

Longtime correspondent provides beautiful insights

By Father Paul Cuddy

Courier columnist

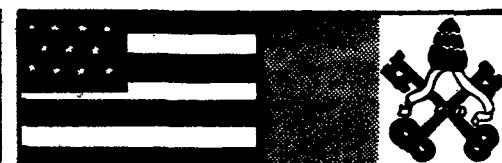
When I was an Air Force chaplain at Lackland Air Base in 1953, Roy B. was a 22-year-old officer stationed there. A man of integrity, he was intelligent and cheerfully serious.

He attended Mass at St. Mary's Church in San Antonio, where he took instructions and was received into the church. When I learned about Roy B., I put him to work teaching religion to some of our men and to the children of military dependents.

After he left the military, he returned to college and got two degrees. Roy B. later became the principal of a public elementary school in Oregon. Twice a year he writes to me, combining family news with some thoughtful philosophizing.

Here are excerpts from his most recent letter:

"A most happy event to find your note in



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

the mail today ... I have a number of Sheen audio tapes, mostly thanks to you. I love his beautiful teachings. In these times so many learned men and women seem to be unduly concerned with examining all beliefs and teachings, seeming almost hoping to find some flaws in the Church. I find Sheen's words soul-satisfying."

Comment: G.K. Chesterton said substantially: "If you know the truth you don't have to be concerned about the

errors." It is curious that some Catholics seem more bent on discovering what's wrong with the church than what's right.

The letter continued: "In one of his tapes Archbishop Sheen asked: 'Are we still teaching our people to offer it up?' Well, I am still teaching this to my classes."

Comment: "To offer it up" is an observation from my well-advertised surgery last March, when I alluded to the Sheen teaching to "offer up our pains and frustrations and distresses as a prayer ..." In 1928, Father William Bergan — who taught English at St. Andrew's Seminary — made us memorize: "Oh the depths of the richness and of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How incomprehensible are His judgments. How unsearchable are His ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? Or who has given to Him that recompense should be made Him? For from Him and

through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever." (Romans 11:33.)

Life has many mysteries, and only God knows the reasons.

Back to the letter: "Dorothy and I do have one of those beautiful marriages. How thankful we are for the love we have for each other; and for our four fine young people. They all seem to be coping well, but Dorothy and I would prefer that our culture be such that young people would value material things less and family more. Earlier marriages and more offspring would do for a starter."

Comment: Earlier marriages and children might be good for mature and stable younger people, but so many marriages are entered into with the emphasis on such things as the wedding clothes, bridesmaids and ushers, flowers, the rental of expensive automobiles, and the reception afterward, that I would hesitate to encourage younger marriages.

How many glamorous weddings don't last because they are based on materialism rather than on a mutual concern for each other and sacrifices. Marriage may be a bed of roses in many ways, but it also has its thorns. Married people have to have the will to adjust to the problems as well as the joys.

The letter concludes: "Last November my mother became a Catholic in a beautiful ceremony with just the family present. Our pastor (yes, he's from Ireland) baptized and confirmed my dear mom followed by First Communion in our chapel. She's 89, but maintains her own apartment near our home. She's basically an upbeat person with a sharp mentality and spirituality, and what a loving person! I think her prayers were a part of my conversion over 37 years ago, and a natural background for her coming into the Church."

Comment: What a beautiful finale to a thoughtful letter.

Forgiving enemies is the path to overcoming evil

By Father Albert Shamon

Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 18:21-35; (R1) Sirach 27:30-28:7; (R1) Romans 14:7-9.

A frequent problem confronting most of us is anger at others. Because people are people, we are often self-centered, thoughtless, inconsiderate or sometimes spiteful. Often we might be the butt of another's animosity. What are we to do — let people walk all over us or tell them off?

Peter had been absorbing something of the gentleness of Jesus when he asked about forgiving others. He thought he was being magnanimous when he forgave seven times. Jesus smiled and said, "Forgive seventy times seven times."

Why?

There are two basic reasons for this:

First, God's forgiveness of us is inextricably bound up with our forgiveness of others. We pray to our Father to forgive us only in so far as we forgive others. We ought not burn the bridge over which we, too, must pass. We all need forgiveness, for we all are sinners. But only the merciful shall obtain it.

Our Lord illustrated this in the parable of the kind King. I remember as a kid how I used to gloat when the king apprehended the unforgiving servant and handed him over to the torturers. Boy, I felt he got just what he deserved. Then one day I realized that "I'm that man!"

You see an offense against God is infinite, "a huge amount." An offense against one's fellowman is finite, "a much smaller amount." Graciously and generously, like the king, God forgives our sins for the asking. Shouldn't we imitate our heavenly Father and forgive those who offend us?

We ought to pray for the grace of St. Paul, who was bitten by a viper while shipwrecked on the island of Malta. The natives expected Paul to swell up and die.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Paul, however, did not die (Acts 28). Similarly, when we are stung by injury or insult, we ought not to swell up with rage or a desire for revenge.

Secondly, we should always forgive and never strike back because that is the way to win over our enemies to Christ. In a dream as a boy, Don Bosco found himself fighting a large crowd of rowdy lads who were cursing and carrying on abominably, refusing to hearken to his voice. He fought them with fist and nail. Suddenly, a "man" appeared, who motioned to him and said, "Not with blows will you help these boys, but with goodness and kindness!"

When Don Bosco founded the first Boys' Town in Turin, he used the "preventive system" in all his schools. The educational system — based on reason, religion and kindness — excluded all violent punishment and chastisement. We say more flies are attracted by a drop of honey than by a barrel of vinegar. Or as Scripture put it: "A mild answer breaketh wrath."

That was the method of Our Lord. Jesus

was never a reactor. He did not let other people dictate His actions. He never let Himself become vindictive or sour by the hate of the Scribes and Pharisees. He came to do the will of His Father. That will, and not the actions of others, determined His own actions. In His will, too, is our peace. Don't be a reactor! Don't let other people's actions determine your reactions or actions. Act from principles, from God's will!

A Chinese emperor besieging a city told all his officers that he would destroy all of his enemies after the city was taken. After the city had fallen, there was no slaughter of the enemy leaders; instead, they sat with the emperor at his banquet table.

His officers exclaimed, "Did you not say you would destroy your enemies, your highness?"

The emperor answered, "I have. I have made them my friends."

Forgiveness overcomes evil by good.

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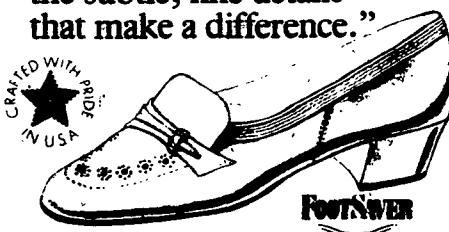
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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



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Why don't we forget funerals and get on with living?
When presidents and national heroes die the nation has elaborate ceremonies to mark their deaths. We mourn heroes because their lives mean something to us, they are important to the morale and life of our nation. When someone we love dies we mourn also. They are important to us and we need to mark their passing with appropriate ceremonies. The ceremonies we have for the deceased help us express our feelings about the person's life and our feelings of loss. Through ceremony we express tribute and say goodbye to those who have been close to us. If we did not take the time to express our feelings at a formal ceremony we would find it more difficult to let go of the past and get on with living.

We purchase all forms of insurance to protect our family & assets, not because we expect the worst to happen, but to be prepared. Doesn't it make sense then to prepare for what will happen. Let our trained counselors assist you with the many options available in planning for a worry-free future.

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