

Lessons gleaned from Mormon youths

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Last week's column narrated my annual ingress into Lyons. I'd like to elaborate more on my experiences.

In a village like Lyons — which has a population of about 5,000, there is a familial interest in what goes on. A new priest is — if not a celebrity — a person of comment. I am convinced that our Catholic leaders waste time in many meetings. We priests and laity should go out to the people, and bring the faith as witnesses — face to face.

While in Lyons, Father Leon Neu from Buffalo — a friend from my Hornell days and his from Almond and Alfred University — came to visit me. The door bell rang about 3 p.m. Two girls in their late teens said, "We are Mormon missionaries of the Church of Latter-day Saints."

I invited them in and we talked amiably for a half hour. Every year 30,000 young

Mormons in their late teens go out for two years as missionaries. They pay their own expenses. They rent an apartment and, in groups of two, go door to door with the gospel of Joseph Smith of Palmyra. They have six to eight weeks of training. What they know of Mormonism comes largely from their families where the religion is absorbed from infancy, like a religious osmosis.

If Catholic parents would indoctrinate their children from infancy in the truths, practices, and sacraments of the church, we would not be having hysterical pleas for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. Expressing my admiration for their zeal, and my regrets that they are not Catholics doing work for the church, I sent them off with a bag of homemade cookies sent in by a parishioner.

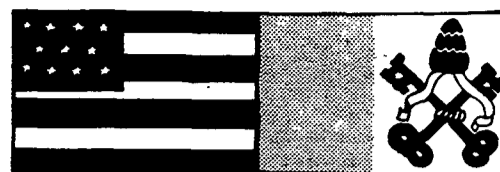
The best places to reach careless Catholics are restaurants, sporting events and pubs. In a local pub, I meet many

likeable men and women, who — though religiously drifting — still retain the faith. If they are Catholics, I bluntly accost them: "Do you go to Mass?" So often the reply is: "Haven't gone in years except for Christmas."

"Why not?" They reply, "Oh, I don't know. You know how it is, Father."

The fact is that I usually do not know "how it is," but in conversation the reasons often come out. When I leave them, I give my new-found friends a prayer book or some religious literature — and a big smile. Then I add them to the long list of people who need my prayers.

A special place for the apostolate is at the hospitals. The spiritual field is especially fertile because of sickness. You always meet a patient's friends and relatives, who are concerned about their well-being. All are given a Sunday bulletin as well as a prayer book, medal, rosary beads, some instructional book, and a smile.



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

A great concern of mine is the Spanish apostolate. Father Ed Golden, who speaks Spanish fluently, is a chaplain at the Elmira Correction Facility. There are many Hispanic prisoners from New York City, and he told me: "We are losing Hispanics from the church by the car load. We need parishes to serve them in their own language and culture. The Hispanic Pentecostal churches will have a minister who speaks the language and can quote from the Bible."

Off hand, I recall that Fathers Lawrence Tracy, Anthony Calimeri, and Peter Deckman speak Spanish very well. Fathers John Dillon and Dennis Shaw speak it fairly well. Bishop Clark also studied Spanish at a language institute in Mexico.

Anyway, let me say again and again, let's do away with many time-consuming and nonproductive meetings, and go out and meet the people face to face.

The ideal organization for this is probably the Legion of Mary, which transformed the Church in Africa, the Philippines, and China before the Communist takeover in 1949. The problem is that it is demanding: a weekly productive meeting with prayers intertwined; and a person-to-person apostolate which emulates the Mormons in the ideal.

Sinners are never too far gone for saving power of sacraments

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

April gets its name from the Latin word *aperire*, meaning "to open." April is the month when flowers open up; when the forsythias and crocuses "spring" into life from the graveyard of winter.

The Sunday readings celebrate resurrection to life: a baptismal theme.

Ezechiel speaks of a national restoration, a resurrection of the nation of Israel, buried in Babylon during the terrible captivity of 587 B.C. "I will open your graves and have you rise from them" (R1).

Isn't the same thing happening today in Eastern Europe? Our Lady predicted this at Fatima. It wasn't the military or any political force or the media that toppled the Berlin Wall and lifted the Iron Curtain. It was the rosaries of God's little people that accomplished this.

Paul speaks of a spiritual resurrection from sin. "He who raised Christ from the

dead will bring your mortal bodies to life" (R2). Doesn't this happen now in every good confession and in the baptism of the catechumens on Easter eve?

The gospel speaks of a physical resurrection. "Lazarus come out! The dead man came out" (R3). Don't we profess and confess "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church ... the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body"?

In the gospels are three accounts of Our Lord raising people from the dead. One is a little girl, the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus. One is a young man, the only son of the widow of Naim. And the other is a full-grown man, Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary.

The little girl had just died; the young man was being carried to the cemetery; and Lazarus was already four days dead and buried. Martha warned Jesus, "There will be a stench."

St. Augustine said these three dead per-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

sons symbolized the three states of sinners: the young girl, those starting on the road to sin; the young man, those already caught in the habit of sin; and Lazarus, those hardened in sin and buried in it.

By raising all three, Jesus meant to give hope to all sinners. It matters not if sins be as red as scarlet or as numerous as the sands of the seashore, He can make them white as wool and as if they were not. All one need to do is go to Jesus in the great sacraments of baptism and confession.

The Lazarus story is dramatic. Lazarus is mentioned only in the beginning and the end. In between — heightening the tension — there are a series of delays by Jesus, the disciples, Martha and May.

However, the dialogue with all these persons begets faith in Jesus; the disciples are ready to die with Jesus; Martha confesses He is the Son of God; and the Jews who had come to console Mary and Martha "begin to believe in him."

Belief leads to the sacraments and both baptism and penance lead to resurrection from the dead — and from sin.

Catholic War Veterans plan Easter party for children

ROCHESTER — Monroe County's chapter of the Catholic War Veterans is sponsoring an Easter party for children Saturday, April 14, at St. Andrew's Church hall, 923 Portland Ave. Scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the party is free of charge and open to any child nine years old or younger. Entertainment will be provided,

along with a gift for each child. Tickets are available from any member of the chapter or its auxiliary. The veterans' chapter also celebrated its annual Convention Banquet at the Maplewood Inn Saturday, March 3. At the banquet, Edward Kraft, newly elected commander, and other officers for 1990-91 were installed.

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