

- This past May Pope Benedict XVI ordained 19 priests for the Diocese of Rome, and in his homily the Holy Father counseled the new priests to cultivate a strong interior life to protect themselves against worldly influences.
- The Holy Father went on to explain that the world does not know God, and that the “world”, in its evangelical meaning, is a threat to the Church and to her members.¹
- Pope Benedict described the world as “a way of thinking and living that can . . . contaminate the Church, . . . and hence requires constant vigilance and purification.”²
- His point, of course, is that a worldly way of life and Christianity are very often at odds with one another, and therefore it is very important that we guard ourselves from the dangerous and sinful influences of the world.
- In this same vein, St. Paul tells us today in his letter to the Ephesians: “you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.”
- Rather, St. Paul tells us that “you should put away the old self of your former way of life, . . . and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”
- What St. Paul is telling us is that, as Christians, our lives must necessarily be different from the lives of those who do not know God. Our belief in Jesus has set us apart, and therefore our lives must reflect our belief in Jesus and in His teachings.
- Therefore, to St. Paul it is important that we examine our lives – even daily – in order to prevent ourselves from giving in to the ways of the world that endanger our souls.
- As the Holy Father mentioned to the newly ordained priests, we must be vigilant against sin, purifying ourselves through acts of penance, and fortifying ourselves through a life of prayer.
- Furthermore, in the Gospel of John today Jesus tells the crowd: “Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”
- Jesus is calling us to make a choice. While in a primary sense Jesus is making a reference to the Eucharist, in a more broad sense our Lord is calling us to choose the things of Heaven over the things of this world.
- And let us be clear: the Church, within whose fold we are directed toward the things of Heaven, and the world, with all of its seductions and temptations, are on vastly different pages and have vastly different values.
- Sadly, our Church is so often ridiculed and mocked for being out of touch with the world and in need of modernization. This is absurd. Founded by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church understands the world all too well.
- But like Jesus Himself, whose Body she is, the Church is called to be a sign of contradiction in this world. And so this conflict between the Church and the world necessarily exists.
- No, my friends, it is not the Church who is out of touch with the world. It is the world who is out of touch with the Church – and who thereby rejects our Lord.
- Therefore, my friends, it’s important that we understand that we cannot compromise with the world and still maintain our Christian integrity. It’s simply not possible, for our Christian values and the values of the world are too often at odds. And so we have to make a choice.
- Are we going to live up to the name of Christian that we took on at our baptism by actually trying to be like Christ, following Him no matter what the cost? Or are we going to wantonly

¹ “Guard Against Worldly Influences,” *The Catholic World Report*, July 2009, p. 6

² *Ibid.*

revel in the mammon this world has to offer, imbibing its culture of death and all of its trappings?

- My friends, I'm certainly not here to point fingers in this regard. I'm here to point out the way that Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls us to live our lives. I'm here to call all of us to a life of Christian integrity for the sake of our souls.
- Bear in mind that living a life of Christian integrity doesn't mean we will never sin. All of us sin out of human weakness. Having integrity means that we recognize our sins as sins, and that we don't try to rationalize them or make them into something they're not.
- It pains me a great deal to know that the denomination I grew up in, and which gave me the foundation of my faith, now finds abortion acceptable. People: Things do not stop being sins just because laws change or because a society thinks it is evolving and advancing.
- To say that something our Christian tradition has known to be intrinsically evil is no longer a sin is a wicked lie. No, we must be honest and recognize our sins if we wish to be people of integrity.
- Furthermore, having Christian integrity means that we humble ourselves and ask our Lord for His mercy and forgiveness whenever we sin.
- Christ loves us and He wants to save us, but we must be willing to trust Him and follow Him, even when the way that He marks out for us is the way of the Cross.
- So many times it can seem very difficult to live up to the demands of our faith because it requires that we die to ourselves. Living as a faithful follower of Christ requires courage, self-control, patience, humility, and generosity – virtues that are hard to come by in our world today.
- It requires that we put away our old selves and convert, putting on a new self configured to Christ. Most importantly, it requires that we love of God above all else – even above ourselves.
- But let us not forget that following the way of Christ is also the way to true joy and peace in our lives! As our Lord tells us today: “whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.” In Him alone is our ultimate security and our eternal happiness.
- Therefore, we must turn away from the things and values of this world. You see, my friends, we can take nothing of what this world has to offer with us into eternity. The only thing that we can work for in this life that we can take with us into the next is our personal holiness.
- Moreover, it is only in living for Christ that we can ever realize our true human dignity.
- Think about this for a moment: our Lord has made us in His own image and likeness. In His humility our Lord has taken upon Himself our human flesh, and in doing so He has bestowed upon us a dignity that we cannot begin to fathom.
- Furthermore, God has put all of creation at our disposal. It was for us that this beautiful universe was made. But while this world was made for us, we were actually created for the world to come.
- Therefore He has called us to live in a way that is commensurate with our heavenly calling. He has called us to live in a manner worthy of the dignity He has bestowed upon us in letting us be called children of God.
- Specifically, God has created us in His own image so that we might make visible with our lives the invisible reality of His existence. We are His ambassadors, as Paul says, so that Christ may be made known to all mankind (cf. 2 Cor 5:20).

- But to do this, we must be willing to put aside our sinful pasts and put on the new self, created in righteousness and holiness of truth. We must reject the lure of worldly temptations and work for the food that endures for eternal life, not the food that perishes.
- And this food that endures for eternal life is only found here: in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church: within our teachings, our traditions, and our sacraments.
- My friends, ask yourselves: What does our Catholic faith mean to you? Do you live your life differently because you are a Catholic? Are you living in a way that compromises or is at odds with our Catholic faith? Are you living for the world rather than for God?
- Let us all examine ourselves well, my friends, and make the choice to live for our Lord rather than for the world. Let us lay aside whatever worldly values and attachments we may still cling to and fully embrace our Christian faith. And let us trust that our Lord, in His mercy and His goodness, will save us and set us free.