globalization has distracted the youth in various ways. Globalization today is not just a phenomenon it has become a lifestyle. This lifestyle is slowly replacing their

beliefs, their values and their faith. Though not very evident it is eating us up slowly. The Catholic Church on the other hand is constantly making sincere efforts to fight this lifestyle. The church in such context has to evolve itself through new ways. If Globalization is a challenge today let us face it and seek for ways to counter it.