Cardinal warns of ‘poison’ of adapting Church to the spirit of the age

PHOENIX, Arizona, January 1, 2020 –

Speaking to a large gathering of U.S. college students, Cardinal Gerhard Müller warned against attempts to adapt the faith to “the spirit of the age” and giving in to “relativism” and “modernization.”

The former Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith did not mince words in his Jan. 1 homily on the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God which was delivered to thousands of Catholics gathered in Phoenix for the 2020 Student Leadership Summit. Over the course of the four day gathering in Phoenix now in progress, 9,000 Catholic young people — mostly college students — are expected to attend workshops and keynote speeches about missionary discipleship.

The Cardinal repeatedly cautioned the students against “adapting” the Church to the secular world.

“We cannot escape the deadly poison of the rattlesnake or other serpents if we strike friendship with it, but only if we prudently keep our distance and have the antidote ready at hand. The poison paralyzing the Church is the opinion that we should adapt to the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the age, and not the Spirit of God; That we should relativize God’s commandments, and reinterpret the doctrine of faith,” declared Müller. “Instead, as St Paul says, ‘The Church of the living God’ is ‘the pillar and foundation of truth.’”

“The crisis in the Church is man-made and has arisen because we have cozily adapted ourselves to the spirit of a life without God,” he said. “This is why in our hearts so many things still are un-redeemed and, consequently, long for substitute gratification!”

“Should the Church adapt the revelation of God in Jesus Christ to ‘where people are today?’ Can the Church be faithful to her foundation, and to her founder, if she mutates into a religion of humanity?” he asked. “The allegedly peaceful agnostics of today generously allow the simple people to keep their religion, but only because they are eager to use the potential of meaning the Church possesses for their own purposes: They do not hold revealed faith to be true, but they would like to use it for building the new religion of world-unity.”

Müller alerted his listeners to the fact that even a “few Church leaders” are confused in relation to attempts to “reconstruct the Church as a convenient civil religion, and make her more worldly, more secular.”

“Many believe what the Church needs is ‘modernization;’ Conversely, anyone opposing modernization is fought like an enemy and called ‘traditionalist,’” said Müller.

He continued:

Let me give you an example of how this works: Protecting human life from conception to natural death is discredited as a “conservative, right-wing” political position – while at the same time killing innocent unborn children is declared a “human right,” and therefore deemed “progressive.” In politics and media, it is all about power over human minds and over the money in people’s pockets. For this purpose, people are being conditioned by using campaign slogans like “conservative” or “modern.”

But faith in God is concerned with the contrast between true and false, and about the distinction between good and evil. What matters most deeply is that the faith is true, because Christ is the Truth. Only truth gives life, even and especially when it is challenging.

“There is no religion which is somehow ‘higher’ than the Church’s faith in Jesus Christ,” declared Cardinal Müller in no uncertain terms. “Jesus cannot be surpassed by the changing of times because God’s eternity encompasses all eras of history and the biography of each person.”

“God ‘wills everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself,’” said Müller, quoting St. Paul’s letter to Timothy.

Jesus Christ “alone can and does save the world; and frankly, I also would not want to be saved by anyone but him, true God and true man,” he concluded.