

Columnists

# The world's greatest therapy

By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday Readings: (R3) John 17:11-19; (R1) Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; (R2) 1 John 4:11-16.

Christ's Easter gift to us was the sacrament of reconciliation and the primacy of Peter. In the mystagogic phase of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), both of these mysteries should be illuminated.

Last week, I briefly explained why one ought to go to confession to a priest. But we might ask why one ought to go to confession at all?

There are a host of reasons for confession. The first is that Jesus himself instituted the sacrament (John 20:19f).

Secondly, Mary the Mother of God has invited us at Medjugorje to go to confession monthly. I certainly hope we don't turn a deaf ear to Mary here as we did to her at Fatima. World War II could have been avoided had we listened to Mary. She is speaking to us now, perhaps for the last time. At Lourdes, she appeared in the morning; at Fatima, at noon; at Medjugorje, in the evening — as if to teach us that her apparitions have come full circle. Please God, we shall listen to her this time and not shrug off her message with such comments as "This is a private revelation" or "The Church hasn't approved it yet?"

Thirdly, our Holy Father has gone one step further and recommended confession for venial sins. He wrote: "Great importance must continue to be given to teaching the faithful also to make use of the sacrament of reconciliation for venial sins alone.

"... such a practice deepens the awareness that even minor sins offend God and harm the Church.

"... such a practice has great remedial power and helps remove the very roots of sin" (Reconciliation and Penance, 12/2/84, No. 32). Canon 988, No. 2, says: "It is to be recommended to the faithful that venial sins also be confessed"

Well, what greater authorities can one have than the Holy Father and Canon Law?

The sin of modern man is to lose the sense of sin. Confession deepens the awareness of sin.

The terrible consequence of original sin is

## A Word for Sunday

the root of sin: the tendency to sin. To sin is like swimming downstream; to do good is like swimming against the current. Confession — frequently and for venial sins — will remove the roots of sin so that doing good becomes easier than doing evil.

Fourth, confession is the greatest therapy in the world. Psychiatrists have gone back to confession.

Lee Iacocca, in his best-selling autobiography, wrote: "It took me a number of years to understand why I had to make a good confession to a priest before I went to Holy Communion, but in my teens I began to appreciate the importance of this most misunderstood rite of the Catholic Church.

"I not only had to think out my transgressions against my friends; I had to speak them aloud. In later years, I found myself completely refreshed after confession. I even began to attend weekend retreats, where the Jesuits, in face-to-face examinations of conscience, made me come to grips with how I was conducting my life.

"THE NECESSITY OF WEIGHING RIGHT FROM WRONG ON A REGULAR BASIS TURNED OUT TO BE THE BEST THERAPY I EVER HAD" (page 8).

Take the cap off a tube of toothpaste. Squeeze it. The paste will glide out. But keep the cap on and squeeze it hard, and the paste will break out at the weakest spot.

Cut off the normal outlet for sin — confession — and repressed sins and guilt will erupt in violence, drugs, drink, illicit sex.

How perceptive was the psalmist who wrote: "Happy is he whose fault is taken away ... As long as I would not speak, my bones wasted away!" (Psalms 32:1-2).

## Baptizing 'little Brian'

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

A conversation between a pious Catholic and a deacon.

**Pious Catholic:** "What is the world coming to, and the Church? My daughter Jane went to her pastor to arrange for the baptism of her baby, Brian, and the priest flatly refused!"

**Deacon:** "Why? Was there a problem?"

**PC:** "I don't know why a baby should be penalized even if the parents might be a little lax. After all, Brian — and he's a darling baby — is 8 months old and certainly should be baptized!"

**Deacon:** "You're right. In fact, little Brian should have been baptized seven months ago. Why did your daughter wait so long?"

**PC:** "Well, she's not registered in the parish, and the priest didn't like that. And Jane doesn't go to church much, and he didn't like that. And the godfather never goes to church, but he is my son-in-law's best friend. Also, we were going to have a wonderful family party after the baptism. Now that priest has spoiled it all!"

**Deacon:** "What did your daughter say the priest said?"

**PC:** "He told her she should be ashamed of herself for not going to church, and she hadn't made her Easter duty. And he said the Church wouldn't baptize children unless at least one parent is a practicing Catholic. My daughter may not go to church much, but she does believe in God. And she wears a nice gold cross that I gave her myself. I was brought up to believe every Catholic child has the right to be baptized!"

**Deacon:** "What did Jane say?"

**PC:** "She cried and said she thought it was awful that the priest wouldn't baptize little Brian. And he's such a darling baby. Has a lovely smile!"

**Deacon:** "Did Judy suggest that she would start being a practicing Catholic?"

**PC:** "The priest said she'd have to go to some pre-baptism classes, and come to Mass every Sunday for a month. Then he would baptize little Brian. But he won't let my son-in-law's pal be the godfather because he isn't a practicing Catholic. He never was. Why should he expect him to be one now?"

## On the Right Side

Such is not an uncommon dialogue between parent and a priest who is conscientious about the laws of the Church. Unfortunately it often brings on hard feelings, misunderstandings, and sometimes even rejection of faith.

The solution is simple. Practice the faith, and share it with the children. Baptism is the official incorporation of the baptized into the Body of the Church, along with all the privileges and responsibilities on the part of the baptized, the parents and godparents. The beginning of the baptismal rite reads:

"You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ has taught us. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

**Parents:** "We do."  
**Priest to godparents:** "Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?"

**Godparents:** "We are."  
Because baptism is so necessary, we priests years ago would baptize any child brought to us, regardless of the religious indifference of the parents. We now realize that if the parents are indifferent, the children have little chance of being brought up as practicing Catholics. Hence the insistence in many places on pre-baptism classes and attendance at Mass as signs that manifest sincere intentions.

An additional thought. Every Catholic should be registered in his parish. Catholics who go to the Sunday Mass but are not registered in their parishes are like clandestine alien immigrants who don't officially have citizenship.

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