

Catholic doctor

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on such controversial issues. Like some Catholic politicians, they think they can separate personal morality from public policy and hide behind the fear of imposing their beliefs on others. At the same time, doctors wonder why their public esteem as professionals has fallen so badly in the last few decades. As a practicing surgeon, I was caught up in all of these concerns. Having made the decision not to perform any more abortions, I continued for 13 years to practice with another surgeon who did abortions whenever he was asked. I thought to myself "I'm not doing them; what he does is his business." Even though I was not directly involved, abortion was part of the practice we shared.

Then in 1980, I read an excerpt of John Powell's "The Silent Holocaust." That convinced me of the horror of abortion. I knew that I had to speak to my partner about the abortions he was doing, but I just didn't have the courage. I ignored the pleading of my conscience.

But God had a plan, a plan for my life and a plan to use me for life. His plan was for me to speak out for unborn life, that a child might be born. He also planned that, in the process, a child of his might begin to grow into manhood. In my search for direction, He led me to the Anawim Community and it was there that my conscience was formed in His truth. As I became more aware of my own sinfulness and God's mercy, I became more compassionate toward those physicians still caught in the lie of abortion. I knew I could no longer postpone confronting my partner with the truth. I realized that if he didn't give up doing abortions, I could no longer be a part of our surgical practice. That would mean major personal upheaval in my personal and professional life. At the time, I was only partly aware of the deep ramifications of my decision.

I approached my partner in humility. I asked his forgiveness for the ways that I had failed him in our partnership and asked him to stop doing abortions. Ultimately, neither he nor the board of Soldiers and Sailors would give up the practice of aborting life. In December, 1983, I left the hospital, my partnership of 14 years and the private practice of surgery.

As a child conceived in love is carried with expectancy and delivered with the painful contractions of labor to be brought forth with joy, so too the last year of my life has been marked by waiting, pain and my gradual emergence into manhood. The impact of being sidelined from my active practice was greatest in the area of my self-esteem. My sense of worth was tied to production and doing for others. Almost daily, I fought with feelings of shame and worthlessness. Through it all, God revealed who I really am. Gradually, He let me see the underlying moral disorder which led to

The Berkeses: Not of this world, but in it

By Teresa A. Parsons

The most surprising thing about Ken and Willa Berkes is how ordinary they seem.

By worldly standards, it is uncommon for a physician to give up a thriving surgical practice because his partner and the local hospital perform abortions. When that physician and his wife offer themselves and their home for healing ministry, they begin to sound extraordinary and possibly a bit off-balance. But when they identify with an esoteric-sounding community named Anawim, they sound weird.

If the Berkeses had been dressed in long white robes and speaking in tongues, it wouldn't have been quite as startling as finding them in casual clothes, sitting and having lunch in a spacious, comfortable home overlooking Keuka Lake.

It's only through their conversation that they begin to take on an otherworldly aura. But they don't find that dismaying because living contrary to worldly standards is fundamental to Anawim. The word means "remnant" and refers to the fragmented people of the exile in the Old Testament, those who remained steadfast in their allegiance to God's word during a period of great unfaithfulness.

The Berkeses and others who belong to the Anawim community model themselves on the example of Mary and Joseph. In their own lives, they try to reflect total faithfulness and dependence on God's word through the gospels and through submission to hierarchical authority in the Church.

In relation to the world, the Anawim see their mission as "a witness present to the broken, the suffering and the sinner as they are led to us in their pain and struggle by divine providence." In concrete terms, members of the Anawim community are committed to providing hospitality, teaching

abortion on demand in this country.

On reading the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life), I was stunned to find God's beautiful plan for married love, in which sexual pleasure shared by husband and wife was unifying and at the same time open to the creation of new life. In it I saw the high calling of the married vocation, one which only could be supported by prayerful commitment and communication.

It was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen who described sexual love as the icing on the cake of matrimony. Like children, we have been deceived into thinking we can have the icing without eating the cake.

Once we accept the idea that we are entitled to recreational sex protected by contraception, it follows that abortion is the necessary back-up for contraceptive failure. No longer is pregnancy considered the normal consequence of conjugal love, but it is thought of as an unwanted complication of sexual pleasure. Even physicians have come to consider pregnancy as an abnormal state. Operations are destined to help us from a state of disease to one of health. Abortion, on the other hand, is the surgical treatment of a normal condition. It is the surgical evacuation of the pregnant uterus, regardless of the innocent unborn destroyed in the process.

The reason we have had so little success in our fight against abortion is that we have not been dealing with the underlying cause. The truth about abortion that nobody wants to hear is the widespread deception that sex is only for pleasure. Even in many "good Christian marriages" there is confusion about the unitive and procreative purposes of conjugal love and their inseparable nature. If we deny the right to abortion, we threaten the freedom to enjoy sex without the responsibility of parenthood. Many who oppose abortion in principle resort to it in the hard situation of an unplanned pregnancy, particularly if they are not committed to God's plan for married love.

My own prayerful struggle this past year brought me to a better understanding of my own tendency to self-pity and sexual compensation. God has also brought me to a heartfelt appreciation of the truth of *Humanae Vitae*. I confess that in my own fearful nature, I am easily overcome by my own weakness and intimidated by the fear of losing the respect of others.

His call to me as Anawim — that group especially favored in a period of great unfaithfulness — is to stand in His truth in compassionate love. In this I rely on His mercy for I fail daily. Like Mary, I must abide in the response to His call, my yes which began this journey ... waiting to bring forth new life in a way as yet to be revealed. While I wait for the child to be born, this child of God is receiving the ever unfolding gift of his own manhood.

and counsel to others, to salving their spiritual and emotional wounds in whatever ways God makes possible.

In the Berkeses case, this healing has a physical aspect. Right off the dining room, which also serves as a business office, is an examining room. This is evidence of the couple's attempt to provide a combination of low-cost medical care, healing prayer and Christian-based counseling.

The Berkeses came to the Anawim community through a series of experiences with renewal movements in the Church. They began with Marriage Encounter in 1971, and progressed through Cursillo. In 1982, they took a fateful marriage course offered by Anawim. From that point, they began a course of spiritual direction or purification, which led Willa to become a Catholic two years ago.

When he left his surgical partnership in December, 1983, Ken worked in an emergency room and as the school physician — a series of almost preoccupational jobs. In May, 1984, he quit even those occupations to, in his words, "pray and wait for the Lord to show us his way."

Between that time and March, 1985, the Berkeses found their answer and equipped their home to open as the Anawim Healing Center.

They do pray with their patients for God's mercy and recovery from their afflictions, but they don't claim to perform miracles. The healing they refer to is one of the total self, mind and body, in accordance with God's will.

There are no crutches on their walls or spare wheelchairs scattered throughout the house. Nor do the Berkeses claim to have all the answers to the problems people bring to their door. In fact, they readily admit that their area of expertise lies in offering a

The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone



Conversations With a Friend

The Bible is one of the ways God speaks to us. Jesus Christ wants to be our best friend. He cares about every part of our lives. Jesus is not a "fair-weather friend" — someone who is just there for the good times. He is someone who can be counted on in the stormy times, too.

We have all been given God's gift of free will. Because of this gift, He will never force us to do anything. We must reach out to God first, and the way we reach out to Him is through prayer.

We have many beautiful prayers, among them the Our Father and Hail Mary. But sometimes prayer can simply be a conversation with a friend who loves us and who will never let us down.

God created us in his own image, and He knows all about us. Prayer is a way of getting to know God as a personal, loving friend. We can talk to God about our good days and our not-so-good days. We can go to Him with our every mood and with whatever is on our minds.

God always answers our prayers. It may not be just the answer we are expecting. But there will always be an answer to our prayers.

The Old Testament of the Bible contains a section known as the Psalms. The Psalms come from the Psalter, which was a hymn book of the Hebrews. These songs are prayers written in a form like that of poetry. They are examples of every human feeling and mood. There are psalms that are joyful and those that were written in troubled times. Some of the psalms were written for special occasions like the coronation of a king. There are even psalms that foretell the coming of a Messiah. And the psalms were written about 10 centuries before the birth of Jesus!

The psalms were sung by the cantors as part of the prayer ceremony at the synagogue. They were usually accompanied by a stringed instrument, such as a harp or the ancient Greek instrument known as the lyre. The people could get pretty noisy when they were doing this type of praying to God. Sometimes they even used cymbals.

If we take a look at the psalms in a biblical edition like the Jerusalem Bible, we will find several unusual things. Sometimes musical directions for the choirmaster are printed on the sides of the pages, or suggestions are made for the type of musical instrument that should accompany the psalm. The really interesting things are the titles. There are 150 psalms in all, and each one appears in the Jerusalem Bible with a number and a title like "A Confident Appeal," "The Innocent Man Pleads His Case," or "Among Ferocious Enemies."

Of the 150 psalms, more than half are psalms of David. David had a very colorful life. As a young shepherd boy, he killed the giant, Goliath, who had been terrorizing David's people. Later, David went on to become a very great king. The House of David was the royal ancestry house of Jesus Christ.

Since David was both a great hero and a king, you might suppose he had very few problems in his life. Yet this couldn't be further from the truth. David is a perfect example of someone who came to God in prayer over every situation in his life — both good and bad. During the bad times, he prayed to God with faith that surely God could get him out of a mess. And David had some pretty big messes!

ministry of loving presence and Christian counseling, along with Ken's medical knowledge.

Many of the people they serve are excruciatingly poor with what Ken calls extremely disordered lives — struggling with marital problems, abuse, loss of faith, poor health.

Willa meets each person at the door, offers a cup of coffee or a cool drink, and leads the way to her comfortable kitchen to talk. If that person is someone accustomed to scorn and degradation or callousness, he or she is understandably confused and dazzled.

It's not difficult to imagine their thoughts — "What's the hitch? Is this a cult? Do they want money? Will they try to brainwash me into selling what little I own? Do I have to

One time, David's own son, Absalom, was trying to kill him. In Psalm 3, David prayed: "Save me, my God! / You hack all my enemies to the cheekbone, / you break the teeth of the wicked." (Now that was really saying to God what was on his mind!)

Another time, Saul, the crazed king, chased David through the hills in an attempt to kill him. David hid from Saul in a cave and prayed to God in Psalm 57: "I call on God the Most High, / on God who has done everything for me: / to send from heaven and save me, / to check the people harrying me, / may God send His faithfulness and love. / I lie surrounded by lions / greedy for human prey, / their teeth are spears and arrows, / their tongue a sharp sword."

The real lesson in David's psalm prayers is his complete faith that God will save him. If we read these psalms all the way through, we will hear quite a bit of grumbling and complaining by David to God about all of David's troubles. Throughout it all, though, David also trusts in God to save him. He talks to God as a good friend who is not going to leave him to die at the hands of his enemies.

Besides David's prayers to God, there are also psalms that are prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God for his many blessings. Many of these psalms contain the word "alleluia." This word is a miniature, one-word psalm. It is a Hebrew word that means "praise God."

Psalm 150 is a noisy, foot-stomping song of praise to God. This prayer says that everything that breathes should praise God with cymbals, drums, dancing and blasts of the trumpet.

Today, the psalms are used in many of the prayers of the Mass. These include an entrance psalm and the Glory to God. In the readings of the Mass, we have a psalm and a psalm response every week.

We can go to Jesus in our daily prayers by using the psalms in the bible. It isn't enough to read about who Jesus is and what He did for each one of us. We have to meet Jesus ourselves and get to know Him through prayer.

We can compose our own psalms by just making conversation with our very special friend, Jesus. He's always listening and ready to help us with anything we bring to Him in prayer. And for this we can always say, "Alleluia!"

For further reading:

- 1) Read the psalms of David described in the above lesson: Psalm 3 and Psalm 57. Read Psalm 150 in praise of God.
- 2) Read Psalm 23. This is another famous Psalm of David about the Good Shepherd.

Suggested activity:

- 1) What things do you have to be grateful to God for? Compose a psalm about them to thank God.
- 2) You have studied very hard for a test in school. When the teacher hands out the test, you get so nervous that you are not able to answer the questions very well. Describe how you feel in a psalm to God.

If you've come up with your own good version of a psalm, you can mail it to Cindy Cottone, c/o the Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607. In the coming weeks, we'll be continuing our column about different ways of praying, and we'll publish the best psalms we receive.

accept the Lord Jesus as my personal savior?"

Well, sort of.

The first question you'll be asked at the Anawim Healing Center is not your Blue Cross/Blue Shield number, but rather "Where are you with the Lord?" That doesn't mean that to be treated, the people who come to them have to meet certain requirements as practicing Christians.

What it does mean is the people they counsel have to be open to Christianity as a basis for solving their problems.

"We see healing as bringing people to deeper knowledge of the Lord, family, Church, a relationship with God," Ken said. "Being present and caring to people is far more important than having the answers."