

# Television's potential influence for good or for evil

By Father Paul J. Cuddy  
Catholic Courier columnist

Psychologists say that the first seven years of life are the most influential in shaping our personality and attitudes. Psychologists frequently contradict one another, but on this principle they seem to agree. Both psychologists and sociologists used to agree that the nuclear family — parents, grandparents and relatives — were the major determinants in shaping a child's personality and attitudes.

It is worth speculating on the coming of television into the home and family circle and on the impact of this ill-boding substitute for parents and grandparents.

While there are a few children's programs for which we might be grateful, parents — fathers are quite as important as mothers in child rearing — who entrust their children to the television without great selectivity might as well have a male gorilla for a baby sitter.

Once, when I was visiting the pediatrics ward in a large hospital, I stopped into a

room where a four-year-old child lay in a large crib, fascinated by a TV picture. I was stunned to see on the screen a ghoulish face, filling the entire screen. Screaming from the face came a repetitious, hate-filled chant: "Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!"

The little boy watched the face on the screen. I watched the face on the pillow. It was intense, large-eyed, gripped. I thought: "Seeping through that little boy is a virus which destroys sensitivity to evil."

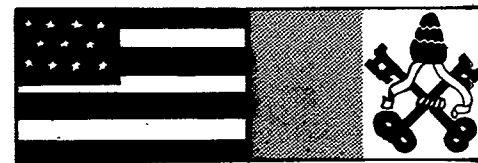
"Before he is 12, he will be so accustomed to violence, hate, avarice, lust, murder, that he will be calloused toward evil. This is worse than physical evil."

There is little profit in lamentation without offering possible solutions. TV programs for adults have a wide range: from ballgames, music and dancing to public affairs and commentaries such as C-Span or "The McLaughlin Group;" from "Miami Vice," with its super violence, or the sloppy soap operas which seem to be the source for the strange names of so many

little babies brought for baptism, to big-mouth Morton J. Downey, who has such a macho audience. Very few, including children's programs, encourage viewers to live and love better lives.

Concerned people are becoming conscious of Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network. It is a specifically Catholic cable network which reaches 9 million homes and more than 18 million viewers. EWTN presents programs through Mother Angelica's staff in Birmingham, Ala., in cooperation with the bishops of the United States. It is thoroughly regretted by Father Richard McBrien.

ETWN presents a wide variety: children's programs, music, Bible classes, devotions like the Mass, rosary, Benediction. When I was in Lyons last January, I was able to get Mother Angelica's programs, which came through Geneva Television Cable. After watching and listening to many programs — learned lectures, interesting panels, musical programs and children's productions — one has the feeling of



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

goodness coming into the room.

There is a strong movement in Auburn to petition the local cable television company to give the area this Catholic channel. Auburn has seven Catholic parishes, and an estimated 75 percent of the city's population of 32,000 is Catholic. But the channel reaches miles outside Auburn itself, including Skaneateles, Sennett, Throup, Owasco, Bordino, Marcellus and Spafford.

Imagine the impact of a channel that would give thousands of hours over so many days to such an area. And God willing, Mother Angelica's evangelization will someday reach into the whole diocese.

# Foreshadowing peril for a 'company' that fails to honor its 'claims'



## ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated Columnist

The afternoon sun began to warm the small, book-strewn office beyond the level of comfort. Professor Bill Libertas interrupted his reading, walked quickly around his desk, and opened the window a crack.

Carefully avoiding his guest's briefcase and feet, he circled back to his chair and retrieved the document he had been studying at his desk. It was a new insurance policy his long-time agent, Byron Comstack, was urging him to sign.

"Are you sure this is a good policy?" Libertas asked skeptically.

"Of course, it is," Comstack replied.

"But I've been hearing some disturbing things about this company lately. The word's around that they don't always honor their claims and that the company's in trouble."

The agent frowned, shaking his head slowly. "Look, Bill," he said, "that's nonsense. And I know exactly where it's coming from. One or two other insurance companies! Let's face it: they have a vested interest in knocking Consolidated."

Professor Libertas looked down again at the policy on his desk. He wasn't reassured, and Comstack knew it.

"Consolidated Underwriters of America is a solid company, Bill. They've been in

business for more than 150 years, for God's sake! And they've had some of the finest people working for them."

It was Libertas' turn to frown and shake his head. "Several of their top agents recently retired, didn't they?" he asked.

"That's right," Comstack softly replied.

"And some others, I've heard, are very uneasy about rumors of an unfriendly takeover of the company. I just don't like the long-term prospects, Byron."

"Bill, you can tell you're a professor. How many clients give a fig about the internal politics of their insurance company? Not one person in 10,000 could even name the president of their insurance carrier. It's a miracle if they remember their agent's name!"

He paused. "Byron, let's cut through all this stuff. You know exactly what's bothering me. What about Carl Kearns?"

Comstack blanched, at once frustrated and angry. "I'm getting a little tired of hearing about that Kearns case. Don't you think we all ought to get beyond that now? That was a special case, and, as you well know, the court decided in favor of Consolidated."

"Yes, and that's exactly what troubles me: that court ruling in favor of the company. Did you read the judge's opinion?"

"Well, not all of it," Comstack said with a sigh. "I read some excerpts in the papers." All this for a lousy commission, he thought to himself.

"The judge said that Consolidated's refusal to honor Kearns' tornado claim should not have come as a great surprise, given the special exemptions CUA has had under the law in the case of such disasters.

'Acts of God,' they call them."

"That's right," Comstack nodded.

"The judge concluded that anyone submitting a claim to CUA for something like the total loss of a house in a tornado, or a prolonged major illness, might or might not have the claim honored; that it's entirely up to Consolidated to decide." Libertas was becoming more animated.

"If, in any given case, CUA decides to invoke its special exemption under the law, it can do that. And if it wants to pay on the claim, it can do that, too. What happened in the case of Carl Kearns could happen to

anyone else insured by CUA. And that's precisely what the judge ruled!"

"Look, Bill, let's be reasonable. What's the chance of a tornado destroying your house? What happened to Carl is a one-in-a-million thing."

Professor Libertas stared stonily at his agent. "I want a company that stands behind you, especially in what you call those one-in-a-million things. Consolidated doesn't. I owe it to myself and my family to have a company that will."

They talked some more that afternoon, but Comstack made no sale.

In recognition of the Catholic high school seniors of the Rochester Diocese, the Catholic Courier will be featuring a special graduation supplement in the issue of June 1, 1989.

This keepsake section is among our best read... and best liked. Included will be a listing of graduates, photos of the valedictorian and salutatorian, and details of commencement ceremonies.

If your son or daughter does not attend a Catholic High School, But you wish to have them included in this Keepsake issue, please contact your pastor, or parish religious education coordinator to have their name mailed in to our office. All names must be received by Friday, May 19, 1989. Names will not be taken over the telephone.

If you or your business would like to advertise in the Catholic Courier's Graduation Supplement, please call our Advertising Department.

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