

Bishop Moussa G.H

One of the essential traits of the minister of youth is to be aware of the era, for it is unreasonable for him to deal with young people without an awareness and a knowledge of the age that they live in with all its characteristics, its trends, and its conflicts. Young people cannot live isolated from these or without being influenced by or influencing them.

These are some of the features of the years we are living in. I do not say the era we are living in because the landmarks of this age change thoroughly and radically every few years and need to be constantly reviewed and kept up with by alert minds and spirits.

1. The Age of Knowledge:

The scientific achievements of this age are amazing and numerous. There has been a great accumulation of previous studies and research that have been undertaken by thousands of scientists through time. Statistics indicate that the scientists of the twentieth century are equal in number to those in previous centuries and that the energy consumed in this century surpasses the energy consumption of the world throughout its long history.

Wars today do not depend on the number of troops or of the quantity of military equipment but of scientific achievements in the areas of spying and counterespionage, the devising of new codes and similar matters.

Space research has made it possible to cope with the world as a small sphere. Photography, broadcasting, aiming or changing the direction of missiles to hit those who had fired them, have all become easy.

Reaching the moon, the conflict over planets, meteorology, desalination of the sea water, aerial agriculture, technological progress, the robot, genetic engineering, test-tube babies, surrogate mothers, new forms of energy, computer networks, computer viruses, all make the modern minister in need of:

- knowledge of these achievements
- religious, humanistic, and moral discussion of these issues
- the utilization of this storehouse of knowledge in the ministry.

2. The Age of Communications:

A while ago, CNN, which operates 24 hours a day, came to Egypt offering us the news of the world the moment it takes place, various commentaries on it whether sincere or biased. It gave us information about various societies, mainly Western with all the manifestations that are contrary to Egyptian morals, traditions, and religions. It also shows provocative advertisements arousing our consumer appetites so that we buy what we do not need.

Satellites and the Internet are responsible for a wealth of information being available to all and have brought about an educational revolution. This potentially unlimited information invades our space and intrudes without permission into our homes through a computer monitor, imposing a foreign culture on us. The world which seemed huge before is now suddenly to be found in our living rooms.

We expect more television broadcasts which will present us with American and European values which are increasingly threatening to our lives, our families, and our children and which tend to be more materialistic, physical, and violent rather than spiritual, moral, and ethical. These spectacles will invade our houses without permission, as we can see is clearly the case in Western societies.

In spite of the fact that the communications revolution naturally has benefits such as the ease of transfer of information and knowledge and the ease of transmitting it to others via cassette recorder and video, document duplication, fax and telex, what is needed is a way to exploit these methods for the benefit of man and the service of Christ.

What is required is that these means of communication be thoroughly studied to choose what is best and to preserve and exploit them.

3. The Age of Integration:

It is no longer possible for a human to live on an island isolated from the world. Even a country can no longer live alone without the exchange of news, of civilizations, cultures, and values.

The dazzling American media has become the most dangerous imperialistic force and its cultural invasion of nations is more dangerous than military invasion. Time has brought an end to military invasion and it is now time for economic and information invasions.

When you turn on the radio or TV especially after the main broadcast, you find a remarkable media mixture: religion and morals, science and culture,, arts and literature combined with impurity, materialism, crime and violence, and defilement. There are programs that invite people to be religious and others that are atheistic or against Christ. They are all to be found on the radio, on television, in the press, in books, and on tapes.

We need to build up our youth and establish them firmly in their Christian, Egyptian, and their ancient civilization roots so that they can face up to this overwhelming information flood and stand tall as Christians above the dangerous influences and the stumbling blocks.

We need to build a youth that knows its Christ, is united with Him, has His Spirit, is enlightened with His word, is filled with His grace, and has the positive mission of confronting and resisting sin so that it does not give in to it slavishly.

4. *The Age of Materialism:*

The determining factors in any given situation are now “interests”. Nations now deal with each other on the basis of this term considering it “the only value that should be observed” which is of necessity very dangerous since an “interest” is merely a material value; so where are the spiritual and moral values? The material end now justifies the crooked means. Man is now evaluated in accordance to his material worth or his bank account. With all due respect to the importance of the material in the life of man as a means of subsistence, it is not the aim of existence. The thin line between “sufficiency” and “greed” needs to be clearly defined to our youth. Also the main concern of the faithful spiritual minister who is aware of the great worth of the divine treasure, of the eternal inheritance, of the tender shepherding of the Lord, and of inner spiritual peace is to give the material its natural weight so that it does not become a cancer eroding all our human, moral, and spiritual values.

We need a minister who is spiritually filled, living the faith, engulfed in the world of eternity so that he may persuade those who are ambitious for wealth, or those who rely on money, or those who despise the simplicity of truth. He needs to explain to them what is useless and what is counterfeit, “*for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*” (Lk. 12: 15) “*If I have made gold my hope, or said to fine gold, ‘You are my confidence’ for I would have denied God who is above.*” (Job 31: 24 -28).

5. *The Age of Immorality:*

We cannot deny that impurity walks the streets of the world with head held high and without shame. The virtue of sanctity is now hiding in embarrassment before this impure flood of immoral films, perversions, invitations to profligacy, an attempt to legalize perversion, and more.

Sexual freedom abroad has caused man to live at a level below that of animals. Animals have times, restrictions and limits. Man, in contrast, was given two “reins” to his instincts by God, reason and the soul. But man has ignored the controls of reason and spirit and has followed his instincts and senses without however, being filled or slaking his thirst, for *whoever drinks of this water will thirst again.*” (Jn. 4: 13)

Thus values were destroyed, marriage is spurned and children are perceived to be a heavy and terrible burden. The birth rate has gone down and divorce has gone up. Young people have taken the way of violence, addiction, and sin, and there are no shepherds.

We therefore need a skillful minister and a consecrated servant, who serves not because of coercion or and under duress, but in love and of his free will. We need to call our youth to holiness and show them that it is suitable to life on earth and a preparation for eternal life. It is a value that can be lived by and which can govern behavior in joyful faithful striving, with the grace of God and the work of the Spirit of God.

6. The Age of Pressure:

Life is no longer easy and smooth for there are two different types of pressure:

- a. pressures on faith
- b. economic pressures

In the first case, the media disseminates a great deal that assaults our faith and we have to support our youth in the face of these attacks. We need to explain to them the tenets of the Christian faith with a heart that has experienced it, and with enlightened thought and behavior that bears out the truth of our faith.

In the second case, we need novel and innovative ideas on how our youth can reformulate their perception of work. They should not be ashamed of manual work and should not submit to the tyranny of a job that does not give them the opportunity of development and progress, but they should energetically start a small private enterprise with its changing and growing revenue. We need to help our youth start these microenterprises through simple easy-to-repay loans which they should be conscientious about repaying with manliness and honesty.

We need:

- + to change the young people's way of thinking.
- + a great deal of faith, for the Lord can open closed doors.
- + a dynamic and positive attitude on the part of youth who should not knock at doors waiting for a static job that hinders their growth and progress.

7. The Age of Freedom:

The winds of freedom are blowing everywhere, from Latin America to the Soviet Union and we see totalitarian regimes in Russia, Eastern Europe, and other countries, falling like autumn leaves. Doubtless this is a significant aspect of our age. There is no place for an arrogant dictatorial minister who overrules other ministers and those whom he is serving; this minister would be one who is out of

touch with the spirit of the age and who is unaware of the changes taking place around him. He should

- + accept opinions different from his.
- + encourage free debate.
- + develop group leadership.
- + allow participation in decision making.
- + ensure freedom of information
- + give explanations.
- + be an “Us” leader rather than the “I” leader.

These are all the facts of the present age and we must exploit them for the benefit of the ministry; otherwise, those who are being ministered to will fall into one of three categories:

- + **A passive group:** those who do nothing
- + **A discontented group:** those who reject silently or who discuss secretly.
- + **A rebellious group:** those who openly reject what is happening.

These are only examples of the characteristics of the age we live in with its currents, its organizations, and its media. Just as everything about this age is not totally bad, so neither is everything totally good. We need to pay attention to the following:

- 1. Awareness:** the need to study thoroughly everything around us.
- 2. Choice:** of what is constructive and the rejection of what is destructive willingly, with conviction and joy.
- 3. Making the best use:** of the changes and achievements in a way that builds our lives and the lives of those we serve.

