

Watching television should not be a waste of time

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Question: Do you watch much TV?
Answer: More than I should. Most nights I watch "The MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour" at 7 p.m. At 8 p.m. I watch "Murder She Wrote" with my housemate, Father Raymond J. Wahl. Sometimes I also watch "The Odd Couple," "M*A*S*H," "Hogan's Heroes," and C-Span.

I also like programs with Pat Buchanan, whose autobiography, *Right from the Beginning*, I would recommend to anyone who is interested in this ebullient, intelligent man whose Catholicity is a source of inspiration. And at times I watch such shows as "The McLoughlin Report" and "The Larry King Show." It troubles me that some of this time on TV is wasted time.

Question: Why wasted?

Following God's will is the definition of goodness

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 21:28-32; (R1) Philippians 2:1-11; (R2) Ezekiel 18:25-28.

Members of a confirmation class threw this objection at me one day: "What right has the church got to tell me what is good and what is bad? In school we have values clarification: we clarify for ourselves what values we shall hold. Our teachers do not impose their values upon us; they just enable us through facilitating discussion to arrive at our own values. So, why do you tell us what values we have to hold?" To answer their objection, I had them open to next Sunday's gospel about the two sons.

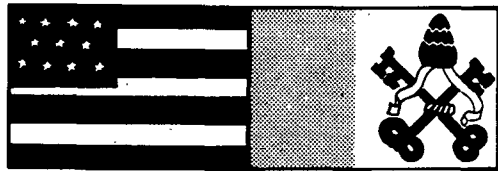
The two sons represent two classes. The first son represents all those who talk a good game such as the Scribes and Pharisees. They are people who are all words and nothing else. These people are hypocrites and proudly disobedient.

The second son represents the bold and open sinner such as tax collectors and prostitutes. They unreasonably reject the reasonable requests of God.

Both sons changed their minds. As Ezekiel pointed out, the good became bad and the bad became good. But the fact that people can change was not the point of the parable. I think the point of the parable was this: it is in doing the will of one's father that determines whether or not a son is a good or a bad son.

So I pointed out to my confirmation class that it is in doing the will of God our Father which determines whether or not we are good or bad. Obedience to His will, not our own, is the key to morality.

Then I took off my wrist watch and asked the students, "Is this a good or bad watch?" After a while, they asked, "Does it keep good time?" I said, "Yes." "Then it is a good watch," they answered. "But why does the fact that it keeps good time make it a good watch?" I asked. "Well, that's the purpose of the watch — to tell



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Answer: God gives us so much time, and we should use it for His glory in our vocations. Since my seminary days I have followed the practice of nightly examination of conscience. Because it takes time to fall asleep, I examine my conscience when I go to bed. I go over the day, hour by hour, to thank God for the good accomplished and to repent for the not-so-good.

Although they are real, these sins of omission and waste are less obvious than sins of commission. Wasting time that

should be used for God's service is a constant concern in my examination of conscience.

Question: But do you find programs that are helpful to you?

Answer: Yes. I spent over 7 hours watching TV on Sept. 14, and on the whole it was within the scope of my vocation. Much of it was on the hearings focusing on Judge David Souter.

I marvelled at the callousness of Senate Judiciary Committee members Sen. Joseph Biden and Sen. Ted Kennedy. Sen. Biden had to quit the race for the Democratic nomination in the 1988 presidential election because of his dishonesty, and Senator Ted Kennedy will always be remembered for the Chappaquiddick scandal. Both men sat in righteous judgment of Judge Souter, whose integrity no one questions.

As these two fiercely tried to question the judge about abortion, I thought, "The

Pharisees are well with us. The Catholic religion seems only skin deep in many."

Question: What about Judge Souter?

Answer: He is an Episcopalian who rightly wants privacy in his religious practices. He is a man of great integrity who skillfully stymied all his inquisitors. While I admire him greatly, I was troubled at his great praise of former Chief Justice William Brennan whom he declared to be the greatest judge on the Supreme Court in many years. That should give solace to Molly Yard and her gang of abortionists, and some pause to the pro-life people. Judge Souter presents himself with a tremendous ambiguity.

Question: What else did you watch?

Answer: Larry King was away so Pat Buchanan took his place. The topic of the program was celibacy, recent scandals and pedophilia within the church. A handsome, impressive Father Sweeney carried the ball for a married Catholic priesthood and no celibacy. He had done an in-depth study of celibacy and concluded its non-effectiveness.

When the American bishops forbade its publication and his Jesuit superior ordered him to destroy the study, he left the Jesuits, but continued for a while in the active priesthood. A couple of years ago he married, causing his automatic suspension.

A nice, rather academic priest from the Pittsburgh diocese supported celibacy quite well. Both men tossed statistics like some Christians toss biblical texts at one another.

Question: Are you against TV?

Answer: I have heard that Father Bart O'Brien would take all TV sets out of all Christian homes. That is impossible. We should utilize TV as Fulton Sheen did. Bishop Sheen's series, "Life is Worth Living," is shown on local channels in some places.

And Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network reaches 15,000,000 people every day.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

time." "Who determines the purpose of the watch," I persisted, the watch or the watchmaker?" They all answered, "The watchmaker."

I said, "Now you have answered your own objection as to why the church can tell us what is good and what is bad. For who made us? Our parents? The state? Yourself? No, God made us!"

And just as we never do anything without a purpose, so God had a purpose in creating us. When He created the world, He saw that everything was good. Why? Because they were exactly what He intended them to be. Likewise we are good or bad according to whether or not we fulfill His purpose for us. Morality is as simple as that: do we fulfill God's purpose for us? Do we do our will or His will? Which son are we — the first or the second?"

There we have the key to morality. To know God's will or purpose for us, God

gave us reason. When our reason tells us what is good and to do it, or what is bad and to avoid it, we call that conscience. Conscience is our reason pronouncing on the goodness or badness of an action. Hence we call conscience "the voice of God."

But — and here's the rub — we can distort our conscience, even silence it. Like a wheelbarrow, we can push it on ahead of us and make it say what we want to hear. If we do, then — like a broken compass — it is no longer a good guide. That's what happened to God's chosen people in Egypt. For 400 years, they lived among pagans — people who had no sense of morality. The result was they lost their sense of right and wrong. Thus it was easy for them to worship a golden calf.

To inform their conscience, God gave them the Ten Commandments through Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Today, we Catholics are in a similar situation because we live in a neo-pagan society and we are in danger of losing our sense of sin. We have one safeguard: it is in following another father — the Holy Father. "The Pope's will," St. Alphonsus Ligouri said, "God's will."

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

**EDWIN SULEWSKI
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**Grief...
is help available?**

Grief is the name of a complex combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. It occurs when we lose someone or something very important to us.

It is a natural reaction to the realization that we are not all powerful, that we ourselves are mortal.

Everyone deals with grief in a different way.

GRIEF RESOURCE INFORMATION FORUM and the **PASTORAL CARE CENTER** at Rochester General Hospital jointly sponsor a monthly bereavement group called **WORKING THROUGH LOSS**.

The group provides information, education and peer support for adults recovering from the death of a significant person in their lives.

The group meets the first Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the E-4 conference room at Rochester General Hospital.

Easy-to-follow signs are posted upon entering the hospital from the parking ramp.

Open to all adults. There are no dues or fees. You may attend as long as you choose.

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