

SYNDICATED RADIO TALK SHOW HOST

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EXTREME MAKEOVER



WOMEN TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST
NOT CONFORMED TO THE CULTURE

IGNATIUS

The following is an excerpt from Chapter 7 – Extreme Media Makeover

Make a Concerted Effort to Silence the Noise in Your Life

On the cover of my first book, *Noise: How Our Media-Saturated Culture Dominates Lives and Dismantles Families* (mentioned in chapter 1), I have a thought-provoking quote from Pope Benedict XVI: “We are no longer able to hear God. There are too many different frequencies filling our ears.”

Think about that. The first thing we should be doing when we awaken is get down on our knees or bow our heads in a prayer of thanksgiving for another day. Instead, most of us hop out of bed and turn on the TV, the radio, or both. Many also hop on the Internet to check email and turn on their cell phones to start calling or texting a friend or a coworker about this, that or the other thing.

Given the fact that, as we discussed in Chapter 2, children are using media on average 53 hours a week, it’s not a stretch to say that your son or daughter is probably online or in front of the television set before leaving for school. So now you have all the noise from the media plus the inherent noise of one of the busiest parts of the day coming at you full speed ahead – noise, noise and more noise.

We rush to work and to school with the radio blaring and the cell phone ringing; and before we know it, the day is well under way and we haven’t even taken time to hear what God has to say to us. Then we get angry with God or frustrated when life doesn’t go our way.

We have to silence the noise in our lives if we want to hear from God and live a more peaceful and less stressful life.

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said that God cannot be found in noise and restlessness: “God is the friend of silence.... See how nature, the trees, the flowers, the grass grow in deep silence.... We need this silence in order to touch souls.”

This is where our “media reality check” enters the picture. Silencing some of the noise in your life will help you in your prayer life and allow you, as well as your family, to have some beneficial quiet time.

Wouldn’t it be nice to just walk into the house and not have to shout over the television? When was the last time you ate dinner with your family without some interference from modern media technology?

This media reality check, if you’re honest with yourself, will help you and your loved ones assess just how much time you spend watching TV or “friending” people on Facebook. It will help you detox in terms of learning to limit the amount of time spent with media.

The media is a great tool for evangelization, communication, and faith education; unfortunately, most Catholics are not spending their media time listening to Catholic radio or visiting Catholic websites. That's why most of us can benefit from applying a media reality check:

- Build a “media-free zone” into your daily routine at home or at work. Silence the noise and allow yourself quiet time (start with 15-30 minutes) with God.
- Take control of the media outlets in your home by taking TVs and computers out of the bedrooms (including yours) and putting them in a central area that allows regular monitoring.
- Set and keep media guidelines in terms of time limits. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours a day of TV for children in grade school and high school, and no TV for children younger than two years of age.
- Keep Family meals completely media free. Turn off the TV and the cell phones. Let voice mail handle your calls.
- Don't make the TV or the computer the main focal point of your home.
- Think WWJW, or what would Jesus watch? Spending time soaking up movies or TV programs loaded with sexual or violent content is offensive to God and offensive to your spirit.

What we take from the media on a regular basis can impact our thoughts and behavior. Garbage in, garbage out, is the best way to put it. That means that our media habits, if they're more negative than positive, could lead to our not taking our faith or our time with God as seriously.

Conducting a media reality check at least once or twice a year can really boost that spiritual makeover and make it last for a long time to come. Advent and Lent are great liturgical seasons to do this.

If you have children, why not make the media reality check a family event? This will help instill solid habits in your children, habits that just might prevent them from needing a major spiritual makeover later in life.