

Chain of Prayer : Praying for "Mountain" of culture & media

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From the "seven mountains of society", this "mountain" contains several interconnected domains. To name them : **culture and art, media and press, entertainment and sport.**

Culture and art

The world of culture is very expansive : **it encompasses a very wide range of arts**, including graphic arts (painting, drawing, engraving...), visual arts (sculpture, modelling...), literature and art of speech (novels, poetry, drama...), film and photography (> 500,000 films have been made worldwide... + 1,000,000 documentaries and series...), music (all genres : from classical to jazz, rock and heavy metal ...), performing arts (theatre, choreography, dance...), everything related to design (of almost all utensils), textiles, carpet weaving, lace, fashion...), architecture (also interior architecture), comics and cartoons, graffiti, fireworks, sound and light, gastronomy... and since the digital revolution is added to all modern media art (multimedia, audio-visual installations, web design...). You can make art out of almost anything, or you can incorporate art into everything : man is constantly finding new materials and techniques. This infinite creativity, the Creator put it in us, because he himself is like that.



Art is from God : He used beauty abundantly in his creation : even Solomon's robes were nothing compared to a simple flower in the field (Matt. 6:29). God commanded Moses to decorate the tabernacle beautifully, and he chose Bezalel : "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, wisdom, insight, knowledge and all kinds of crafts... (Ex. 31:3). God himself lives in unspeakable, heavenly beauty (with translucent gold streets!). Art can touch us deep in our hearts and **help open our minds to God.**



And yet : we see a lot of **distortion** in today's art world. The limits are constantly pushed back, the content too : art is **abused** for profit or perverse to promote dark ideas and sin. The world of culture is a free world (!) of artists who believe they have raised themselves **above the moral law** : drugs, alcohol and free love are quite normal here.

To "score" you have to stand out, therefore shock : slaughter sacred cows, an overdose of nudity, horror violence and sinister. The sacrosanct "artist's freedom" becomes an excuse for indecency, denigration, crass insults and the promotion of decadence. Artists



sometimes use their art to fight against their own "demons" (and unleash them all over the world). At its worst, it is a subculture (think Hollywood, for example); snobbish, conceited people who praise each other. Culture **becomes an idol** "which must save the world" : they give themselves the halo of "prophets and priests" - think for example of expressions such as "fashion pope" or "temple of 'art'". Sometimes absurd amounts are spent on such an art. This in turn causes commerce (Mammon) to reign, and that, for example, woman are exploited (and humiliated) as objects of lust. The mere fact of showing sin is often already a hidden promotion of it. You certainly can't put the whole art world in one basket : luckily, there is also a lot of beauty without an immoral agenda (e.g. Steven Spielberg). And there are also beautiful productions in the Christian sphere. But those who stand on the "top" of the mountain and shout the loudest, usually belong to the camp of "extremes". In God's eyes, the goal does not sanctify the means: art is not above moral laws. Art

can open our minds to God, but also to darkness! Movies, for example, influence you more than you think!

In Belgium, cultural **competence** lies with the communities. For the Flemish Community, the Minister-President, Jan Jambon (N-VA); for the Wallonia-Brussels community Bénédicte Linard (Ecolo); in Brussels, Pascal Smet (sp.a) and Rudi Vervoort (PS). The annual subsidy from the Flemish Community amounts to 508 million (1.11%) (in 2020). But the federal government still retains certain cultural institutions (La Monnaie, Bozar, and all the royal museums).

Pray for :

- artists of integrity who produce beauty in all sectors of the arts
- art glorify God again and respect His creation
- those who abuse art to be excluded
- decision-makers to discern what and who they subsidize, with wisdom; not to be afraid to throw away the "bad apples"
- the world of art to open up to the spiritual dimension, to man's spiritual needs, so that God and faith are no longer taboo
- the influencers on this mountain to meet God, or at least have respect for Him
- believing artists who produce Christian art without shame at the highest level (e.g. films), and for these to be watched.

Media and press, entertainment and sports

The media also cover a **very wide area** : newspapers and magazines, radio and television channels (public, commercial, regional, local), social media (Facebook...), websites and blogs, all kinds of documentaries, the global variety of journalists, editors, news agencies and bloggers. The media are more and more international, therefore less clear and **more difficult to control**.



The media boasts of being "**popular educators**" and emancipators, revealing "**objective**" **truth** (e.g. in scandals : the whole world of investigative journalism), making a critical voice heard (certainly in dictatorships), exercising a "control" of politics. It is not for nothing that they are called the "**fourth estate**" (next to the three estates of politics): like no other, they influence people's opinions. Those in power understand very well that whoever controls the media drives opinions. This is why there is so much political conflict around the media (and this is the first thing dictators do in taking control of the media). The media can make or break a politician. But they are not democratically elected, and they themselves do not allow their freedom to be restricted.

The media can indeed provide beautiful programs, educational documentaries, exhibit magnificent art (films, etc.). But like everywhere else, **abuse and imbalance** are possible here too. "Objectivity and neutrality" do not coexist. It becomes problematic when they suggest they do. It is the perennial problem of one-sided or false information, and worse still : the conscious influence exerted through bots and hacking, fake news, etc. The so-called objective "reporting and education" turns into manipulation or 'brainwashing'. It happens very subtly : the way you say things, what you don't say, who you give or don't give the mic to... It's amazing how the media **controls our opinions**, "massaging", send, without us realizing it (just like advertising). Mainstream media (general public) are in fact managed by companies (large corporations) which have a political or ideological colour. We often hear criticism say that they are in the hands of "leftist intellectuals" who themselves consider themselves very open-minded and tolerant, but they also apply censorship : which (by their standards) is not "**politically correct**", is made suspicious or silenced (for instance, we never hear a single criticism of the LGBT movement : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender). There is also a constant battle going on around the main broadcast channels that are serving the public, to see who can show their political colour. The commercial media, on the other hand, is **dictated by Mammon**. It has to pay off (audience numbers) and therefore people get (or are given) what they want! The world of **advertising**



is still entirely separate in this area : where thousands of professionals are constantly

focused on deliberately playing on our feelings and our desires. This is a business that brews on billions of dollars. The pull of commerce is drawing the scoop and populism to the fore, and the media is descending on the paparazzi and the gutter press. **Porn** is also very prevalent and downright problematic, especially since digital media has brought everything within reach.

The relationship between religion and the media is not straightforward. In our postmodern culture, everything must be supposedly **secular**, without religion (for example, "third party broadcasts" on VRT have been abolished). We rarely discuss the subject of God and faith, we silence them.



Those who are competent in this field; for Flanders, Minister Benjamin Dalle (CD&V) and for Wallonia Bénédicte Linard (Ecolo).

Entertainment is a small world apart in the media and has also grown into a huge industry. The first objective is relaxation and entertainment, through shows, quizzes, game programs, series... It can be high quality, humorous and informative, but also sometimes vulgar and low. 'A-muse-ment' literally means 'without muse' (inspiration). It often becomes an uninspiring pastime. Hence the quote: "If 'killing time' were to be considered murder, the TV would be the greatest mass murderer of all time".

Another part of this is the **world of sports**. It has also evolved from harmless play and healthy relaxation into an industry in which big money is ever more prominent. With all the resulting consequences – corruption, scandals, doping; absurd, astronomical amounts for the players; a small sphere with religious connotations (football gods, cycling gods...). However, the world of sport is also at times an opportunity for top Christian athletes to testify to their faith in front of a large audience.

Those who are competent in this area: for Flanders, Ben Weyts (N-VA) and for Wallonia Valérie Glatigny (MR). For the nineteen Brussels communes: Pascal Smet (SP-A) and Nawal Ben Hamou (PS).

Pray for :

- journalists and editors of integrity with sound moral standards, who love truth more than sensation, and who respect God and faith
- influencers on this "mountain". It is the summit that sets the course. May God raise up good people and bring down the others
- strong voices who dare to openly denounce abuse
- decision-makers, ministers: for an open, transparent and balanced policy
- new openness to God and to religion; standards and values. Make the world aware that Christian values have made Europe great
- people to learn to watch television and the media critically (Christians first)
- the media and for Christian initiatives: may they find enough staff and funding, and open up access to channels (name the people or initiatives you know specifically)
- more and more Christians to have the opportunity to testify in the world of sport
- the leisure industry not to sink into vulgar and immoral practices, for the sake of money