

# Magic stressing wrong message

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

Recently, Father Joseph Gaynor, one of my rectory mates, said: "St. Aloysius needs a priest for Saturday night Mass, Nov. 9, at 4:15 p.m. I am committed to Mass and preaching at St. Francis. Are you free to take the Mass at St. Aloysius?"

"Yes. Happy to," I answered.  
"Good. You will just say Mass. Father (Conrad) Sundholm will preach, and then run up to Holy Family for 5:30 p.m. Mass," Father Gaynor said.

Father Sundholm welcomed me and gave directions for the liturgy (e.g. procession up the aisle from the back). The small choir helps carry the congregational singing.

Father Sundholm, whose mother was a Murphy, is of medium height and weight. In the pulpit he looks like the master of all he surveys. His booming voice is a joy to the hard of hearing. His strong convictions are contagious to his listeners.

He began his presentation: "Today we will consider the widow and her son and the miracle of Eli-

jah multiplying the oil and flour, and the famous Magic Johnson." Then he unfolded the parallel between the widow's solicitude for her son, and today's concern for our children regarding the spreading of AIDS.

Substantially, he said: "Magic Johnson is to be praised for his candor regarding his AIDS and his solicitude about the spreading of that disease. But Magic Johnson is delivering the wrong message. Rather than encouraging our youth to practice abstinence, he advocates a mechanical device as 'safe.'"

"The stocks for the biggest manufacturers of these jumped over \$8 within a week of his announcement," he continued. "These devices are estimated 82 percent safe. Would you take a plane from Rochester to Los Angeles which advertised: 'Our planes are 82 percent safe?' God has given the answer to safe sex. Fidelity in marriage. Rejection of promiscuity."

After Mass I was in the vestibule greeting the people. Several commented on the fine sermon. One person, almost accusingly said: "He

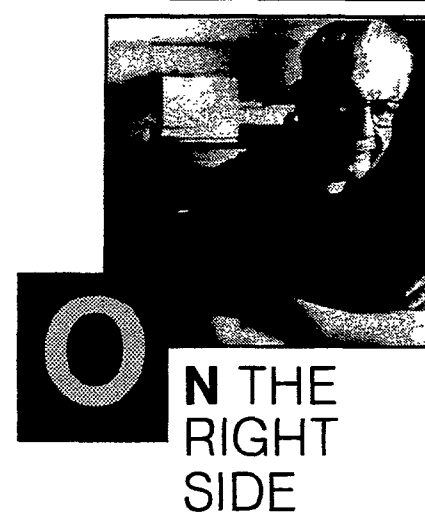
said what all you priests and bishops should be saying."

The Nov. 12 issue of *The Syracuse Post Standard* had an article written by columnist Howard Rosenberg:

The headline exclaimed: "What Happened to all the Chastity Advocates?" Rosenberg wrote: "CNN's Catherine Crier noted: 'Magic Johnson will now champion a new cause, 'safe sex.' No where in the TV did anyone urge kids not to have sex. Although many Americans believe that juvenile sex is flat-out wrong, the best way to combat it is through preaching premarital abstinence, this found no place in the voluminously reported Magic Johnson."

In *Sports Illustrated* Magic reports: "I was the one most NBA players looked up to when it came to women. I lived the kind of social life that most guys in the league wanted to lead. Now I'm pleading for every athlete and entertainer who has also been 'out there' to get tested, and from now on, to practice safe sex," i.e. take an 82 percent chance of safety in fornication.

In our sick society the church is in



for a violent time because she stands for purity and against fornication and adultery. The church's enemies will multiply. Pope Paul II will be vilified. Magic will be magnified.

The day after Father Sundholm's sermon I had dinner with a beautiful family. After I recounted the sermon, the son commented calmly: "The only safe sex is abstinence."

# Advent prepares for the coming of Christ

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 21:25-28, 34-36; (R1) Jeremiah 33:14-16; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2.

The calendar year starts with Jan. 1. The Church Year begins with the Sunday nearest Nov. 30 — the feast of St. Andrew. The calendar year is built around the sun. The Church Year is built around the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ. The Church Year is simply the life of the church revolving around the life of Christ.

The great event of Our Lord's life was His resurrection. It occurred on a Sunday. So Easter Sunday became the foundation of the Church Year — every other Sunday was seen as a "little Easter," a resonance of the big one. When the catechumenate came into existence in the fourth century, the Easter Season was born, with its preparatory weeks of Lent and its celebratory weeks of Eastertide.

The heresy of Arianism (around 325 A.D.) spurred the church's em-

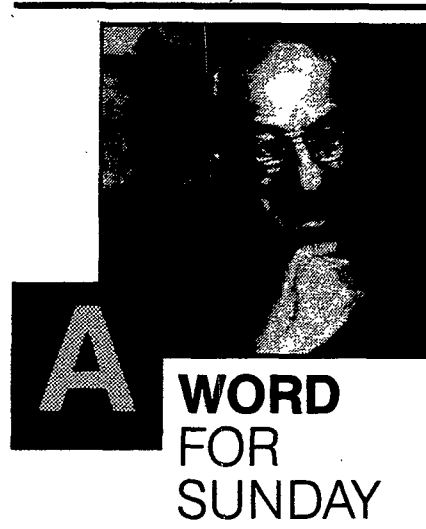
phasis on the birth of Jesus. The date, Dec. 25, was chosen to replace the pagan celebrations to *Sol Invictus* (the Sun Conquering darkness, because after Dec. 21 the days get longer). Later, preparatory time was appended to the Christmas feast — the four weeks of Advent — and celebratory time, Christmastide.

Advent prepares for the coming of Christ. Christ comes in history (second and third Sundays of Advent). He comes in mystery (Dec. 8 and the fourth Sunday of Advent). He comes in majesty at the end of the world (first Sunday of Advent).

Logically, the Church Year begins with the end of life. Philosophers say, "The intention of an action always comes before the achievement of the action. The goal is first in the mind, but last in the execution."

When going on a vacation, for example, the first thing we think about is where we are going and yet it is the last thing we arrive at. In a war, a general's first thoughts are about victory, but it is the last thing achieved.

So, in the beginning of the Church



Year, the first thing the church asks us to think about is the end. Where are we going? For the big danger of life can be to let our immersion in this world crowd out the real purpose of of life.

The gospel enumerates three such dangers: indulgence, drunkenness and worldly cares.

Indulgence can make one soft and flabby. In the desert God's people grew strong while in a land of milk and honey they turned to other gods. We cannot be delicate members of a crucified body. Advent calls for a little fasting and self-denial.

As for drunkenness, have you ever watched television and seen that the first thing people do when they get together is pour drinks? Alcohol and drugs are responsible for 90 percent of juvenile crimes, 75 percent of felonies, 50 percent of divorces and 40 percent of fatal accidents.

As for worldly cares, Our Lord was not talking about making provisions for the future. He was condemning anxiety: the excessive care about the things of this world. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned against this danger and urged us to budget our lives on the Providence of God. He said, in effect, that God is a Father and He will provide. All we need do is our best and He will do the rest. Let go, let God.

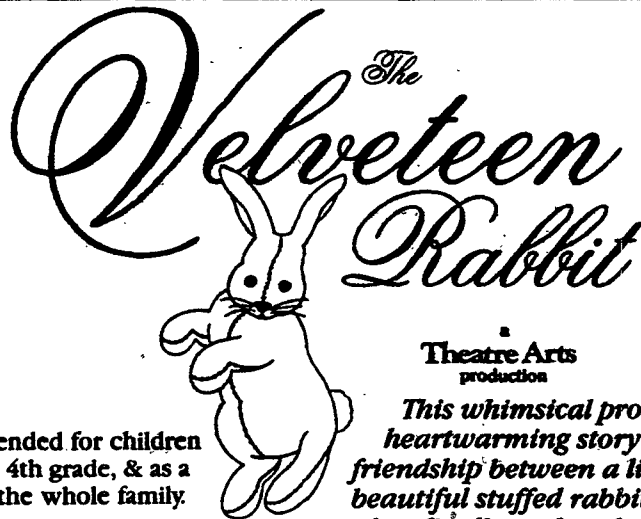
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