



Keeping Fit

Lawrence Frankel, a proponent of exercise for older people, led almost 100 in an exercise workshop at Nazareth College recently. The event is an example of the Center for Elder Learning's commitment to continued intellectual and physical growth for the over-60 population. This Spring the program will include six non-credit courses and memberships to the Center for Elder Learning. Further information is available from Kathanne Mitchell 586-2525, ext. 246.

Sarah Child



All in the Family

Women, Thank God For Jesus

I have been reading Sirach, that book of the Bible whose author is primarily concerned with moral instruction.

I had "dipped in" before, reading random chapters with little or no reaction, but on this day I came across Chapter 25 with the subhead "On Wicked and Virtuous Women."

It is uncompromising, unequivocal, harshly damning. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I read it again.

The section begins, "Worst of all wounds is that of the heart, worst of all evils is that of a woman." Then, "No poison worse than that of a serpent, no venom greater than that of a woman."

Fascinated, I read on. "There is scarce any evil like that in a woman" and "In woman was sin's beginning, and because of her, we all die."

For good measure, I read it again — this time aloud to the head of the house and he, a man who likes and admires women, commiserated.

I wonder how many men, deep down, still hold with the sentiments espoused here.

I flip to the Gospels — not

caring to end my day's reading on Sirach's sour note.

Almost without thinking I turn to St. Luke's account of the Penitent Woman. It is a favorite of mine. The mental picture of this sinner bathing Jesus' feet with her tears, then wiping them with her hair, moves me. Her tears bring my tears. But, they are good ones. I finish the story, my equilibrium back, the beauty and love communicated by Luke's words, a powerful restorative.

My thoughts leap to the Broadway musical of the Sixties, "Bye Bye Birdie," in which a young girl in the throes of adolescent awakening sings "How Lovely to Be a Woman." I have thought so for a long time now, although that was not always the case.

I ponder on the Old Testament and its view of women — not just Sirach's — juxtaposed against Jesus' view.

I think of his first miracle — at the behest of his mother; of his mild admonition at the home of Lazarus which lifts us household Marthas to another plateau; his extolling of the Penitent Woman as a model of love; that fact that it was Mary Magdalene who was the first to see and speak to the risen Jesus.

It occurs to me that we women are indebted to Our Lord beyond that yet of the rest of mankind.



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