

Editorial



Dear Readers,

The theme of this Bulletin, *Mission in a Secular Europe*, resulted from the SEDOS Mission Symposium 2021, where Fr. Daniel Huang, SJ, gave a lively talk on the theme of “Mission in a Secular Age.” His article will appear in the book of the Mission Symposium that is scheduled to appear mid-June, published by Orbis Books. In this Bulletin we have gathered the texts of the talks by different renowned speakers focused on mission and secularization in Europe. The introduction will be by Sr. Marie-Hélène, OLA, who together with Sr. Lieve Stragier, ICM, helped us to set up the program of this seminar, SEDOS Spring Session 2022.

We would like to give a short summary of the article by Fr. Daniel Huang, SJ, which will help us to enter the problems, and opportunities, of a secular society.

First, it is important aspect is to understand the “secular”:

- ✓ in opposition to “religious”, relating to worldly or temporal matters, e.g. secular concerns;
- ✓ not overtly or specifically religious, e.g. secular music
- ✓ not ecclesiastical or clerical, e.g. secular landowners

Thus, “secularization” is the process of “becoming secular”.

However, the term “secularism” refers to the political system, which in French is called “*laïcité*”. It discourages religious involvement in government affairs, especially religious influence in the determination of state policies; it also forbids government involvement in religious affairs, and especially prohibits government influence in the determination of religion (separation of Church and State).

Now, according to Fr. Huang, “what makes a culture secular is not simply the absence of religion, but the presence of a new ‘social imagery’, a different cultural construct of society, a new set of conditions of plausibility for belief that affect religious believer and unbeliever alike.” He then gives three features of a secular culture:

- 1) Faith becomes an option;
- 2) A tendency of “exclusive” humanism;
- 3) Suspicion of institutional religion.

The way to answer and accept these challenges in mission is by:

- 1) Embracing pluralism as a value;
- 2) Enhancing Human flourishing and Spiritual experience;
- 3) Reforming the Church.

In a nutshell, this is what mission in a secular age is about. In this issue of the SEDOS Bulletin we will find many of these aspects back, but now in the context of the Mission in Europe. We will end this short intro on the topic of the seminar with a prayer formulated in a “secular” way, written by Karem Barratt:

A Prayer For Oneness

*I rest in you, Spirit of Life.
I place in you my feet, my legs, my torso,
my arms, my shoulders, my head
and allow you to support all that I am.
I rest in you, Spirit of Life,
and give to you my worries,
my fears, my doubts, my hopes,
my joys, my pains, my anger,
my love, my hate, and allow you
to take in all that I am.
And as I give all that I am,
I find the place of truth, stillness, still,
eternal where you and I are one.
I breathe in, deep, deeply, down, up,
all that we are, as I stand on my toe
at the edge of the universe, in oneness.
And all that we are expands,
until forever.*