

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

### Confession Has Great Value

Few places bring a priest and people closer together than a hospital. There, people are extracted from the security of home and family. There hovers anxiety from sickness and discomfort. There is the insecurity of being in a strange place and served by strangers. The priest usually represents an oasis of security both to patient and relatives. He represents God and the Church, which loom important in the lives even of careless Catholics.

About 12 years ago when I was chaplain at St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell, the revolution within the Catholic Church was going full blast. Old devotions were being attacked, including devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the Virgin Mother, and the rosary. Particularly under fire was the sacrament of confession.

One morning I stopped in to welcome a patient who had just arrived the day before from a neighboring village. I had not been with her three minutes before she blurted out in tears, "Father, can't I please go to confession?" "Why, of course. That's one reason a priest is ordained." "The priest we have in our parish won't hear my confession. He says it's not necessary, and that it's a waste of his time." Now this woman was no prize sinner. In fact, she was a woman of unusual holiness. But she had the right to the sacrament. The refusing priest later left the priesthood. I hope he is bringing up his children better than he cared for his spiritual charges.

### Contest Judged

Hornell — The annual Christmas decorating contest at St. James Mercy Hospital was judged Dec. 18.

The maternity unit won for best door decoration; intensive care-coronary care for best complete floor decoration; housekeeping office for best room decoration; fiscal services for best wall murals; occupational therapy unit for the prettiest tree, and the supply, process and distribution unit won for the most original decoration.

The winners received a donut and coffee party.

### NFP INFO

A Natural Family Planning class will be held Monday, Jan. 18, at St. Monica's. The class is limited to six engaged or married couples, and costs \$40 which covers three sessions, materials and follow-up. Pre-registration is required and is accomplished by calling the NFP office, 464-8705. In addition, NFP information sessions are held at St. Mary's Hospital the first Monday of each month and at Rochester General Hospital the second Friday of each month, 7:30-9 p.m. The information sessions are free and open to the public.

Last September I made my annual retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House in Auriesville. Our retreat master, Father Vincent McCorry, gave each of us a memento entitled, "The Case for Confession."

"The present startling decline in the use of the sacrament of reconciliation, however much it represents a reaction against past exaggeration, can only mean a decline in the genuine sense of sin which is an integral part of the Christian and Jewish religious heritage. The culture in which we live has systematically abolished a sin: (If you question that, consider the number of unmarried "live ins;" constant propaganda of the Planned Parenthood people which assumes and encourages fornication as the normal mores for youth; and the pride which places self above God's revelation.) The idea of no sin is attractive. And it is contagious.

"The teaching of the Church is clear: when no mortal sin, no confession is required. But: (a) is that the only need for confession? and (b) who is to judge the seriousness of the sin? Have we no distrust of our self-regarding, self-pampering subjectivism? Here are the reasons for regular confession, seasonal or bi-monthly.

"1. It is a sacrament. Every reception of a sacrament is a personal encounter with Christ.

"2. It is an ecclesial act, as distinct from a private act. The approach to Christ is through His Church.

"3. It is the one time we approach Christ sacramentally as sinners.

"4. By honest self-examination of conscience, it is a steady help to that which many people never do attain: true self-knowledge.

"5. Explicit contrition, expressed and sacramental, becomes deeper and more genuine.

"6. Love always seeks expression in act. A devotional confession, which is what most confessions are, is a voluntary act of love of God.

"7. It is a real demonstration of reverence for Christ in the Eucharist. Like taking a shower before going out to dinner with an esteemed friend.

"8. It is an act of witness, of good example, especially in parents with regard to children.

"9. It shows our gratitude for the sacrament of reconciliation, God's Easter gift to us.

"10. It is an act of sincere humility. How we hate to confess what is embarrassing!"

The greatest spiritual writers, with Ignatius of Loyola heading the list, have always recommended confession, not because of mortal sin which is usually absent from regular confessions, but because of devotion to God.

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