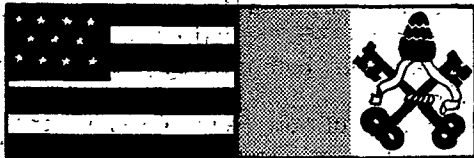


Virtuous role models help to advance ideals of purity

By Fr. Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

From a young soldier in Texas:
"Dear Father, thank you for your letter. It has been many years since I last spoke with you or listened to your sermons. So it was especially good to hear from you."
"In reading 'On the Right Side,' I must let you see a scary fact. Of the people in my generation I know scarcely any who have not engaged in pre-marital sex. At first I did not realize the number of people to whom this was acceptable. Now I am in awe. The value of sex as something sacred, valued, shared or dangerous is zero. This 'peer pressure' to have sex is blatantly beyond something to be snickered at. What happened to bring this about or how to change the mind-set is beyond me.



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

However I thought I should share what I think the climate is with the people I know."

Response: What a good letter. Thank you. As to your puzzlement, both biblical and secular history abound with examples of the ravages to individuals, to nations, and to families because of sinful, sexual activities.

Consider Solomon and David, both

extraordinarily graced by God, yet they flipped dreadfully. The name "Borgia" connotes carnality within the church to many people. All know of Alexander VI, too. Yet few know of the great Saint Francis Borgia. The two kinsmen make an interesting example of the Lord's parable about the wheat and tares growing together.

I have just finished a historical novel, *Autobiography of Henry VIII*, written by Margaret George. The book recounts the life of a sex-driven man, who tore a whole nation away from the Universal Church because of his lust.

The media recently published the alarming record of 100,000 rapes in the United States last year. God knows how many went unreported. The divorce rate and the

increasing number of single-parent families shows a continuing weakening of family life in the states.

Also, the gay and lesbian movement is politically powerful and spiritually devastating. And now you report the dismaying fornication and adulterous activities among today's youths.

What to do? I don't know. I do know that when Christ came into the world, the moral condition of society was even worse than it is today. Centuries of Christian evangelization and example did bring to the world some semblance of sexual stability.

Role models are always great influences. But we have had a generation of people not influenced by the saints. I think we must re-emphasize the ideals of purity through the saints, through good parents (of whom there really are many), through sound preaching and teaching from the pulpit, as well as through our schools.

But let's face it. Control of our sexual instinct is not easy to do. It takes strong character to maintain that control. I do not think things are quite as bad as you indicate, but I am glad that you are concerned. That in itself is the beginning of a fine influence on others.

I am sending you a cassette tape by Archbishop Sheen entitled "Youth and Sex." The tape is not juicy or sensational in the manner of the *National Enquirer*, *Penthouse* and the like, but it is a good presentation of the value, holiness, problems and ideals associated with sex.

Many older people have ordered the tape from me with the comment, "It says what I do not know how to say." Please share the tape with your comrades.

Anyone else wishing the Sheen tape can send \$4 to me at: 10 Lewis St., Auburn, NY, 13021.

Sacrament of Penance can break shackles of sin

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 20:19-31; (R1) Acts 4:25-32; (R2) 1 John 5:1-6.

The first reading in next Sunday's liturgy is one of three summaries (2:42-47, 5:12-16 and the current reading), which St. Luke has inserted into the first five chapters of Acts to show the effects of the Holy Spirit upon the early church.

The Holy Spirit is the liberator: one who breaks the chains of sin that isolate man. Much like the apostles after the first Good Friday, man can become enchained by his betrayal of Christ.

He can either destroy himself, like Judas, or cower behind locked doors and separate himself from the rest of society — like the other apostles — because of guilt and fear.

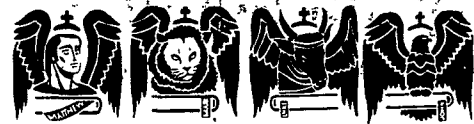
The chains that bind him can be greed, which Judas was guilty of when he sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver. Or it can be denying him, like Peter, out of human respect. Or it can be a lack of faith, like Thomas, who protested, "I'll never believe without probing the nail-prints in his hands..."

Park Ridge seeks help for single-parent program

ROCHESTER — The Single Parent Family Program of the Park Ridge Health Care System needs volunteers and college interns to lead support groups for children whose parents are experiencing separation and divorce.

Support groups meet one night a week for 16 weeks. Program coordinators offer 16 hours of orientation and training for volunteers, as well as weekly supervision.

For additional information, contact Don Rosenthal, 716/723-7750.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

But the first fruit of the redemption was the Holy Spirit. With him came a wonderful power to the church: the power to forgive sins. Twice during the first Easter, the risen Lord said to his apostles: "Peace be with you."

His first greeting of peace was to forgive their sins, but the second was to empower them to forgive the sins of other people. "As the Father has sent me," he said, "so I send you." The Father had sent Jesus as savior. Thus, the angel said to Joseph: "She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21).

When Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic, the Pharisees said, "Who can forgive sins but God." That is true because only God can forgive sins. So Jesus breathed upon the apostles and gave them God! "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven then; if you hold them bound they are held bound."

What an Easter gift! The Holy Spirit was given to us so that through him the chains of sin might be broken. The same way a stroke or heart attack limits the movement of a man, sin limits one's freedom as well. The alcoholic must deny himself even one drink. The drug addict can no longer call his soul his own.

The way to break all these shackles is through the Easter gift of Christ — the Sacrament of Penance. The forgiveness of sins is the unbinding of the risen Lazarus. To ignore the sacrament is like leaving one's self bound: "If you hold them bound, they are held bound." And not just the sins, but the sinners as well.

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