

The Benedict Option vs CSWNA Advocacy

A book was recently published that has stirred much commentary in Catholic circles. This book is The Benedict Option by Ron Dreher. I need to disclose that I have not read this book but I have been following the conversation 2nd hand from those who have. As I understand it the author proposes we the Catholic Church have lost the cultural war here in the United States not to mention in other parts of the world. The author then suggests how the Church should continue to function. His role model is Saint Benedict of Nursia, the father of western monasticism. Benedict was raised in the area of Rome in the 500's. This was following the fall of Rome to Germanic tribesman in 476 AD. Roman civilization was mostly gone and society had descended into anarchy. In order to maintain a Catholic community he and other like-minded men left Rome and moved to the remote area of Nursia to establish the first western monastic community. Here the faith was maintained and other aspects of civilization were preserved. The model eventually sponsored other monasteries throughout Europe and convents for observant women. Later these monasteries and convents played a key role in re-Christianizing areas where formerly the faith had flourished.

This is a beautiful model but I would like to suggest that it has a critical flaw given the current movements within our society. When Saint Benedict moved to Nursia he and his fellow monks were left largely unmolested. The powers that contended then in Rome and throughout Italy did not perceive Benedict's establishment as a threat. It was irrelevant to them. Here is the flaw in the Benedict option for today: **separate catholic communities will be perceived as a threat and subject to persecution.** The destructive forces that are now manifesting themselves in our society demand that all bow before their standards. Resistance will not be tolerated. Currently the legal system has been subverted to meet this ends but I would suggest that more punitive methods will be employed in the future. A new Benedict Model will receive no peace.

This is where CSWNA advocacy is critical. **The best defense (preservation of our faith) is an active offense. CSWNA advocacy is that offense.** Catholic social workers need to stay informed of the issues in society that are attacking their faith and ability to practice their profession. After being informed of the issues we need to take action utilizing the tools available through advocacy. Many of these call us to become involved in different capacities to make our voices heard in the legislative process. Going forward the Advocacy arm of CSWNA, along with our allies such as the USCCB, Thomas Moore Society etc., will endeavor to provide you guidance on those opportunities.

Also please pray for Our Ladies' and Saint Louise de Marillac's intercession in this struggle...