

St. Therese Catholic Church

Religion of the Day
Session II

February 20, 2024

1

 **St. Therese Parish**

Overview

Religion of the Day	
Session I	Introduction and the Religion of the Day
Session II	Twelve Aspects of Modern Religion (Points 1 - 6)
Session III	Twelve Aspects of Modern Religion (Points 7 - 12)
Session IV	Further Notes on Progressive Religion
Session V	Catching the Diseases of the World
Session VI	The Winning Stance
Session VII	Conclusion: The Kingdom, the Tribulation, and the Patient Endurance

2



St. Therese Parish

Goals for Today

- In the introduction, we saw how Catholics can do many Catholic things, but not necessarily have a Catholic mindset.
- The book looks at a three-front battle that the Church faces in every age:
 - **External Battle:** Against the unbelief of a fallen world;
 - **Internal Battle:** An internal battle against disloyalty and corruption among Church members;
 - **Spiritual Battle:** Against the darkness and unbelief of one particular member of the Church: namely ourselves.

3



St. Therese Parish

Goals for Today

- Chapters 1-3 look at “Twelve Aspects of Modern Progressive Religion” – what religion we need to be converted *out of*, if we are to be truly converted to Christ.
 - To be a Christian in any age is to believe the Gospel *instead of* some alternative. In other words, we need to understand the alternative religion proposed to us (8).
- Chapter 4, entitled, “Catching the Diseases of the World” corrects a utopian view of the Church. The religious ideas of our age oftentimes find their way into the Church – diseases. This chapter looks at the second battle (the battle inside the Church).

4



St. Therese Parish

Goals for Today

- Chapters 5 and 6 look at the spiritual battle within ourselves so as to live as fully converted and faithful followers of Christ (9).
- Chapter 5, entitled, “The Battle for Deeper Conversion” looks at ways serious Christians can be taught and formed by the religion of the day rather than by Christ and can unwillingly take on attitudes and modes of behavior that mirror that false religion (9).
- Chapter 6, entitled, “The Winning Stance” outlines a posture for the Church in the apostolic age we are increasingly inhabiting.

5



St. Therese Parish

Aspect I

- The Human Tragedy of Alienation
 - *Progressive religion acknowledges the human tragedy of profound alienation from the world, and even from our own being.*
- Progressive religion begins with the recognition that there is a great deal of evil in the world, and that at an existential level, humans experience deep alienation from their own being, an alienation that cannot be overcome by normal ways of adjusting to life (21).

6



St. Therese Parish

Aspect I

- **Key:** We all experience alienation or a sense of estrangement (something is off) in the world and within ourselves.
 - **World:** We all sense there is something off in the world – broken relationships, injustices, etc.
 - **Ourselves:** We experience brokenness in ourselves.
- In this, Progressive Religion borrows from Christianity that we all experience dislocation because of sin and exile from Eden (21).

7



St. Therese Parish

Aspect I

- Those who are naïve and think all is well in the world and with ourselves will not be drawn to Christianity or a Progressive religious cause.
- Not all religions begin with the experience of alienation from the existing world as a religious starting point.
- For example, polytheistic nature religions see the world in a continuous cycle (think of a washing machine) and that the point of religion is to help humans find their proper place in the cycle of living and dying (22).

8

St. Therese Parish

Aspect I

- **Polytheistic natural religions:** The world is not flawed, but rather just a cycle of living and dying in this valley of tears. We do the best we can to accept it and make the best of it.
- Progressive religion follows Christianity in that the condition of the world is seriously flawed, and that the last thing one wants to do is to conform to its corruptions (22).
- Like grumpy cat, we are disturbed that something is terribly wrong in the world.



9

St. Therese Parish

Aspect II

- **Salvation is possible.**
 - *Progressive believers hold that salvation, meaning escape from the current state of alienation, is an attainable goal.*
- Progressive religion is not fatalistic: it offers a salvific vision, one that engenders a hope that all, or at least most, of our suffering world can be ended (23).
- **Key:** We can overcome human alienation or the evil that we experience in the world. In this way, it again follows Christianity and borrows from the narrative of salvation.

10



St. Therese Parish

Aspect II

- Christianity brought to humanity a majestic hope: *What no eye has seen and what no ear has heard* (1 Cor. 2:9), the complete healing and glorification of humanity in eternal bliss (23).
- Progressive religion has imbibed and digested that hope and has worked it into its own imaginative vision (23).
- However, there is a significant difference. For Modern Progressive Religion, the "new heavens and earth" (Rev. 21:1) where all tears will be wiped away, no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, can be accomplished *in this life* through faith and self-sacrifice.

11



St. Therese Parish

Aspect III

- **The Transformation of Our Humanity.**
 - *The salvation offered by Progressive religion promises not only escape from evil, but the transformation of our current humanity.*
- Here, too, Progressive religion borrows from Christianity. Christians have held that in Christ we are to become *partakers of the divine nature* (2 Pet. 1:4) (24).
- Our faith tells us that we will be radically transformed (or intimately participate) in God's own life (regenerated).

12



St. Therese Parish

Aspect III

- Christ, as the new Adam, is the “firstborn” of the re-generated human race.
 - **2 Cor. 5:17:** So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.
- Progressive religion places great emphasis on the notion of freedom, which is necessary to overcome the current constraints of humanity (24).

13



St. Therese Parish

Aspect III

- Christianity puts forth we are set free from oppressive forces: sin and guilt, death, slavery to the devil, and internal disharmony (24).
- Progressive religion also focuses on the idea of freedom, but it changes its meaning and points it in different directions.
- We can be set from whatever limits us in the current age of the world, whether that limits us in the current age of the world, whether that limit is economic, social, spiritual, physical, psychological, or sexual, and we can experience a noble expansion of our being as we freely determine who and what we will be (24).

14

St. Therese Parish

Aspect III

- In all Progressive forms of faith, freedom is not something to be achieved through a road of self discipline and the development of virtue according to a divine pattern but by breaking the perceived bonds of oppression that limit the self-creation process (24).
- **Key:** Think of the prodigal son who left home to go into a “great open space” with no limits.



15

St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

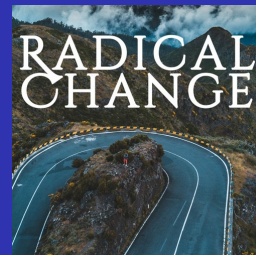
- **The Source of Alienation Not Within Us**
 - *For the Progressive believer, the cause of our alienation is to be found not within ourselves, but in the existing (dis)order of an evil world.*
- On this point, Progressive faiths break with Christianity and embrace a principle that represents the entire subversion of the Christian account of reality (25).
- For Progressive believers, the cause of alienation is not within ourselves, but rather in some aspect of the external world.

16

St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

- Like Christians, they know that the only way life will get better is if something radically changes.
- Unlike Christians, they hold that what needs to radically change is emphatically not *me* (25).
 - “I’m okay and you’re okay.”
 - Something in the world is *not* okay and needs to change.



17

St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

- **Key:** Progressive faith *denies the doctrine of the fall*. It is not we who have fallen, by choosing evil and inflicting on ourselves a moral wound that had laid us open to being enslaved by powerful dark forces (25).
- It is instead *the world* that has been poisoned, or perhaps that was created evil from the start, and we find our good selves trapped in the world’s evil oppressive structures (25).
- We will overcome our alienation when we destroy those evil structures and remake the world on a new and good pattern (25).

18



St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

- **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:** "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains." (25)
- **Christianity:** Man is born into moral and spiritual slavery (brokenness with God, one another, within ourselves, and with the created order), and only Christ can set us free.
- **Key:** The founding principle of Progressive religion is the denial of original sin, the refusal to find the source of human evil in the individual human heart – points to the prideful turn at the core of all Progressive faiths (25).

19



St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

- While world's religions have traditionally demanded humility to heal the human soul and bring us into communion with God, the Progressive believer begins with the doctrine that the self is free of evil and free of guilt, except to the degree that it has been contaminated by the external evil of a darkened world (26).
- It then ascribes all evil, including personal moral evil, to an external someone or something else. "Not my fault!" is the universal Progressive religious mantra (25).

20

St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

- The moral failure of Adam and Eve was that they seized for themselves what God had intended to give them as a gift.
- In contrast, Christ did not count the greatness as something to be grasped, but rather *emptied himself*, trusting in the One who was the source of life, and as a result he received his high destiny from God's hand (Phil. 2). (26)
- Ancient Gnosticism viewed the materiality of the world as evil – creation itself was the fall. Modern Gnosticism accepts the materiality of the world, but the current structures of the material and social worlds that are evil and need to be rejected (27).

21

St. Therese Parish

Aspect IV

- In other words, the material world (political, social, educational structures) need to be radically changed.
- Progressive religion harbors a profound hatred for the world as it currently exists and a corresponding anger toward the entrenched but evil order that it believes is the cause of human alienation and injustice (27).



22



St. Therese Parish

Aspect V

- Tragic Hostility to God
 - *Progressive religion necessarily and tragically leads to hostility toward God.*
- It may take time for this hostility to emerge for those who embrace Progressive belief.
- Among those who call themselves Christians, it may not be outright denying the existence of God, but instead rejecting God's revelation of himself and by changing the glorious and awe-inspiring Deity into a harmless figure who does not interfere with Progressive self-realization (27).

23




St. Therese Parish

Aspect V

- The 2005 book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* by sociologist Christian Smith introduced the phrase *Moralistic therapeutic deism* (MTD).
 1. A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth;
 2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most religions;
 3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself;
 4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to solve a problem;
 5. Good people go to heaven when they die.
- **Source:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralistic_therapeutic_deism


24

 **St. Therese Parish**

Aspect V

- In other words, God is effectively destroyed. All that remains is a sentimental attachment to the forms of Christianity that offer a certain ballast to life (28).
- In short, Progressive believers may to hold the outward rituals of Christianity but kill the soul or the living relationship with the God of revelation.
- Ironically, each attempt to eradicate the evil (oppressive) structures of existence to overcome the depths of human alienation have led to an insistence of a deeper change (28).

25

 **St. Therese Parish**

Aspect V

Progressive Theories	
French Revolution	Remake society by abolishing the nobility and radically altering the political and cultural order
Marxist Theory	Revolutionary change in the economic and therefore class order
Freudian Angst	Domination of the superego and the structure of the human psyche
Feminism	Hatred of patriarchy as embodying the oppressive order of gender
Sexual Liberation	Hostility toward marriage and family and a "heteronormative" understanding of sexual life
Critical Theory	Racism pervades every nook and cranny of Western civilization and the psyches and assumptions of the world of every citizen of Western civilization

26



St. Therese Parish

Aspect V

Progressive Theories

Ecological Movements	Anti-human sentiment given the impact of human beings on the creator order.
Transhumanist	Contempt for the physical and mental order of humans and the hope to remake humanity from the ground up. The body is malleable and must be reshaped according to our inner convictions.

- Each of these successive expressions of neo-Gnostic faith shares the same fundamental terrain, and each attempts a profound structural change. Each insists on the utter annihilation of the structure of oppressive system as the necessary prerequisite for the new age of freedom to come (29).

27



St. Therese Parish

Aspect VI

- **A High but Ambiguous Call**
 - *Progressive religion issues a high but ambiguous moral call.*
- Progressive religion sounds a bracing moral call and claims to occupy the moral high ground in whatever cause it takes up (30).
- Given they are the fighters against the world's evil, they can be ready to make personal sacrifices for what they believe (30).

28



St. Therese Parish

Aspect VI

- Progressive religion has a stance moral seriousness in the face of perceived injustice and bringing about a better world, a quality originally borrowed from Christianity. In this way, it is attractive, especially among young and idealistic spirits (30).
- But because Progressive religion denies the Fall, and therefore leaves its adherents unchastened by the realization that all people, including themselves, are sinners in desperate need of forgiveness, it tends to produce an unfortunate but inevitable collective attitude of moral superiority. It tends toward Pharisaic self-righteousness (30).

29



St. Therese Parish

Aspect VI

- Progressive religions often begin with an assault upon the real injustice (though not always, as can be seen in the Progressive attack on the unborn). (31)
 - **Examples:** Attack on the depredations of the aristocracy in 18th century France; against the sad plight of workers in 19th century Europe; or the evil blot of slavery and Jim Crow visited on blacks by whites in America, or aspects of inequality between women and men that have needed reform in a modern technological society (30-31).
- Christians, understandably, are moved by concern for justice.

30

St. Therese Parish

Aspect VI

- While Christianity and Progressive religion have a common concern for justice at the outset, the deeper principles of the two faiths only emerge as time passes, when it becomes apparent that poverty cannot be simply be overcome, or that disease and old age cannot be entirely conquered (31).
- The logic of the Progressive mindset makes itself felt, and an insistent call is sounded to eliminate the poor, to abort the abnormal, and to euthanize the elderly.
- It is not so much love for those who suffer, but anger rooted in pride at the fact of suffering that provides the deepest motive power in the drive for societal change among Progressive faiths (31).

31

St. Therese Parish

Structure of Modern Progressive Religion

- Read chapter II
- Twelve Aspects of Modern Progressive Religion (first six principles).
- Pages 31 - 52



32