

DE MAZENOD FAMILY

Understanding The Secular World We Live In

With this course being broken down into three sections, just as the original course was, we have included for you a list of definitions for each section of the course, as well as a brief course summary.

You may find it helpful to have the definitions handy when completing the course as a point of reference.

We hope you enjoy this course and find something to challenge your thinking as we continue to understand the secular world we find ourselves living in.



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Family**

*Part of the Missionary
Oblates of Mary Immaculate*

SERIES 1 - Definitions

Secular 1 – non-religious, “of the world” aspects of culture

Secular 2 – decline of Christian practice, a “secularisation” of society

Secular 3 – Many options, a plurality of belief and unbelief

Subtraction stories – how we have subtracted religion from our understanding of life

Enchanted world – a world infused and open to the supernatural

Disenchanted world – refers to only the physical, the material with no other forces at play

Buffered self – not ‘porous’ or vulnerable to both positive and negative spiritual forces. Free to choose options of belief rather than simply responding to spiritual forces

Social Imaginary – the subconscious influences on our life, the reality of all in Western culture, the water in the goldfish bowl we swim in. Based on natural order rather than supernatural order

Immanent Frame – the physical, material, tangible aspects of life

Transcendent – the intangible aspects of life - aspects of God, meaning, spirituality, fullness

Open/Closed Take – Open or closed to the idea of the transcendent, a personal sense of the transcendent

Open/Closed Spin – an extreme form of a take; convinced there is no other way of looking at the possibility of the transcendent



SERIES 1 - Summary notes

1. Default cultural context- secular

- Only the physical evidence based facts are accepted in Western society
- The rest we are free to believe or not believe

2. Religious practice not faith is declining

- Data suggest continuing decline in formal Christian belief
- Society concludes modernity and scientific evidence diminishes need for faith
- But the majority still have a level of spirituality

3. Believe through doubting

- There are now a variety of options to believe or not believe
- We need to be able to defend what and why we believe, recognising our doubts



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SERIES 2 - Definitions

Excarnation – removal of external “enfleshed” practices of faith

Mutual fragilisation of belief – the difficulty in maintaining a clear belief system when we are surrounded by others very similar to us with different beliefs

Nova Effect – a loosening of bonds of agreed religious position due to cultural cross-pressures

SuperNova – an extreme form of the Nova Effect with heightened pluralism

Spirituality vs religion – spirituality: own spiritual journey including pilgrimages, study and local groups. An interior journey that moves someone and makes them a better person.

Religion: tradition, doctrine, group practice.

Seekers – moving from where we are to a place of wholeness, with potential spiritual intuition

Dwellers – wanting purpose, not just experience, go from seeking to dwelling, wanting to be apart of a practising community or Church

Believing without belonging – those whose faith life can be at odds with their lifestyle, or they are distracted by other commitments. Enough aspects keep them regularly in contact with a Church community without committing to it

NB - the “notes” David refers to in the presentation can be provided upon request

SERIES 2 - Summary notes

1. Many practise spirituality not religion

- A desire to grow internally according to one’s own convictions and experience

2. Aspects of this Spirituality

- A journey rather than a stance
- Non-defensive
- Aware of doubts in their belief system
- Include others on the journey

3. Approach we can adopt

- Pray about it
- Talk to people of their spirituality
- Help bring the transcendent into the present conversation



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SERIES 3 - Definitions

Malaise of Immanence – the buffered self protects us from the negative but also from significance and meaning

Exclusive humanism – devoid of the transcendent

Gathered time – all time (past present and future) being present in God, in one moment.

Secular time – removes God and eternity from definition of time

Itineraries– the individual path of the spiritual journey

SERIES 3 - Summary notes

1. Need for transcendent remains in a secular world
 - Refusal to recognise the transcendent does not mean we are immune to this need
 - Continued sense of dissatisfaction, a lack of significance and meaning when we focus only on the immanent world
2. Redefinition of time to account for evolutionary time further minimises our significance
 - Time is not in relation to God but longitudinal, historical time
 - This gives a sense of diminished life span, such that time, meaning and death become our focus
 - There is disquiet in us, enlarged by an inner void
 - We have a deep need for reconciliation with God, despite philosophical secular views of enjoying life in the now
3. To find meaning
 - we remember our incarnation and God's resurrection
 - We gain meaning in the knowledge of our identity in God
 - Yet we present these in the context of personal spirituality, using subtler language



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