

Jesus Walks the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33) with Generation Z
the *Woke Generation*.

Good morning and thanks to Benny for this invitation to reflect with you on the Bible and evangelization with Generation Z. I have been invited as a person who spends most of the hours in my day reading and reflecting on the Bible, as our rule, borrowing from Psalm 1, teaches: meditate on the Law of the Lord, day and night.

I work with the Bible on various levels, from preaching here in the Parish of San Martino, to lectio divina, to working with doctoral students on their dissertations, and teaching Exegesis and working on the new critical edition of the Hebrew Bible (*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*) and the translation of the Aramaic Bible into English (*The Antioch Bible Project*). I see all of what I do as *lectio divina*, studying the word of God that leads to prayer and action and evangelization.

I feel rather limited to speak to you today on the question of engaging Generation Z, though I have been listening to others. I am a Canadian coming from a Western culture with all its presuppositions about itself and the world beyond its borders. I have lived in Italy for 32 years and still I feel I have a limited vision on this topic given my background. I cannot pretend to address the realities of all the cultures who are participating in these days. Perhaps some of what I have to say will speak to your world, some will not. I am blessed to work at the Pontifical Biblical Institute where I enjoy classes with young people from over 70 countries.

Given my own limitations with this topic, I have posed questions to members of generation Z about the Bible. I have spoken with two young Pugliesi priests who are currently living here at San Martino are very much involved with generation Z. I have also spoken with parents of Generation Z to ask them the question of this conference.

The general response is that generation Z here in Italy view the Bible as a series of legends and fables. This was confirmed for me with other young parents in the Parish here. They complained that they cannot get their adolescent children to come to church. But they also confirm for me that in school they are exposed to philosophers who are not believers such as Albert Camus or John Paul Sartre, or Karl Marx. As adolescents and young adults they begin to raise questions about the Bible and about the catholic faith in general. We can explore this phenomenon a bit later.

In my generation, when I was an adolescent and young adult, the famous play Jesus Christ Superstar had appeared (1970). It asked questions that I had never heard in Church. I was 15 years old when the movie was released. At the climax of the play, Judas interrogates Jesus:

*Every time I look at you I don't understand
Why you let the things you did get so out of hand
You'd have managed better if you'd had it planned
Now why'd you choose such a backward time
And such a strange land?*

*If you'd come today you could have reached a whole nation
Israel in 4 BC Had no mass communication*

*Don't you get me wrong
Only want to know
Jesus Christ
Who are you? What have you sacrificed?
Jesus Christ
Superstar
Do you think you're what they say you are?*

*Tell me what you think
About your friends at the top
Who do you think besides yourself
Was the pick of the crop? Buddah was he where it's at?
Is he where you are? Could Mohamed move a mountain
Or was that just PR [public relations]?*

*Did you mean to die like that? Was that a mistake or
Did you know your messy death Would be a record breaker?*

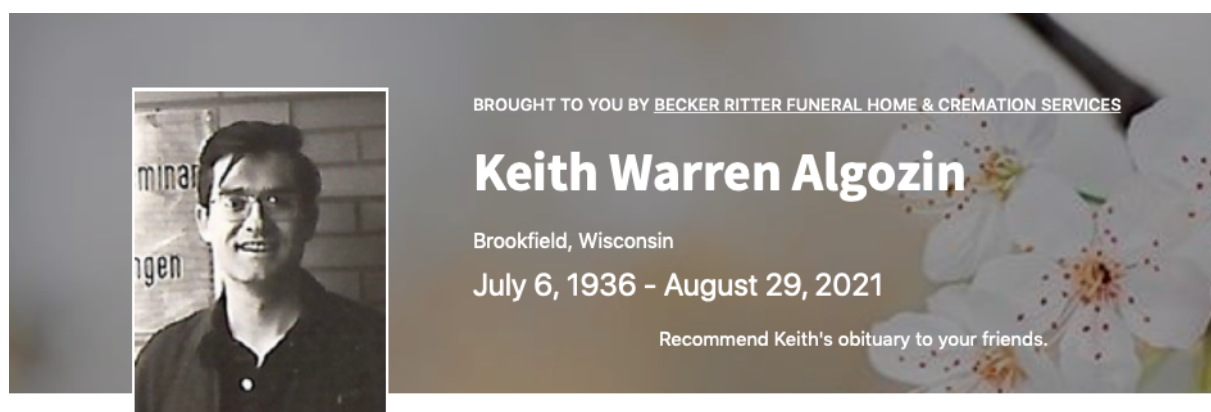
*Don't you get me wrong
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Do you think you're what they say you are?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlOxUcTcUH0>

This was 1973. I was 15 years old and these were the questions of my youth regarding Jesus. This play by Webber and Rice is now a classic, often reprised in London, New York and Toronto. It was streamed free during the pandemic on the website *The Show Must go on.*” Thus, thousands of people were again exposed to the questions raised in Jesus Christ Superstar.

As a teenager, I was awakened to new questions about Jesus, questions I had never heard before. In my religion class in Canada the teacher, a Holy Cross priest, showed the movie in class and we discussed it. It was my first act coming to a more mature faith. It was an awakening for me. I was able to ask even more questions than Judas asks of Jesus in *Superstar*.

At university, I had direct contact with philosophical atheism, or what is known as “philosophical materialism.” The professor who guided my research was Keith Algozin, an atheist who taught me philosophy. Here you see a picture of him as a young man



He too awakened in me a deeper faith and raised profound questions that challenged me. I was lucky that already, because of *Superstar*, I was already on the way to a mature faith. Without that, I could have lost everything. I am grateful to prof. Algozin for pushing me even further. He was a gift in my life. Thus, I was deeply moved when Pope Francis gave his first interview as Pope to Eugenio Scalfari, the owner of the center left Newspaper, *La Repubblica* and a well known atheist in Italian society. Now in his synodal process Pope Francis is institutionalizing this action—which we will talk about below.

I would humbly suggest that to engage Generation Z in their faith journey, I have to know my own journey—moments of darkness, confusion, of abandonment and how I reacquired my faith as an adult—how I grew from the Christmas stories I learned in Catechism to coming to believe that Jesus Christ is God’s response to humanity.

TODAY

Today in my culture we speak about the “Woke Generation,” a term that is common among some of the members of Generation Z.

The term, woke generation, has become chic and it is even used today in a negative sense, meaning “trendy”. The term itself was borne in the 1950s in the African American community as members of that community were **awakening** to the injustices they were suffering in American Society. It would lead to the civil rights movement and the expansion of voting rights to African-Americans and the end of segregation.

Helen Prejean in her new book, *River of Fire*, that was published a few months ago (she is the author of the book *Dead Man Walking*, that was made into a major film in 1995 and won several awards) recounts how she **awoke** to the suffering in American prisons and especially the injustice to those condemned to death row.

She writes about her life prior to this awakening experience :

*At this point in my life, I am still pretty much smack-dab in a very enclosed world of **personal, privatized** religion. The suffering all around me in the larger world does not exist for me. It's not that I'm trying to block it out. I simply haven't **awakened** to it. **But I guess when you're not awake, you're not awake.** That's why when I do wake up to the call of the Gospel to resist injustice and get to work in the public square, I have to call it grace.*

Her point: persons who are not awake to the injustices in our world, **do not even know they are not awake**. As she writes, they live in a personal, privatized religion and don't even know it.

As she gets closer to her awakening, she writes:

*Awakening to the real struggles of desperate people on the margins in a way that ignites compassion and concrete action is a grace, a precious gift-**which at this point in my life I clearly don't have.***

She then writes about her awakening as she listens to one of her sisters in the community who was currently on a plantation in the southern United States teaching African Americans to read. She writes:

*After Marie Augusta's talk, feeling stricken, I follow her into the elevator and blurt out, "I'm the director of novices." I feel a need to confess, to acknowledge how slow I've been to understand the heart of what Jesus was about. **What took me so long?***

From this moment of awakening her life would be permanently changed. Until that point in her life, she writes that she had been asleep. Her awakening comes over two thirds of the way through the book. Thus, she honestly records for her readers her many years of being asleep. It becomes a transparent report of how a religious can sleepwalk through the signs of the times.

The idea of “woke” (being awake) stems from the Gospel itself where Jesus awakens people from their sleep to perceive a new world of justice, what Jesus calls, *The Kingdom of God*.

Generation Z is a woke generation, awakened to climate change, to structural injustices built into our societies. In my home country of Canada, we are awakening to the injustices of colonialism, how Europeans, arriving in North America actively worked to destroy the societies that were already present in Canada. This statue was recently removed from a park in northern Ontario. It depicts the French explorer, Samuel Champlain in all his colonial power. As you can see, the lower bronze images are of a Jesuit holding high the cross of Jesus and the indigenous people cowering.



In this close-up view of the side of the statue, You can see to indigenous people cowering under a Jesuit who holds up the cross Christ.

This is what the statue looks like now.



People have thrown red paint on the base, a symbol of the blood of the indigenous people.

I remember seeing this statue as a child and finding it amazing, breathtaking. Today, I am glad it has been removed. Younger Canadians have awakened us all to the presentation of indigenous people in public statues in public parks.

During my discussions with generation Z, their parents and the priests who work directly with them, I learned that generation Z expect us to be awake too.

Being “awake” to injustice in our world is part of our Christian tradition. It happened on the road to Emmaus:

*Jesus Walks the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33) with Generation Z,
the Woke Generation*

Jesus awakes Cleopas and his Companion

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all **these things** that had happened.

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their **EYES** were kept from **RECOGNIZING** him. And he said to them, “**What** are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know **the things** that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “**What things** ?”

They replied, “**The things** about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But **we had hoped** that he was the one to *REDEEM ISRAEL*. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since **these things** took place.

Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.

They were at the **tomb** early this morning,

and when they did not find **his body** there, they came back

and told us that they had indeed *seen* a vision of angels

WHO SAID THAT HE WAS ALIVE.

Some of those who were with us went to the **tomb**

and found it just as the women had said;

but they did not *see him*.”

Then he said to them, “Oh, how **foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe** all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah *should suffer these things* and then *ENTER INTO HIS GLORY*?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them **the things** about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay **with us**, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay **with them**.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their **EYES** were opened, and they **RECOGNIZED** him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning **within us** while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem;

Questions:

How does Jesus awaken them?

How does Jesus awaken me?

Where am I still asleep in my own life?

What are the signs of our times which Jesus awakes me to?

Powerpoint.

I would like you to take a moment with this passage and notice just how asleep Cleopas and his companion are. I would also like you to consider how Jesus awakens them.

As the scene opens we recall that the Passover is now over and that Cleopas and this friend are leaving Jerusalem and heading back home. They were in Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover, the celebration of the salvation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

As the scene opens, they are discussing all the things that they have witnessed in Jerusalem during Passover namely the crucifixion of Jesus.

This is a **very positive** presentation of these two people. They are aware of current events and they are discussing these events and trying to understand their significance. They read the newspaper and are not unaware of critical questions in their world. They know the signs of their times, but struggle to understand them. They are asleep to the significance of the events that have taken place. But I appreciate the fact that the two of them are deeply engaged by their own world and seek to understand it.

Jesus engages them where they are at. He does not begin with—you fools, can't you see me. In fact, Jesus walks with them in the **wrong direction** while he enters into dialogue with them. After they recognize him they get up and returned to Jerusalem—they walk in the right direction. But for me it is critical that Jesus walks with them in the wrong direction and listens to their experience. He does not discount their experience. He does not explain to them what they **should** be experiencing, he just listens, while walking with them in the wrong direction. Once they have recognized him they will return to Jerusalem. They will walk in the right direction. But it is going to take some time for them **to see**, and Jesus gives them that time. He invests his time in them.

During a Mass in St Peter's to mark the start of a two-year synodal process that is taking place across the world, Francis called on Catholics to embrace the "**art of encounter**". While he preached on the encounter between Jesus and the rich man (Mark 10: the gospel for that Sunday), the experience on the road to Emmaus is a more developed and nuanced scene of the "art of encounter".

Jesus questions them so that they will share their experience. And they are well-informed. We hear their disappointed hopes: "we had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel."

Jesus listens to their despair. He lets them tell their story: “We had hoped” is such a powerful expression. What are the hopes of generation Z? Do I know what their hopes are?

Perhaps we see only limited ways of contacting this generation: they have to come to Church, they need to fit into my world for me to have contact with them. Pope Francis in his homily said: “God is not found in neat, orderly places, distant from reality, but... meets us where we are, on the often rocky roads of life.” Jesus finds two travelers on the rocky road to Emmaus.

Pope Francis preached: “Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties.” “So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one another.” Again, Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

“Today, as we begin this synodal process, let us begin by asking ourselves - all of us, Pope, bishops, priests, Religious and laity - whether we, the Christian community, embody this style of God, who travels the paths of history and shares in the life of humanity.”

This is Jesus on the road to Emmaus and it is a profoundly Carmelite scene. Edith Stein, a student of Edmund Husserl, together with Emmanuel Levinas, write about the **Other** who is to be encountered as infinite, and that **our transcendence** is experienced in the counter with a mystery of the other person. We encounter the other, **just as the other is**, not as I insist that the other **should be**.

This is what is happening on the road to Emmaus. Jesus models the art of encounter with generation Z. Here is one of my favourite paintings that depicts my imagination:



The painting is by Riccardo Tommasi Ferroni and was done in 1982. It hangs in Santa Maria di Montesanto, the twin of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, in Piazza del Popolo. Here we see Jesus at supper in Emmaus with two young street musicians—Generation Z. Note the music and violin on the ground. The supper takes place in a local tavern along the via del Babuini.

The road to Emmaus asks me how deep is my sleep and how open am I to being awakened. Like Helen Prejean's confession post awakening: she didn't even know she was asleep, so how could she wake up?

How does Jesus awaken them?

Remember that Cleopas and his companion have learned about the empty tomb. They have heard the message of the angels, "he is alive"! Still they keep walking away from Jerusalem. They are not convinced. No Easter faith for them.

What is their fundamental question? They note that Jesus “was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and *crucified him*. ”

With that it becomes clear that while they are awake to the events in their lives, they are asleep to the meaning of the cross.

How is Jesus going to bring them do this deeper experience of his incarnation and his passion? What other way then to open the Bible with them and to begin a lectio divina: “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them *the things about himself* in all the scriptures.”

The lectio divina experience awakens them. Pope Benedict was convinced that Lectio divina was the road to renewal in the Church. On September 16th, 2005, the first year of his papacy, he spoke to a group of biblical scholars at his summer residence at *Castel Gandolfo* on the approaching 40th anniversary of *Dei Verbum* (the Vatican II document on Revelation). He said:

In this context [the celebration of *Dei Verbum*], I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of "lectio divina": "the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart" (cf. "Dei Verbum," n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church -- **I am convinced of it -- a new spiritual springtime.**

Then on November 6, during his Sunday blessing in St. Peter’s square, the Holy Father returned to the question of *lectio divina* as the anniversary of *Dei Verbum* drew closer. He said:

Among the many fruits of this biblical springtime I would like to mention the spread of the ancient practice of *Lectio divina* or "spiritual reading" of Sacred Scripture. It consists in pouring over a biblical text for some time, reading it and rereading it, as it were, "ruminating" on it as the early Christian writers say and squeezing from it, so to speak, all its "juice", so that it may nourish meditation and contemplation and, like water, succeed in irrigating life itself.

The question is how to bring lectio divina to Generation Z. We learn through stories—narratives. The bible reports real stories about real people, David and Bathsheba, Uriah, and Absalom, a rebellious son. It addresses questions of

violence, rape, and war. Our Gospel stories report encounters with Jesus and his teaching and preaching.

Lectio divina can be done with art, music, drama and other creative activities to reach Generation Z. My most recent lectio divina was on the terrace here at San Martino the night before the major climate protest—a protest coming from the Generation Z and I used Naboth's vineyard: a story about conversion of land from its divine purpose for other purposes. The Bible addresses climate change.

Jesus leads a lectio divina to bring Cleopas and his companion to a deeper faith.

There are three final comments I would like to make before leaving the Emmaus text and Caravaggio's masterpiece. Note that Caravaggio adds a third person who is not in Luke's account. Doesn't he look like a representative of generation Z? He looks interested and even preoccupied. I want to know what he is thinking? The moment of salvation at this table is for him as well, captured in the fish fin that is shadowed on the tablecloth.

Secondly I would ask about the worthiness of Cleopas and his companion to receive the Eucharist. They have not yet confessed their faith in Jesus, yet Jesus breaks bread with them. They come to faith only after he disappears. Should they be allowed to receive the Eucharist. It seems Jesus thinks so.

Thirdly, Caravaggio knew and studied Michelangelo's last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel.





Notice what he has done with Jesus:



First, he borrows the beardless Christ. Then you can see that the right arm is identical in both paintings. But the left arm is not. In Michelangelo's fresco, the left arm is raised in judgment. But Caravaggio lowers this arm so that it becomes an arm of welcome, an arm that reaches out to Generation Z.

What is Generation Z discussing as they walk along the road?

Education

Whatever Generation Z is talking about today, they are talking intelligently and critically.

In Europe and North America, we are in the longest peacetime in history. This has led to a highly educated population and Generation Z is an educated generation, perhaps the most **universally** educated in human history.

This leads to challenges in their faith development as I mentioned earlier. Our faith preparation must respect their youthful adult minds as Jesus does on the Road to Emmaus. In all other areas of their lives young people are asked to think critically. Whether they are learning the sciences or the humanities, Generation Z has been taught to think critically. This critical thinking will only increase around the world. Those in the humanities are reading the literatures of their cultures, literature that critiques its own culture and raises issues about the structures of society. Some of this literature, such as novels by the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky or the Irish novelist James Joyce among many others, raise deep concerns about religion.

As I mentioned above, in my conversations with Generation Z and with the parents of Generation Z and the priests who work directly with Generation Z, they sang with one chorus: a good percentage of Generation Z believe that the Bible is a collection of fables. Jesus walked with Cleopas and his companion and listened to them, I can listen to Generation Z as well.

Does our faith development programs, our catechism, respond to these young people? Does it respect their intellectual development that they experience in other spheres of knowledge as they mature. Pope Francis in his homily to open the Synod preached that we cannot present to generation Z **“artificial and shallow and pre-packaged responses.”** In other words, answers like: “you just have to believe it” will convince no one in Generation Z. Such answers didn’t convince me as an adolescent and young adult 50 years ago.

This means that as a Carmelite I can articulate my own faith journey, how my faith has grown and changed as I moved into adulthood. Some of us may have lost our faith in adolescence or early adulthood and had to reacquire it as an adult. The faith of a mature person is like a tree. Perhaps some branches were cut down, but the roots have grown very deep.

An encounter with generation Z means that you and I can articulate our faith without resorting to “artificial and shallow and pre-packaged responses” that, in the end, are unconvincing and the critical thinkers in generation Z can see through them. Or worse, they can see that my own faith has not grown into maturity.

Social media.

We know that social media can be an effective tool for evangelization. Can we model this value to Generation Z. Does our use of social media reflect the new evangelization?

David Brooks in his book, *the Road to Character*, addresses the question of social media. David Brooks is a writer for the New York Times and his book presents different people whom he regards as virtuous, persons such as Dorothy Day and St. Augustine among others. Though the book was published in 2015, which is a lifetime ago in the social media age, he addresses some of the challenges of social media. He writes:

*But information technology has had three effects on the moral ecology that have inflated the **Big Me***

1. *First, communications have become faster and busier. It is harder to attend to the soft, still voices that come from the depths. Throughout human history, people have found that they are most aware of their depths when they are on retreats, during moments of separation and stillness, during moments of quiet communion. They have found that they need time, long periods of stillness.... These moments of stillness and quiet are just more rare today. **We reach for the smartphone.***

Here, Brooks, a Jew, a political commentator, a New York Times writer, expresses the values of Carmelite life in a popular, best-selling book. You would think he was referring to Elijah's encounter with God on Mount Horeb. How often have I seen couples or families in restaurants—each one looking at their phone.

Brooks again:

2. *Second, social media allow a more **self-referential** information environment. People have more tools and occasions to construct a culture, a mental environment tailored specifically for themselves. Modern information technology allows families to sit together in a room, each absorbed in a different show, movie, or game in the privacy of their own screen.*

Before there was social media, in my academic world, there was the curriculum vitae—the Big Me! My curriculum vitae is a great temptation to want to expand my own career at the expense of my students. This is the shadow side of academic life—the Big Me. I work hard to stay away from that, but it remains a

temptation. A professor's curriculum vitae is self-referential—it's all about me. So before there was social media, the temptation of **narcissism** and **self referential** behavior was possible. David Brooks underscores that social media has simply given the narcissistic personality a new outlet.

3. Third, social media encourages a broadcasting personality. Our natural bent is to seek social approval and fear exclusion. Social networking technology allows us to spend our time engaged in a hyper-competitive struggle for attention, for victories in the currency of "likes". People are given more occasions to be self-promoters, to embrace the characteristics of celebrity, to manage their own image, to Snapchat out their selfies in ways that they hope will impress and please the world. This technology creates a culture in which people turn into little brand managers, using Facebook, Twitter, text messages, and Instagram to create a falsely upbeat, slightly overexuberant, external self that can be famous first in a small sphere and then, with luck, in a large one. The manager of this self measures success by the flow of responses it gets. The social media maven spends his or her time creating a self-caricature, a much happier and more photogenic version of real life. People subtly start comparing themselves to other people's highlight reels, and of course they feel inferior.

David Brooks notes that 72% of Generation Z want to become famous on the internet, through TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or other platforms of social media.

Here Titus Brandsma is most adapt to our time since he refused to publish the fake new of the Nazis a gave his life for that.

Leaders in our Carmelite order are called to recognize the value of social media for evangelization and for community building. But it has its shadow side as well that we need to recognize and by our healthy use of social media, we set an example for generation Z.

Climate change

It should be obvious to us all that climate change is a key topic for Generation Z. Greta Thunberg, now 18, became the spokesperson for this issue three years ago. Because of climate change, many young people are awakening to the fact that meat production and dairy production is a major source of greenhouse gasses. In my own local world of Niagara Falls Canada where I grew up, we have the largest fresh water lakes in the world, but they are being harmed by the dairy production along the lakes.

Our young people, generation Z, are clearly awake to this question. Some are changing their diets, others, in an act of sacrifice for the planet, are becoming vegan, which means avoiding the consumption of any animal product. They are teaching older generations. This vegan option is much supported in the Bible:

Gen. 1:29-31 God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

At the beginning of creation, we were vegan. We only begin to consume meat, after the flood:

Gen. 9:1-3 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these.

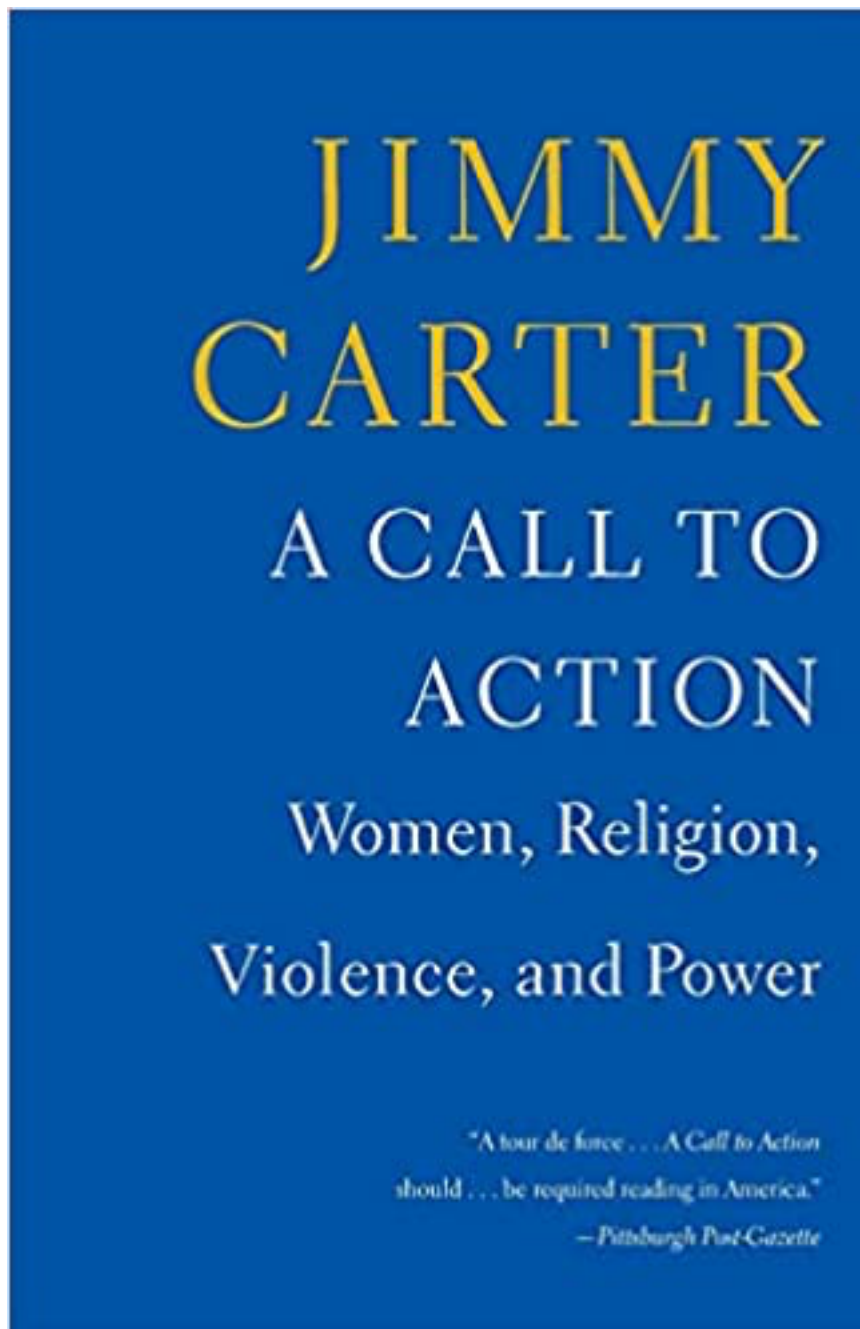
The consumption of animals will result in the development of Kosher rules in Judaism.

So when Generation Z comes into our communities, will these young people see we understand how our food consumption impacts on the climate. Will they see that we know that at creation we were all vegans until Noah left the ark. Are we as awake as they are to this question?

Women

Generation Z lives in a world where women have a greater role in society and we have seen major world leaders who are woman and so that issue is mostly resolved in the secular world, but the role of women in the Church is still a question. We have seen Pope Francis placing women in leadership positions and I think we will continue to see this. For some this is moving too fast, for others, not fast enough. But the role of women for Generation Z, especially the female members of Generation Z, will be very different.

Jimmy Carter, former president of the USA and a man of deep faith has written a book called: *A CALL TO ACTION: Women, Religion, Violence and Power.*



In the first lines of the book he writes:

All the elements in this book concerning prejudice, discrimination, war, violence, distorted interpretations of religious texts, physical and mental abuse, poverty, and disease fall disproportionately on women and girls.

This book traces his decision to leave the southern Baptist church and to join another Christian denomination because of the treatment of women in the Southern Baptist Church.

Cardinal Kasper, president emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, recently addressed the role of women with Vatican News: “We have missed out pretty badly in allowing women to play a greater role in the Church. You cannot simply exclude half of humankind.”

GERMANY

Kasper warns on women priests

WHILE the role of women in the Catholic Church is all-important, the time is not yet ripe for women’s ordination as it could lead to a schism, Cardinal Walter Kasper has warned, *writes Christa Pongratz-Lippitt*.

“We have missed out pretty badly in allowing women to play a greater role in the Church. You cannot simply exclude half of humankind,” Cardinal Kasper, president emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, told Vatican News. Candidates for the priesthood would have to learn to meet women on an equal footing. But the Church was not yet “mature enough” for women’s ordination, he said. “That could only be agreed on by the universal world Church ... which is not yet ready for it.”

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Under Pope Francis there is greater awakening to the need for women in leadership roles in the Church.

Our lectio divina can underscore the role of women in the Bible. There are so many examples: Sarah, Rebecca (who changes God’s plan), Deborah, Suzanna. Mary Magdalene who is not a prostitute but a benefactor:

Luke 8:1-3

The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, *who provided for them out of their resources.*

Mary Magdalena is now considered a "apostle" since in John 20 she is the first person to preach the gospel to the other apostles. We need a series of lectio divina that focuses on women.

A mistrust in Institutions including the Church

In Europe, the mistrust in public Institutions has accelerated since the WWII. We see this especially in Eastern Europe where there is deep distrust of the COVID vaccine that governments are encouraging. Simply because the government suggests or mandates that each citizen should take the vaccine, some people are unwilling. They do not trust civil governments.

In Canada we are dealing with the Church's involvement in managing indigenous residential schools. Thoughtful reflections on this crisis have pointed out that this desire to assimilate the indigenous populations was rooted in a Darwinian understanding of superior races, which today is regarded as a phony pseudo science that is racist. The result is more loss of credibility for the institution of the Church. Pope Francis will visit Canada to apologize to indigenous peoples next year.

The Canadian government actually set up the schools and asked the Churches to staff them. Both Church and government have lost credibility by covering up their crimes committed in these schools.

The movie **Spotlight**, which was awarded the best movie in 2016, focused on how three Institutions, the Church, the press and law enforcement worked together to protect pedophile priests. The movie questioned the credibility of all three institutions. Thousands of generation Z have seen this movie readily available on Netflix. If you haven't seen it, I encourage you to do so.

To engage generation Z, the universal Church, the Carmelite Order, individual Carmelite provinces must be transparent on this question, publishing the names of past abusers and refusing to protect abusers today. Generation Z assumes that institutions look to protect their own interests at the expense of less powerful

persons. They assume that the Church still protects sexual abusers. We have to do everything possible to show that this is not true.

But for the time being, generation Z will not trust institutions, including the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

My compliments to Benny and the Carmelite Curia for choosing such a difficult topic for this meeting. Engaging Generation Z means developing a trust that Jesus developed with Cleopas and his companion. It means walking with them in the direction they are walking when we first meet:

1. Carmelites can imitate Jesus on the road to Emmaus and meet Generation Z where they are.
2. Carmelites can listen to generation Z.
3. Each Carmelite knows their own faith journey and be able to articulate that journey and with a mature faith. We can be comfortable with the disbelief and mistrust of Generation Z because we know our own.
4. We can respect the critical thinking of Generation Z and not respond to them with prepackaged answers.
5. We are able to imitate Jesus and lead a lectio divina that is creative, using social media, art, and music for the “woke” Generation Z.
6. Our community lifestyle reflects concretely the concerns of Generation Z about the role of women, about climate change and the sexual abuse crisis.
7. We model an appropriate use of social media for community and evangelization.

We pray that God might give us the wisdom to read the signs of our times and the wisdom to know how to respond to them like the saints of our time, Titus Brandsma, Rosario Livatino, Pino Pugliesi, and Edith Stein.