

Scandals produce widespread mistrust

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

From a teacher: "I am disheartened at so much in the church. The papers and radio and TV report so much lurid happenings in the church. A compromised archbishop, a well-educated black priest starting a pseudo-African Catholic Church, the dissidents tearing the church apart and moving from the Holy Father. Is this the devil? What is the answer?"

Comment: In the August 2 issue of the *Catholic Courier*, this column discussed the reality of the devil. The Bible is clear about Lucifer and his minions. Near the

end of his life, a discouraged Pope Paul VI wrote that he sensed the smoke of Satan entering the church. Archbishop Sheen has a fine cassette dealing with "the devil." I offered to send the tape to anyone interested in what he had to say for \$3 (plus \$1 for handling).

I was surprised at the number of requests. Archbishop Sheen points out that the devil is real. There is a spirit of evil creating divisiveness among people, and within the church. It is logical to conclude that some evils within and outside of the church come directly from the devil.

We cannot say with the bad little boy,

"The devil made him do it." Our human nature was wounded at its beginning by the original sin of Adam. In his discussion concerning original sin in the "Ratzinger Report," Cardinal Ratzinger said: "A lucid, realistic view of man and history cannot but stumble upon the alienation and discovery in relationships — in man's relationship to himself, to others and to God. Now since man is pre-eminently a being-in-relation, such a rupture reaches to the very roots and affects all" (p.81).

G.K. Chesterton put it more simply when he said that if we did not have the revealed doctrine of original sin, we would



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Jesus gave keys of the kingdom to Peter the master of His palace

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 16:13-20; (R1) Isaiah 22:15, 19-23; (R2) Romans 11:33-36.

Our flag has been making the headlines of late. I am as irrevocably opposed to its burning as I am to iconoclasm — the smashing of religious statues — because every flag embodies and symbolizes the spirit and ideals of a nation.

Consider the flag of the Vatican state. The papal flag consists of two equal vertical stripes of yellow and white. Located on the white stripe is the insignia of the papacy: the tiara (the triple crown signifying the power of the pope to teach, to rule and to sanctify the universal church in the name of Christ). Beneath the tiara, two keys — one gold and the other silver — are crossed and tied together by a red cord en-

ding in two tassels.

Is this yellow and white flag just a piece of cloth? Rather, is it not the expression of the very words of Christ in this Sunday's Gospel?

As far as the two keys under the tiara, what can they mean but that He who wears the tiara possesses the keys of God's Kingdom on earth, the church.

In the neighborhood of Caesarea-Philippi, Jesus casually posed the question, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" He got some quick answers: "John the Baptizer," "Elijah," "Jeremiah," and "one of the prophets."

Jesus must have smiled. Then He put the question to them: "And you, who do you say I am?" Until then, Peter had been silent. He had been listening to what the others were saying and was thinking to himself, "Yes, who is Jesus?" When the question was put to them, he blurted out his response like an excited schoolboy who knew the answer.

Similar to the way a teacher reacts to an unexpected, brilliant answer from a student, Jesus was taken aback. He also was elated. Peter had told Him who He was. Jesus in turn told Peter who he was. "You are a rock. On you I will build my Church. To you I entrust the keys of this kingdom."

The keys echo the passage in Isaiah (R1), where Shebna receives the keys of the royal palace. Generally, the two keys to the palace were worn on the shoulder like an epaulet. One key opened the doors to the palace; the other was the key to the king's treasury room. Thus, the keys symbolized highest authority, and the key-bearer was the major-domo — the man second only to the king.

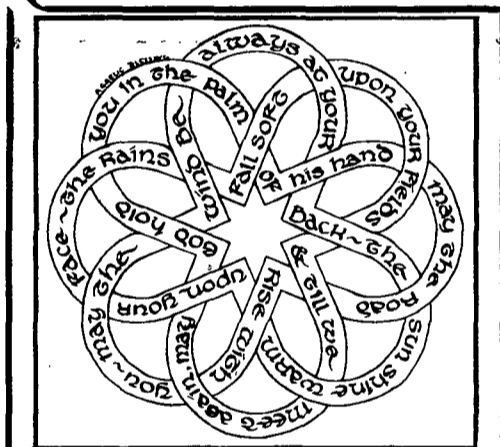
In giving Peter the keys, Jesus declared him to be the master of His palace, the church. Two keys are given to Peter — a golden one, opening up the treasures of

heaven, especially through indulgences; and a silver one, releasing through the power of absolution sinners from the bonds of sin.

The power of binding and loosing is given to the other apostles later (Mt. 18:18), but not the power of the keys. The power of the keys — the supreme authority in the church — is given to Peter and his successors, the Bishops of Rome. To Peter alone Christ said, "Feed my lambs (the laity) and feed my sheep (the hierarchy)." To Peter alone Jesus said: "... I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32).

Although the papal flag basically says the same things, there are dissidents who seek to emancipate themselves from papal authority. They resort to saying, "I am a Catholic Christian." To that I say, "Hogwash! I am a Roman Catholic," meaning that I believe the Bishop of Rome is the head of the church, the source of its unity, the bedrock of its perpetuity.

These dissidents will suffer the same fate as Shebna who spoke against Isaiah and so against God. They too shall be stripped of the insignia of office, their sash and cord. For only Peter is the rock. Against Peter the jaws of death shall not prevail.



Addendum

The artwork above appeared on page 1 last week, referring readers to an "Insight" on Ireland.

Unfortunately, we failed to identify the artwork and the artist. The illustration is of a traditional Gaelic blessing and was designed by Elizabeth Burkhart, SSJ. We regret the omission.

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ON THE RIGHT SIDE

have to invent something similar to explain our muddled nature ... but we do have a free will.

As you know, the consequences of original sin are those tendencies we each have to control: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth. Whether from the devil or our own willfulness, all of us can fall under the urges of any of these tendencies. We are responsible for our choices. A special trouble with wrong choices is the effect they have on others such as spouses, parents, children, friends and the church.

I think the worst thing about these publicized aberrations within the church, in fact in all society, is the mistrust toward others. It is as if we should be suspicious of everyone we meet. Children are suspicious of their parents or guardians, parishioners of their priests, students of their teachers and vice versa.

I remember when I was a chaplain at St. James Mercy Hospital, and I was en route to Hornell from Canisteo. I stopped to pick up a hitchhiker who was a clean-cut chap with a neat haircut when sloppy long hair was in style.

"Hop in, going to Hornell?" I asked. A high-pitched voice replied, "Yes." I looked startled at my passenger. "Why, you're a girl! If I had known that, I wouldn't have picked you up!"

A bit aggrieved, she said, "Why not?" My answer still holds: "If we had been in an accident, think how that would be reported: 'Catholic priest and female companion injured in car crash.' Imagine the interpretation that would have."

She chuckled, "I never thought of that." As for you, cheer up. Just look at the people and priests you know. Most are good people, and many are better than good. Look in the mirror and ask, "What do people think of me? And why?" You are a good man. Just live as you have been living, and leave the suspicious to wallow in their anxieties.

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