

Columnists

Hypocrisy, sin and stupidity

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Q: What do you think of the Jimmy Swaggart affair?

A: The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle had a headline of clever alliteration: "Sex scandal scalds Swaggart" (Feb. 22). In the '50s, I served as chaplain at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, under Jesuit Father John Long. He was actually base chaplain, director of an army of chaplains. When in full complement, we had seven Catholic chaplains, 27 Protestant chaplains and one Jewish.

Chaplain Long had been of students at Holy Cross College, Worcester, and was one of the most brilliant men I have ever known. Because of his keen intellect, we concluded: "Father of Long does not approve of sin, but he does understand the weaknesses of human nature and has a certain tolerance of it. But stupidity he neither understands nor tolerates." Swaggart certainly was stupid to be trotting off to a public motel, escorting a publicly known shady lady.

Q: You don't seem to be shocked at sinful acts?

A: No, I am not shocked but saddened. If one knows history and human nature, one can be sad about sin but not shocked. It's too common, and shock comes from the rare.

Q: But Swaggart was a preacher of religion!

A: His own peculiar brand of religion. While proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus, which is correct, he also taught his followers that Catholicism is not a Christian religion and that we Catholics are all destined for hell because of our religion. His track record of bringing in cash is impressive: \$140 million a year. His great following, too, is impressive, though to me mysterious. His preaching skills were effective but he was dishonest and a hypocrite. He taught that the Catholic Church is from Satan and claimed the Bible as the authority for his assessment of our condition.

He continued his barrages against the Catholic Church even after the bishop of Baton Rouge met with him and explained what the Church truly teaches. The Vatican II document on the Church declares that the Catholic Church is one, holy, Catholic, apostolic — and unique. This is not the church of Jimmy Swaggart, but the Church of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Father Rittler, Pope John Paul II, and millions of other faithful members.

On the Right Side

Q: Then you're glad he was caught and exposed?

A: I am sorry for his sins: the hypocrisy of slamming Jim and Tammy Baaker; his dishonest attacks against the Catholic Church and Catholics; his twisted teaching claimed to be from the Bible and the Holy Spirit. And I am sorry for all his poor followers. But I am glad that he admitted his situation. The problem is that some people will conclude that the clergy as a whole should be suspect of hypocrisy and gross sinfulness. We might as well suspect all men — married and single — which would embrace faithful fathers, chaste single men. And I suppose the women would have to be included among the suspected ones. How would that be?

Q: Well, what do you conclude?

A: A wonderment at the success of these television evangelists who are able to whomp up such a following and suck millions of dollars in cash from good but simple lovers of Our Lord. I give thanks to God that the Church in the States has Mother Angelica, who is not a powerful evangelist, but a simple nun in Birmingham who — with no help from our bishops or people in high places — has established a daily Catholic television station, Eternal Word Television Network, which has an estimated 7 million viewers daily.

Since the death of Archbishop Sheen we haven't had anyone comparable as a preacher of genuine Catholicism. But we do have an effective woman, Mother Angelica, who is doing for the Church what the TV evangelists are doing for a Christ-hungry people. Let us praise her and those who support her.

Social justice and simple living

By Father Richard P. McBrien

The Catholic bishops of Connecticut issued a statement last December 3 that deserves a wide-ranging and long-term pondering within the Church at large. Their immediate purpose in writing the statement was to underscore certain teachings in the U.S. Catholic bishops' November 1986 pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All," specifically the pastoral's call for an examination of conscience regarding the way we live, our use of money, and our attachment to things and possessions.

The pastoral letter had argued that there can be no real justice for the poor of the United States and of the world unless there is also a re-ordering of values and a changing of lifestyles on our part. The Connecticut bishops agree.

Even prosperous Connecticut has thousands of homeless people and many more who live in places that few of us would want to call "home." Meanwhile many thousands more, adults and young people alike, "without consideration for the needs of the poor, spend much money on luxury and unnecessary possessions."

The Connecticut bishops pose this evangelical question: "How do we go about living the Gospel in the midst of the affluence of many and the insecurity and poverty of some?"

To be sure, we must assist the poor through acts of charity and personal commitment, even though private charity and voluntary action are not sufficient in themselves. "We also carry out our moral responsibility to assist and empower the poor by working collectively through government to establish just and efficient policies," the Connecticut bishops insist.

But the bishops' brief statement is not limited to calls for private charity and governmental action. Its primary evangelical thrust comes in the second half of the document, wherein the bishops present both Jesus and St. Francis of Assisi as models of simplicity.

Jesus was born in a simple, grew up in poor circumstances and acknowledged in His public life that "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). Stripped of His gar-

Essays in Theology

ments, He died on a cross and had to be buried in another's grave.

St. Francis was the talented son of a wealthy merchant who bought his son more than the young man could ever want or use. Upon his conversion, Francis bluntly asserted that "The Gospel says no to this. We have the right to live in modest comfort and to plan reasonably for the future of our selves and our dependents. However, the use of our surplus wealth must be measured with consideration of those basic human needs of others which are not being met."

One obstacle to such simplicity, the bishops suggest, is the common thinking that, "My wealth is mine. I worked hard for it and have the right to do with it as I wish." Yet the Connecticut bishops bluntly assert that "The Gospel says no to this. We have the right to live in modest comfort and to plan reasonably for the future of our selves and our dependents. However, the use of our surplus wealth must be measured with consideration of those basic human needs of others which are not being met."

The theological point is that our superfluous goods do not really belong to us. We have an obligation in justice, not only in charity, to put them at the disposal of those in need. If it is inappropriate, perhaps even scandalous, for a bishop to live in a large, expensive home, why is it not also an evangelical problem for the wealthy lay people to live in such homes? "The cultivation of a simple lifestyle," the Connecticut bishops declare, "starts with an analysis of what is needed and what is superfluous for living in dignity."

FURNACE SERVICE SPECIAL
Clean heat Exchanger
Clean all burners
Clean pilot assembly and adjust flame
Oil motor
Check and adjust all controls
Check and adjust thermostat
Check belts & filters
Clean smoke pipe
\$34.95
BRANDT HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING
237 Winton Rd. N. 288-4270
Senior Citizen Discount
Any Cleaning or Service Call
SAVE AN ADDITIONAL \$5 OFF WITH THIS COUPON

Eire Connection BOUTIQUE
CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY WITH 17% OFF EVERYTHING IN STOCK 30% OFF ALL WINTER COATS AND JACKETS
European Fashions • Waterford Crystal Fine Celtic Imports
(716) 394-5143
137 South Main St. Canandaigua, NY
Hours: Mon-Sat., 10:30-5:30

HICKS & McCARTHY
In The Heart Of Pittsford Village
FRIDAY'S SPECIAL Fish Fry \$5.75
Open 7 Days a Week
Mon-Sat 7:00am-8:00pm
Friday till 10:00pm
Sunday till 3:00pm
23 South Main Street • Pittsford

"It is the right of every pregnant woman to give birth... and the right of every child to be born."
BIRTHRIGHT
Canandaigua (716) 394-8737
Cayuga County (315) 252-7865
Ithaca (607) 272-9070
Owego (607) 687-1133
Penn Yan (315) 536-9890
Rochester (West) (716) 328-8700
Brighton-Pittsford (716) 385-2529
Seneca County (315) 588-8904
Free Confidential Pregnancy Testing and Counseling
Maternity Clothes, Baby Clothes, and Furniture Available
Housing Provided when needed. Anyone wishing to send a tax-deductible contribution may do so by contacting your local birthright office.

GRAND OPENING
FIRM and TIGHTEN TISSUE AT ANY AGE
No... we are not an exercise salon! The Body Designer is so revolutionary... you won't believe that anything this easy can actually be effective. We absolutely guarantee that you will lose pounds and inches regardless of age!
The Body Designer has developed a unit that exercises your body for you! You don't sweat... you don't disrobe... you don't even mess your hair. You can come in for a session on your lunch hour and go back to work without showering.
You simply relax on our unit for a half-hour, or hour, if you have the time. The unit does the work while all you do is enjoy yourself.
Men get fantastic results on our program too, and they loose faster because they do not have the extra layer of tissue for child bearing that women do.
This is passive exercise so the physically limited are able to attend. No strain on your heart or other muscles. No physical limitations (heart problems, high blood pressure, back pain, arthritis, etc.) prevent you from using our unit. In fact your increased circulation will undoubtedly be beneficial for these problems.
Call today to make your appointment for a free figure analysis and complimentary first session. We'll tell you how much you need to lose, how long it will take and the cost, based on a per session fee.
P.S. - No contract to sign.
The Body Designer
1425 Jefferson Rd.
Saginaw Plaza
Henrietta, NY
272-1730