

Writer laments ignoring church teachings on marriage

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

I recently received a letter from a friend, not of this diocese:

"I drive some distances because of my work. I have a good cassette deck in my car to listen to lectures, and also those valuable 'talking books' which I get from the Public Library. Recently a friend loaned me the six Sheen tapes he had gotten from you.

"(The tapes) were 'Wasting Your Life,' 'The Choice,' 'The Devil,' 'The Meaning of the Mass,' 'Simon Peter,' (which should be listened to by several priests I know) — and the last, 'The Young and Sex.'" They are all good but the "Youth and Sex" really unsettled



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

me.

"I am in my late twenties, come from a strong Irish Catholic family, educated in Catholic schools from kindergarten through Jesuit college. I have a good job, and up to recently have had a stable and contented life. My wife comes from a nice family, but they have always been weak

Catholics.

"Three years after college I began courting. We were very compatible and had similar interests. She had, and still has a good job with industry. We were mutually attracted physically and frequently during our courtship were intimate.

"We discussed marriage but decided to live together, thinking that we should test whether we really wanted the permanency of marriage. So we rented a beautiful apartment, furnished it well, and continued our work as usual. We explained to my family, to calm their religious convictions, that we had been quietly married by a priest friend from my college days. We agreed not to have children unless we even-

tually should marry.

"Our bed life was quite satisfying. Occasionally she would suggest marriage, but not insistent. I stalled, being satisfied with the live-in set up. But after three years I began to think of children and a family. We didn't discuss the family element, but did like the idea of marriage.

"At first she opted for a medium-sized wedding in church. But my father hit the roof to learn his son was a 'live-in.' So we contacted a Jesuit friend of mine who did the paper work, got dispensations, and married us quietly in the church with just a dozen intimate friends. I thought it strange the priest did not hear our confessions, or even suggest we go to confession to some other priest. In fact I was uneasy getting married without going to confession.

"For a while the marriage went well. Then when I began to talk about children and family there was a change in our relations. I thought that in our late twenties it was time to get moving. That brought about some violent rows. She had a good job and a comfortable life. Why spoil it with kids to tie us down? There came a gradual change in our bed relations. Whereas before she was anxious to please, soon there was a frequent reluctance and as time went on, a kind of indifference.

"My wife has put in for a divorce. Such is my grubby history. I should like you to publish this in your column, if you will. It may be a lesson to others. I suppose by flaunting what I knew from my religion and education, and indeed from my own wonderful family, this catastrophe is my recompense, and I should not complain."

I have experienced a recent upsurge in requests for Archbishop Sheen's tapes. They cost \$3 each, plus \$1 for handling. Those who would like to receive tapes can write me at: St. Alphonsus Church rectory, 10 Lewis St., Auburn, N.Y., 13021.

Repentance means one comes to one's senses

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 1:14-20; (R1) Jonah 3:1-5, 10; (R2) 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

Last Sunday's readings dealt with God's calls to Samuel, John and Andrew. This Sunday's readings also deal with a call from God: the call to repent.

Jonah announced, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed. The people of Nineveh believed ... proclaimed a fast and all of them ... put on sackcloth" (R1). Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming, "Reform your lives" (R3).

"To repent" means to come to one's senses. It is not so much something you do as something that happens. It is not so much a looking at the past and saying, "I'm sorry," as a looking into the future and saying, "Wow!"

The Old Testament tells us that even God repented. When God saw that the people of Nineveh repented, he repented his anger and decided to spare the city.

Yet one greater than Jonah has been preaching to our world: Mary, the Mother of God, at Medjugorje. She, too, is calling the world to repent. She has said repentance can stop wars, convert Russia, and cause God to annul his chastisements.

God's act tells us that repentance is a change of direction. You are going one way; when you repent, you make a right-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

about-face turn and go the other way. Repentance is a change of lifestyle.

Generally, repentance begins with a realization. The prodigal son started on the road back to recovery when "coming to his senses." Then the realization must be followed by a decision, such as, "I shall get up and go to my father's house." Once we have gone that far, God does the rest.

C.S. Lewis once wrote that all people are on the way to becoming either creatures so loathsome that we meet them now only in nightmares, or creatures so glorious that we would be strongly tempted to worship them if we did not know that they were not God. Repentance is a matter of changing directions: loathsome creature or glorious child of God!

Leonardo da Vinci once saw a young singer named Peter Bardinelli, whose face showed such candor and innocence that da Vinci chose him as a model for St. John in his famous "Last Supper." Years later, da Vinci met a shabby beggar with a face of such diabolical wickedness that he thought he could use him as a model for Judas.

da Vinci offered a large sum of money

for the beggar to pose for him. When he put him next to St. John to bring out the contrast, the beggar sobbed. "I served as a model for him, too; when I was a good young man, but now I am a derelict whose only thought is drink and vice."

We can make ourselves respectable Dr. Jekylls or monstrous Mr. Hydes. Eileen George tells about a vision of the outskirts of hell. "I saw two creatures. They were like a charcoal stump ... naked ... their hair was long and dark ... they had the most hideous faces I have ever seen. Their eye sockets were like eggs, and fire was going up inside the eyeballs, not coming out."

For some of us repentance means getting rid of some bad habit: swearing, excessive drinking, pre-marital sex, gossiping, etc. Once a parson gave a sermon on "quitting." Afterwards, he asked a woman what she planned on quitting. She replied, "I ain't been doin' nothin' and I'm goin' to quit that, too."

It is in our best interests to get rid of unhealthy habits. But most of us, like the woman, could quit doin' nothin', and get involved in doin' somethin'. Our Lady has asked us to attend Mass frequently, to go to confession monthly, to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, and to pray the rosary daily. Well, are we doin' somethin' or doin' nothin'?

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