

Society of Consumption: A Promise of a Never-Fulfilled Joy

It is commonly agreed that today's society can be best described as and is known to be a society of consumption *par excellence*. It is a society that is dominated by the power of money, and the relations that move it are subject to materialism. It is a society that creates needs and floods the market with them for the sole purpose of making more and more profit. It is a society that replenishes products speedily. It is a society that presents man with a new, modified, or improved product every day.

It is a society that constantly plans to create new needs. In this planning, it utilizes the latest and paramount techniques of humanistic science, especially the fields of psychology and sociology. It uses the intelligent media to present these products. It forces it on man's sight and, with it, captivates all of his senses and stimulates his conscious and sub-conscious desires.

The media promotion does all of this using the most sophisticated techniques, based upon the results learned from research in the fields of psychology, sociology, and economics. It matches the best image with the most stimulating motions. It entices desire using a premeditated and well-thought-out backgrounds of music, in such a way as to deceive the viewer and mislead him to believe that obtaining that product is a must. He is made to think that, without the proposed product, he will be incomplete, and if he obtains that product he will achieve that much-desired happiness.

Man is besieged by the different types of ads everywhere on the road, in periodicals, on TV, and on the radio. The advertisements are widely spread, rapid in their frequency, intelligently deceptive, and use the stimulation of deeply hidden desires in the conscious and the sub-conscious; all of these are factors that plant doubts inside the human soul, leading it to doubt its wholeness and health. This is in addition to the sophisticated ability of the media to deceive by leading us to think that we are nothing unless we match the criteria of the features that are promoted by the media.

The end result is that, when man is sold into the deception of the advertisement, he is led from one disappointment to another in his strife to obtain the promised but unobtainable happiness. This is in addition to his strife to make more money in order to buy the promoted products. That, in turn, makes his life a continuous endeavor to make more money in order to spend more money. Besides the increased danger of perversion, the fact is that man's life will come to an end, while this cycle, which leads to making man's daily life an unending hectic effort that never captures the promised happiness, will never end.

All of this ties man to running behind the materialistic styles of life, dreaming through them to reach an unattainable happiness and tranquility. The outcome on a personal level ends up being a continuous and an increasing frustration and an unbearable boredom. As far as the family concerned, because of this style of life, man reaps anxiety and tension, as well as a broken family relationship and dissatisfaction of the children and the spouse. All of that is in addition to the disorder that results from long work hours and the absence from home.

In the end, the wise man is he who trains himself to enhance his sense of critical observation in the face of what he sees and what are promoted products that are asked of him to obtain. Man needs to ask questions such as, do I really need this product? Does it really benefit me? Can I not live without it? It is of utmost necessity during this time and age that is crushing man for man to train oneself to attain the ability of discernment

between good and bad, between good and better, between the necessary and the unnecessary of life, between the necessary and the more necessary.

Based upon the above, is it not true that the saying “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10) takes on a unique meaning in our materialistic society, if we understand that the much-longed-for true joy permeates only through an aware Christian life? A life that reflects the belief that man’s true life is built upon the faith that Christ is the true life, and the true life is in Him and only in Him alone.