

Seven-minute homily not enough

EDITOR'S NOTE: Father Dave Mura, parochial vicar at St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan, submitted the following essay for publication as a letter to the editors. Since the point he raises is relevant to this week's page-one article, however, we thought it appropriate to give the essay a bit more prominence.

By Father David Mura
Guest contributor

Several years ago I was asked to speak at a parish on the topic of youth ministry. There was a two-hour spacing between Masses, so I was not too worried about the length of the homily, trying to spend as much time as possible — 20 minutes, maximum — appealing to the teens and their parents.

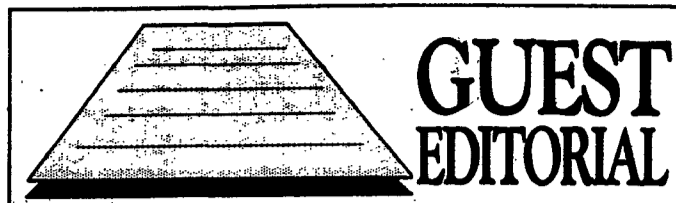
After the first Mass, however, the pastor insisted that I hold the preaching down to seven minutes. I asked him why so short and he replied that they needed 45 minutes between services to clear the parking lot for the next Mass. At the time I remember thinking: "45 minutes for a bunch of blacktop — only seven minutes for the Word of God. No wonder the youths are not too enthused about this church."

That memory returned to me a couple of weeks ago when I received a very kind reminder from one of our good parishioners, accompanied by Father Paul Cuddy's column from Sept. 6 ("Priests should prepare carefully before they preach") on preaching. Father Cuddy touted the length of sermons — seven minutes, of course! I have always wondered if the priest who "invented" the seven-minute sermon was ever concerned if anyone remembered his message — or only his time.

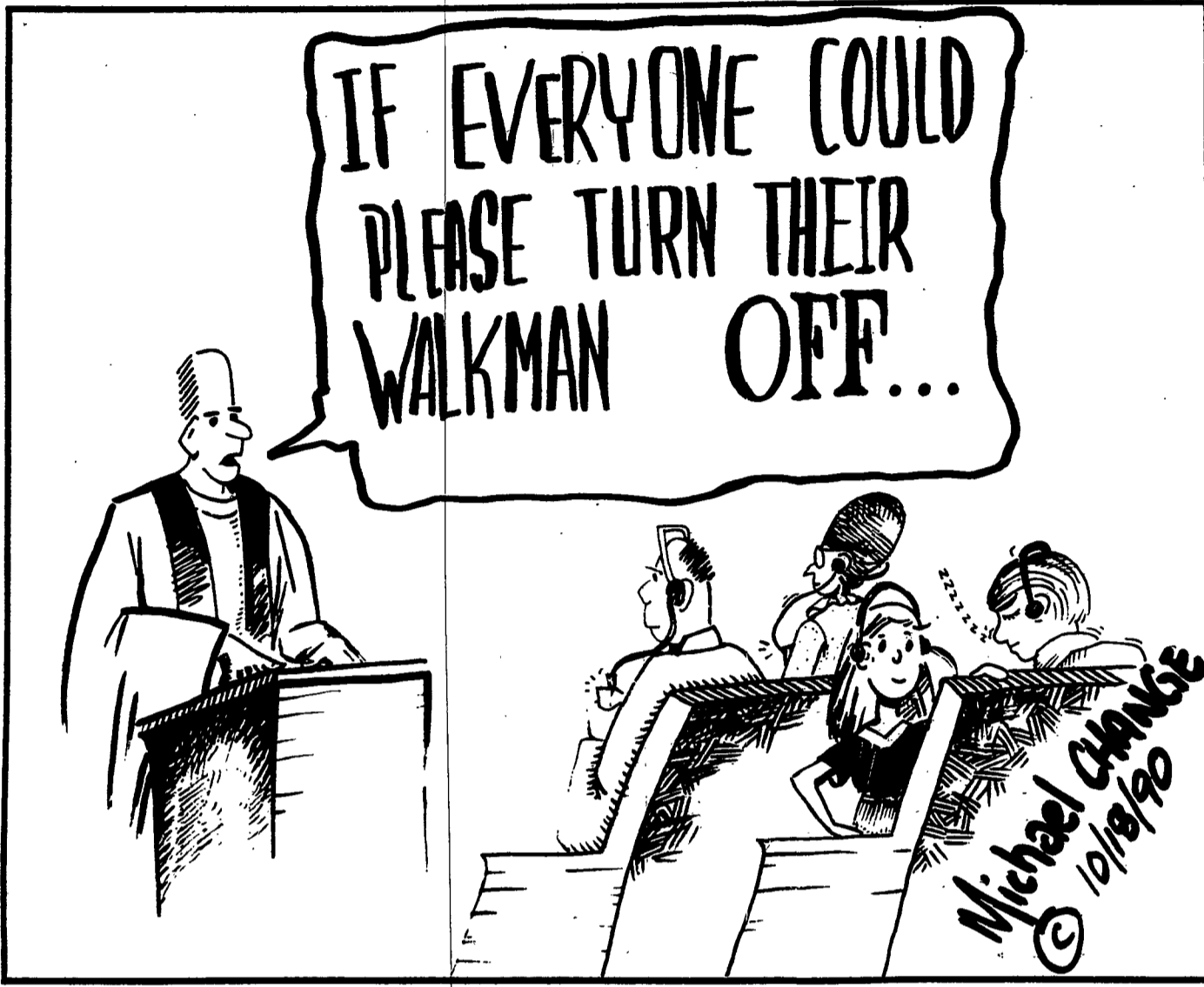
The problem we pastors have is that we know very well that the only time the average Catholic spends any time listening to — or even in the presence of — the Word of God is at Mass on Sunday: one hour out of the 168 hours in a week. If everyone spent a goodly amount of time studying or just reading "churchy" things during the week, then a seven-minute homily might be more than enough. But even the few up-to-date periodicals that are offered FREE in the vestibule of our church sit there and rot from week to week.

Do soap operas last only seven minutes?

- Do golf games last only seven minutes?
- Do bridge games last only seven minutes?
- Do sit-coms last only seven minutes?
- Do movies last only seven minutes?
- Do televised football games last only seven minutes?
- Do shopping trips last only seven minutes?
- Do vacations last only seven minutes?
- Do after-school sports last only seven minutes?



Do restaurant dinners last only seven minutes?
Do concerts last only seven minutes?
I'll make a deal: Prove to me that you will cut off each of these activities after just seven minutes, and I'll shut down my preaching after seven minutes. Until then, let's get real!



Couple endorses providing temporary housing for troubled teenagers

To the editors:

My wife Debbie recently called me at work. She explained that a 15-year-old girl at the police station would have to spend four days at the Wayne County Detention Center if we could not take her in.

I asked if the girl had any history of violence. We have two children and a new baby due in December. Debbie explained that the girl had run away from her home, a

home which had a drink problem.

I'll call the girl "Janet." Janet had run away without stopping to put on her shoes. The first two days Janet spent with us she looked like she would cry at any minute. The third day she had enough courage to tell us that "Blue Kool-Aid is gross" referring to the blueberry flavored Kool-Aid that our children like. She left much happier.

When my wife and I first signed up with Catholic Family Center of Wayne County, I had fears that every problem child and hoodlum would be in our spare room. The children we have seen are usually running from a home that is experiencing divorce, where the situation is so tense they must leave.

If you have thought about participating in a program which provides temporary housing to teenagers, but have had reservations give us a call (315) 589-2316. This will give you the opportunity to ask "hard" questions, before you contact an agency.

Deborah and Mike Larson Ontario

Bishop Clark applauded for article on Selma celebration

To the editors:

We would like to thank Bishop Clark for his article ("Along the Way," Sept. 20) on the Sisters' of St. Joseph 50th Anniversary Celebration of their Southern Mission in Selma, Alabama, which he attended on Sept. 15. In his article, he mentioned a booklet about those 50 years in Alabama, written by Sister Peggy Brennan. Copies of

the booklet are available in the SSJ Communications Office; please call Sister Joan McDowell at 716/586-1000, ext. 31.

We are grateful for Bishop Clark's presence with us in Alabama during the celebration, and appreciate his full participation in the festivities.

Maryellen Potts

Public Relations Sisters of St. Joseph

Prayer campaign urged to aid pro-life cause

To the editors:

To stop the abortion holocaust in which three unborn babies are (killed) every minute, I appeal to all readers to join my "Our Father" Pro-Life Campaign, in which each reader has to make only two small commitments, i.e., to say one "Our Father" daily for the success of the Pro-life Movement, especially that the Supreme Court will reverse the *Roe vs. Wade* decision, and to get only two others to make the same two commitments. First

there would be one person praying. The two new pro-lifers would each get two more for a total of seven praying. The four latest recruits would each get two more for a total of 15 praying. Then there would be 31, then 63, then 127 praying daily for the Pro-life Movement.

Pope John Paul II said that everybody is obligated to do something for the Pro-life Movement. Abortion is one of the sins crying to Heaven for vengeance.

This way of fighting abortion is probably the easiest, cheapest, and most practical because the "Our Father" prayer is acceptable to both Protestants and Catholics. Your participation is needed because it might "tip the balance" on the Supreme Court.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said that abortion is the greatest threat to world peace. I agree because the number of unborn babies killed by known abortions is over 22 million. The number of all Americans killed in all wars is less than two million, so readers can see that abortion is a much greater tragedy.

If readers decide to join my Pro-life Prayer Campaign, please do not write to me because I cannot handle a large volume of correspondence.

Teresa Vallone
School Street
Livonia

Father McBrien gives hope for future of growing church

To the editors:

Father Richard McBrien gives us hope that our Catholic Church will grow and evolve into a truly catholic church with compassion, love and justice for all. Father McBrien was the speaker a short time ago, sponsored by St. Patrick's Church in Elmira. He encourages us by his devotion to the church and the faith that through our commitment and beliefs we can dissent on some of the Vatican teachings and still be loyal members of the church.

Father McBrien's column is the first article that I read when the *Catholic Courier* arrives. I would be inclined to cancel if I didn't have his column to look forward to.

Elsie C. Stabel
East William Street Bath

CATHOLIC COURIER

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, President
Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, Gen. Mgr.
Karen M. Franz, Editor/Asst. Gen. Mgr.

1150 Buffalo Road • Rochester, New York 14624 • 716/328-4340

Editorial Department:
Richard A. Kiley, Managing Editor
Lee Strong, Staff Writer • Rob Cullivan, Staff Writer
Barbara Ann Homick, Staff Writer

Babette G. Augustin, Photographer • Alexander Chaparro, Photo Intern

Business Department:
Mary E. Bittner, Office Manager • Bernie Puglisi, Advertising Manager
Jeanne A. Morin, Circulation Mgr. • Kathy Welsh, Ad. Account Executive

Production Department:
Lorraine Hennessey, Graphics Mgr. • Michael Fleckenstein, Graphic Artist