

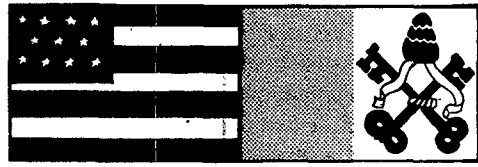
The devil continues as a disruptive force in the world

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Q: Did you see the recent ABC News program, "20/20," which showed the Catholic rite of exorcism?

A: That's the program anchored by Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters. No, I didn't see the program but I have heard much discussion about it — most of it positive.

I saw the advertisements promoting the show. I thought that it was strange for the service to have the blessing of the local bishop in Palm Springs, Fla., where the exorcism took place. To give permission for such a bizarre rite might well cause



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

misunderstanding.

Later I learned that the bishop gave his permission for the rite because so many today don't believe in the existence of Lucifer and his devils.

Q: Is belief in the devil really Catholic doctrine?

A: Yes. Belief in the devil is an article of faith. The Gospels are full of incidents where Jesus drove out the devil or his minions. The rest of the New Testament is clear about the existence of devils.

Q: Well, that's all right for credulous people. What about the educated?

A: Recently, I read a book, *Demon Possession*, which has a collection of case histories, studies and conclusions from a wide range of professional people, including doctors, psychiatrists, scientists, historians and college professors. One article by a psychiatrist, Dr. Gary R. Collins, seems to sum up well what we believe about the devil.

Dr. Collins wrote: "I have been impressed by the oft-quoted statement of C.S. Lewis in the introduction of his *Screwtape Letters*. 'There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils,' Lewis wrote. 'One is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. The other is to disbelieve in their existence. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors. Perhaps all of us have seen extremes. Psychologists tend to be disbelievers; some of the Christians I know tend to an excessive belief and almost morbid interest in the topic of demonology. I try to place myself some where in between.'"

Dr. Collins gives what could be taken by Catholics as a correct teaching about devils. He writes: "I believe a) that the devil exists as a real and powerful super-human creature who, for a temporary period of time, has been allowed by God to wander to and fro throughout the earth seeking who he may devour; b) that the devil's work is largely accomplished by demons who are under his control; c) that the satanic forces are powerful, deceptive, opposed to righteousness, and constantly tempting men to engage in ruinous sin.

After the story on the exorcism, "20/20" showed American collegians celebrating spring break in Cancun, Mexico. The piece showed youths drinking and fornicating with great abandon. The following week I saw a similar program, but this time it showed youths in Florida.

Perhaps the devil and his minions were not entirely responsible for the actions of these American youths, but the awful trio — the world, the flesh and the devil — certainly were in action.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen has a good talk on cassette entitled "The Devil." He deals with the devil from theological, scriptural and psychological viewpoints. He describes the devil as a real person, whose spirit is that of disruption and divisiveness. Certainly the world is full of them.

God's love has the power to transform believers

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 15:9-17; (R1) Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; (R2) 1 John 4:7-10.

John's Gospel speaks of God's love for man. The letters of John tell of man's love for God.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote 44 sonnets of love to her husband, Robert Browning. When Robert Browning first came to visit Elizabeth Barrett, she had only a few months to live. She had almost stopped writing, reconciling all her thoughts to death.

Her 44 sonnets tell the story of the transformation that Browning's love brought into her life. This wonderful transformation is dramatized in the play, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*.

Elizabeth had intended her poems to be read solely by her husband. But Browning saw the great literary merit of the works so he published them. To disguise their personal meaning and their author, Browning



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

called them *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. "My little Portuguese," was the loving sobriquet Browning always used for his wife, Elizabeth, because of her swarthy complexion.

The 43rd sonnet sums up Elizabeth's love for her husband. Few passages in literature have surpassed these 14 lines in which she defines the love that may exist between man and woman. The sonnet begins with the question, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Then she enumerates the countless ways.

Elizabeth's sonnet is without parallel in defining human love. Yet in defining divine love, nothing in literature equals the farewell words of Jesus to his apostles. They were spoken after the institution of the Holy Eucharist — the glow, so to speak of the sacrament of love.

"How much do I love thee?" Jesus, too, might have asked his apostles.

Then he tells them: "I have loved you as much as my Father has loved me."

He might have challenged them to "count the ways of that love, if you can. My Father's love is eternal, is unchangeable, is unselfish, is given even to the undeserving. I have loved you like that, to the depth and breadth and height of my divinity and my humanity — freely, purely, with all my heart and all my being."

Then Jesus begged, "Live on in my love" because love sustains, lifts up, strengthens, and transforms.

We know the transforming power of love. Don Quixote's love for the prostitute Aldonza transformed her into Dulcinea. Professor Higgin's love for the flower girl Eliza Doolittle changed her into "my fair

lady." And Browning's love for Elizabeth Barrett poured new life into her paralyzed limbs and helped her overcome even the prospect of imminent death.

The following lines from the seventh of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* can't be overstated:

"The face of all the world is changed, I think./Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul/Move still, oh still, beside me as they stole/Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink/Of obvious death, where I, who taught to sink,/Was caught up into love, and taught the whole/Of life in a new rhythm."

Elizabeth's strength could be found in her weakness and Browning's love. So our helplessness can be made strong in God's love. A helpless baby's safety is not in its own strength, but in its mother's love.

And what will happen? "My joy may be yours." Jesus entered the world bringing joy. "I bring you tidings of great joy," he said.

And he left it, giving his Gospel of joy still. "All this I tell you that my joy may be yours."

RIT will host program on graphic arts this June

ROCHESTER — The Rochester Institute of Technology will host a graphic arts program for high school students from June 23-26.

Entitled "The Graphic Arts Experience," the program will offer a hands-on introduction to modern imaging and graphic communications processes. The program will also include a college-planning seminar.

All activities will be led by RIT faculty. Students will live in dormitories under the supervision of resident assistants.

Applicants must be between the ages of 16 and 18 and entering their senior year of high school this fall.

For information, contact Linda Tolan, 716/475-5955.

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