

The seven capital sins pose problems for all people

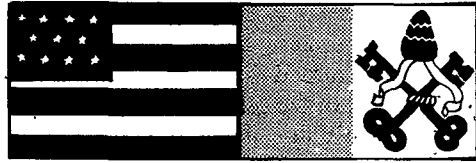
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

While I was driving recently up Lansing Street from the U.S. Post Office in Auburn, I saw seven high school boys dribbling a basketball as they crossed the road. As I slowed down to let them pass, one of the lads shot his arm in the air and shouted, "Hi, old man!"

I was highly amused by his youthful exuberance and that sense of confidence youths possess when they travel in groups.

I am pleased to have reached the age I am. I have had many experiences, good and bad, over 83 years.

The term "old man" started me thinking. All these years I have been impressed by the constant weakness of human nature. Thanks to the fall of Adam, all mankind suffers from the weaknesses that inhabit our being. Those weaknesses are the seven capital sins: pride, covetousness, lust,



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

anger, envy, gluttony and sloth.

What are these capital sins? They are tendencies or weaknesses. These are not personal sins unless we submit to any of them. Just as a person with weak lungs has to be especially careful about catching colds or pneumonia, we all have these weaknesses that demand constant vigilance lest we fall.

A problem for one person, i.e. gluttony, may not be a problem for another. But considering all seven sins, we all have to wage war with God's grace to preserve virtue.

Let us consider all seven of them:

- Pride is an inordinate love of self. It has to do with our relationship to God and neighbor. Pride is referred to as "the mother of all vices."

- Covetousness (avarice) is an excess love for wealth and worldly possessions, property and goods.

- Lust is an inordinate seeking of sex. The media not only makes us conscious that sex is rampant, but it often adds to the problem.

- Anger is a displeasure against another person, desiring to inflict punishment.

- Gluttony is a greed for food, drink and now drugs. Researchers say more harm is done by alcohol than by drugs.

- Envy is a sadness at the success of another. The Germans have an interesting word, *schadenfreud*, which translates into "taking comfort in other's misfortunes."

- Sloth is indifference, especially spiri-

tual sloth. It can be found in the "I don't care attitude" in some people.

After pondering the capital sins and wondering about some antidotes, I thought about the 21 tapes made by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. Some of the tapes would be helpful combatting the "awful seven" so I would like to make the following recommendations: "The Foundation of Sanctity" (pride); "The Choice" (covetousness); "Youth and Sex" (lust); "The Devil" (anger); "Wasting Your Life" (envy); "The Meaning of Suffering" or "Christ: The Center of the World" (gluttony); "Simon Peter" or "Three Kinds of Love" (sloth).

I often question altar boys to stimulate their minds regarding our religion. Before a recent Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Auburn, I asked a cheerful Douglas Dell Stritto: "Do you know the seven capital sins?"

He promptly rattled them off. Surprised and delighted, I asked: "How come you know them so well?" He replied, "I went to Blessed Trinity School." As a reward I have sent him *A Vision from the Steeple* by Father Joseph E. Manton.

Readers who want any Sheen tapes from me can write: 10 Lewis St., Auburn, N.Y. 13021. The cost is \$3 (plus \$1 for handling).

Forces continue to prevent unity in the church

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 17:11-19; (R1) Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; (R2) 1 John 4:11-16.

The theme of Sunday's reading is unity: "that they may be one, even as we are one."

One of the greatest scandals in the church today is public dissent with the magisterium of the church. In the Decree on Ecumenism, Vatican II stated that the spread of the Gospel is hampered by the division of Christian bodies. As one African chief once said to some Christian missionaries, "You each chose your own brand of Christianity, why can't I choose mine?"

What are the causes of religious division among mankind? Our Lord singled out two causes in the Gospel: the devil and the lie.

Thus in his prayer, he said: "Father ... guard them from the evil one." The Bible is a very practical book. It doesn't philosophize about evil. It simply and clearly states that an evil power exists in this world, and it is opposed to the power of God. This power is so mighty that it invaded the first seminary of Christ and caused an apostle to betray the master — the one "destined to be lost."

Although Mary occupied a privileged



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

place in the Upper Room after our Lord's ascension, she was not called to be an apostle. Instead two disciples were put forward whom the Gospels do not even mention. Why did the apostles do this? Because they wished to remain faithful to the attitude of Christ toward women. It had nothing to do with the priest acting "in persona Christi." The apostles knew the will of Christ and followed it.

The second cause of disunity is the lie. The one time our Lord called anybody a name was the evil one. He called him a murderer and a liar. Satan used the lie in Eden, and he uses it in every temptation. Sin is simply a great deception.

So Jesus prayed for all his followers to his father: "Protect them, guard them; consecrate them by means of truth." And his prayer was answered on Pentecost Sunday, when he sent the promised spirit of truth upon his church.

If Satan and the lie cause disunity, as symbolized at the tower of Babel, so the Holy Spirit and truth cause unity, as sym-

bolized by the unity of tongues on Pentecost Sunday.

One of the greatest sources of truth and the Holy Spirit is the holy Mass.

The Liturgy of the Word is God speaking to us. This is not a word *about* the Lord; this is the word *of* the Lord. And God speaks the truth, and truth is the way to life.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist gives us the bond of unity: love. Love is the sacramental grace of the Mass. One of the reasons for the Mass is that we might commune with Christ in holy Communion. The other reason is to pour out the Holy Spirit upon the assembly. Thus, after the sacrificial part of the Mass, we pray, "May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit."

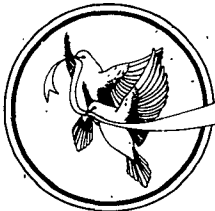
Every Mass we celebrate is meant to pour just a little bit more of truth and love into us, so that rooted in the truth and bonded by love, we can become one in mind and heart.

Unity is the mark of the church. It is also the unmistakable mark of the true follower of Christ.

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