

Sexuality and the Disabled

Tender Subject Finally Getting Scrutiny

By Joan M. Smith

In this International Year of Disabled Persons, the Courier Journal has focused on the educational, rehabilitative, assistance programs and the courage of the handicapped. Another important area, one just beginning to emerge from the shadows, is sexuality and the handicapped.

Sexuality, itself, suffers from communication breakdown, and according to Ms. Jacki Calnek, director of training and education for the Genesee Regional Family Planning Association, communication is just as big an issue with the handicapped as the non-handicapped.

Ten years ago there was nothing — education, support services, or discussion — regarding sexuality and the handicapped. But, like the Renaissance thinkers who shattered the darkness of medieval thinking, today's health professionals are opening doors on the subject. Questions are being asked not only by the professionals but also by the handicapped who are demanding, "Hey I'm here, don't ignore me."

Sexuality simply doesn't disappear because of a mental or physical disability. Mainstreaming has brought the handicapped into everyday life with its physical and emotional



confrontations. There are marriages where both partners are disabled. There are women with spinal chord disabilities who become pregnant, and there are disabled people whose medication interferes with physical functions. How to cope, what to do, where to go are dilemmas they face. There is a need to talk about these and other sexual issues.

With this in mind, Ms. Calnek coordinates health professionals interested in this field, who then develop programs such as informational seminars that are directed by handicapped volunteers, and are based on small group sessions and one-on-one discussions, to find solutions to problems. Ms. Calnek, who has been with Genesee Regional Family Planning for nine years, also was involved in social work. In working with elderly she recalled their one recurrent complaint: "No one touches

me anymore." And according to Ms. Calnek this does not necessarily mean a sexual encounter but the caring and warmth of just a touch.

"Everyone needs the kind of warmth in just holding one another," Ms. Calnek said, and added, "touching needs are important."

But no matter what the needs, whether physical contact, emotional understanding, or psychological support, the handicapped no longer have to drift in the dark. The developing programs have crossed a communication barrier, which is half the battle in facing sexuality with all its aspects.

Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceding the following Wednesday's publication.



Press Time

Special education students attending Camden Catholic High School in Cherry Hill, N.J., work closely with their teacher and get the press ready to run off another edition of the student paper. The handicapped youths produce most of the printed materials required by the Camden diocesan school.

Disabled Work To Provide 300 Jobs

Hornell — More than 300 job opportunities are anticipated by next spring for those wishing to work with the developmentally disabled in community settings.

That is a fact the Hornell Developmental Disabilities Service Office, part of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, hopes will attract potential workers in the Southern Tier.

A job fair recently was conducted at the Craig Developmental Center to acquaint its 1,136 employees with the jobs which will be

available in Chemung, Livingston, Schuyler, Steuben and Wyoming counties.

Craig expects its client population to diminish from the current 500 to 350, and staff to 592.

Jobs to be filled as new programs open in the various communities include residence directors and aides, program managers and team leaders, habilitation specialists, stenographers, clerks; recreation, occupation and physical therapists; dietitians, psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists and general

mechanics.

Present staff at the Developmental Center is being encouraged to consider moving its work closer to their homes and interests. W.T. Dillon, director, invites all employees considering a change to make their wishes known to the facility's Manpower Management Director.

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On the Right Side

3 Cheers For Jesuit O'Malley

Weren't you at Becket Hall recently?

Yes. They often invite an outside priest on Monday to celebrate Mass and give the homily. One said, "Nice to get a homily from outside for a change." I think this is true of parish pulpits too. With the invitation came an invitation to stay to dinner. I hit the jackpot. It was the Thanksgiving dinner for the students before going home for vacation. I was even able to collar a leg from the festive board.

Becket is a four-year "house of formation" preparing men for the theological seminary. There are 22 students at Becket. Fourteen are for the Diocese of Rochester; six for Albany, and one for Grand Rapids, Mich.

Father Robert Collins is the rector, succeeding Father Thomas Statt. Father Vincent Panepinto is the spiritual director. He also teaches religion at Mercy High School. Mrs. Eleanor Bock is the longtime secretary, with Becket from the beginning. And the faithful Laura Campione keeps the men healthy through her kitchen department. Besides the seminarians there is also Father Francis Lesso of the Diocese of Kissi, Kenya.

From our recent Kenya safari, I felt like his soul-brother.

Any special impressions?

I didn't get a chance to talk much with the students, but was well impressed with what I did see. The Mass, concelebrated with Father Collins, was participated in devoutly. They have a good four-instrument folk group. The men sang well. There were a few visitors at Mass, including females, filtered among the seminarians.

Also, I was pleased to see conspicuously on a book ledge in the reception room several books by G.K. Chesterton and Cardinal John Newman. They may have been planted there for my edification, but I was happy to see them. Very few seminarians or even youngish priests I have met know either Chesterton or Newman. However, there is some hope.

Two years ago this summer, I helped out at St. Ann's Home for Father John Glogowski. About 5 p.m., I noticed a young man who had a summer job on the grounds reading a book while waiting for his father to pick him up. He was then 17-year-old Jim Lenhard, now at Cornell. I sidled up to him. "What are you reading?" "C.S. Lewis." "Good Heavens! Where do you go to school?" "I was just graduated from McQuaid," he said. "Whoever introduced you to C.S. Lewis?" "Father

William O'Malley, a fine teacher."

Father Al Hauser of St. Peter and Paul Parish, Rochester, was ordained last May and serves at Waterstown for the Diocese of Ogdensburg. We are friends and he recently came to visit me. He is a Chesterton enthusiast and considers "Orthodoxy" one of the greatest books. I remarked, "You surprise me. Most of the priests I know in their late 20s and early 30s hardly know Chesterton existed. How did you become interested?" "From Father O'Malley when I was at McQuaid," he replied. So three cheers for Father O'Malley, McQuaid and Robert Knille, president of the Rochester Chesterton Society.

In a recent Syracuse Post Standard article, I read that 40 percent of Catholics are drifting from the Church. I doubt the statistic, though I realize there is some drifting.

Thanksgiving morning, Phil Donahue cheered up the airwaves by presenting a panel of three officers of the Gay Athiest Alliance, with their hostility to God, religion, and the Catholic Church. Two were fallen away Catholics: one Italian, the other Irish. The third was a fallen away Baptist. Their presentation of, and misrepresentation of, the Catholic Church and religion made it clear how little they understood the Faith. And Donahue, of course, presented the Catholic Church in the worst light. If Chesterton and C.S. Lewis and Cardinal Newman become popular among our young intellectuals, especially among seminarians and college and university teachers, both men and women, there is great hope for the Church and the nation.

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