

How do we keep our youth in the Church? (Abbot Tryphon)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



We are living in an age that has witnessed changes on a massive scale as never before. The way we communicate has changed with the coming of the internet, with information available that would have required a library and advanced degrees to access in the past. Ideas and information are available that leave our youth with choices that were never available a generation ago.



Moral norms have changed, with values and lifestyles that would have never been seen as acceptable in the past becoming part of mainstream. Gay marriage, the high divorce rate, children being raised by unwed parents, and profane music that sounds like it came from the underworld (which inspired it, I'm sure). Child sexual abuse is reaching shocking numbers, with clergy, boy scout leaders, coaches and police officers under arrest. With the environmental crisis increasing and political unrest spreading, hope is fading. Our world is polarized in ways that are mind boggling, and the economy has lowered the hopes and expectations of a whole generation.

With all that has changed in our world, is it any wonder young people are abandoning the Christian faith in droves? With the youthful questioning of authority, it is not enough to simply expect them to accept the authority of bishops, priests, and the traditions and teachings of the Church. There needs to be a change in the way we of the older generations communicate with our youth.

In this age of information we must demonstrate to our youth the difference between information and wisdom. Wisdom is that which is passed down from the past and which imparts substance and enlightenment. Wisdom is not about information, and does not compete with worldly knowledge. Wisdom need not be in conflict with science, nor be linked to narrow mindedness. Wisdom is that which not only connects us to the best of human knowledge and experience, but links us to that which is eternal. Wisdom gives us the ability to relate to our Creator, to our culture and to others. The urgency of imparting this message is great, for we have

a whole generation that is in danger of losing faith in God.

It is not enough to expect our young people to attend services if we do not listen to them, respect them, and try to understand the world that is confronting them. They are growing up in a different world than people of my generation experienced, and this important difference must be acknowledged and respected. We can't simply teach the truth to our youth, we must live it in a way that makes it real for them. We must be patient with them, be open to their struggles and non-confrontational when they disagree with us, or we will lose them forever to Christ.

Today's young people have the same hopes and dreams that previous generations held, but this fast changing world is depriving them of hope. Nihilism has become the religion of countless numbers of our youth, with the result that life has become meaningless . The information age has driven God out of societal, cultural and governmental prominence, resulting in mass disbelief.

We who are of the older generations must witness to the wealth of truth that is in the ancient knowledge and wisdom of the Church by demonstrating it's worth in how we live. If young people do not see a genuine living out of the Faith in us, they will keep looking for truth in directions that will take them far from it. Young people are worthy of our love and respect, and worthy of sharing with us the life in Christ that is their heritage as well. The Church will not be a draw to our youth unless her members demonstrate holiness of life and reach out with love, patience and understanding, offering something that is seen as real by today's young people.

Finally, today's young people need to see joy in the hearts of those of us who have taken on Christ. If we do not have joy in our hearts the youth will see nothing that is attractive to them, and will continue in the wasteland of consumerism, materialism, nihilism, and all hope for the future of our planet will have died.

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