



George Weigel's Remarks on Trinity House Community

St. John the Apostle Catholic Church, Leesburg, VA
March 20, 2025



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We are renewed in our missionary discipleship and we can go out and be the missionary disciples we were consecrated to be in baptism. What does all that have to do with Trinity House? It has, I think, everything to do with Trinity House, because for Ever and Soren and the people who work at Trinity House, who benefit from it, who guide it on its board, who support it, this is a vocational enterprise.

It's not a job, it's not another boutique café. It's a vocation. It's a calling. It's an answer to a call. And in that sense, it really is **the New Evangelization in action**. First of all, in the simple public witness of having this place in the middle of town that's an unapologetic, welcoming, not in-your-face...but welcoming witness to the love of God in Christ. With coffee.

Secondly, family formation. This theme, “heaven in your home,” which is the theme of the workshops that Ever and Soren lead, these Heaven in Your Home Letters (e-letter) that they send out — all of this is based on a quite serious theological idea, that **the family models the Trinity**, hence the name.

Trinity House is not just a nice name. It's an idea. It's one of the two great Christian ideas: God is triune, God became incarnate. **The family models the Trinity in a distinctively tangible way.** And then these parish-based programs that Trinity House is creating around the country are another example of the **New Evangelization in action.**

All of this is in aid of growing the church. We're not here to just preserve this thing. Trinity House does not believe in what some less-than-fully-catechized dioceses called "managed decline." We don't do "managed decline." **We do growth.** Because that's our baptismal obligation. And this is, as Mike Ortner suggested, terribly important for the country and not just the Church.

My dear friend Fr. Richard John Neuhaus used to say that politics is downstream from culture. Politics is a reflection of culture. If the politics is rancid, which I think is a reasonably fair description of our public life right now, that's because there are deep cultural problems. And at the heart of those cultural problems is the **erosion of the family.**

When I was first going to Poland right after the changes of 1989, one of the things that first struck me was how the Communist project from the get-go tried **to erode family life in Poland.** And a great example of this was a new town built outside of Krakow called Nowa Huta, a steel milling town - the first human settlement in a thousand years of Polish history deliberately built without a church.

But the key were these apartment blocks. They were huge, long apartment blocks with very small apartments. They deliberately discouraged large families. You could not walk down the longitudinal space of the apartment block from the apartment on the far left to the apartment on the far right. You had to go down, go out, walk across, go up, so the secret police could see who's meeting with whom.

Work schedules were arranged so that parents had very little time with children. And one of the first things that the Polish Communist Party did in late 1945 was set up kindergartens to construct the new "Soviet man" from three-years-old on. A deliberate assault on the family. That was certainly very much John Paul II's experience as a pastor.

It's why he created the first Institute for the Study of Marriage and Family Life in the history of the Church in Poland when he was the Archbishop of Krakow. That's why he gave so much attention to the family as Pope, because he knew that **the erosion of the family would lead to the erosion of culture, which would lead to the erosion of public life, which would lead to chains** of one sort or another.

Now, the challenges we face today are not quite the same. They're more subtle, and perhaps all

the more dangerous because of that. The Communist system in Poland was so overtly brutal, that it was easy to understand what was going on, and easy to hate. One of my favorite lines in 900 pages of *Witness to Hope* is from a coal miner outside of Katowice in Silesia during the Pope's first visit to Poland in June 1979. A reporter asks him, "Why are you here?" And the guy says, "To praise the Mother of God and to spite those bastards," meaning the authorities.

That was easy to see and hate, and then resist. **It's a lot different today.** Netflix isn't beating you over the head with a truncheon or making you live in a small apartment or whatever, but it is sending out bad stuff. Corrosive stuff. Family-eroding stuff. The same thing for the Internet, social media, et cetera, et cetera. **So we have to be, as this Church of the New Evangelization, what I have come to call a "culture-reforming counterculture."**

We have to be a counterculture, but we're not just saying "no" to stuff. We're saying no to stuff in aid of reform — and **a culture built around genuine human dignity, community, and solidarity.**

That's what's going on here at Trinity House – and what will hopefully go on for many, many more years, so that I can plead "helping get this [Trinity House Community] started" when I meet St. Peter. Trinity House really deserves your support, and I thank all of those of you who have supported Trinity House in the past, and I urge those of you who haven't to consider being part of the support system of this wonderful ministry, which I'm sure is making John Paul II very happy. Thank you.

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