

on the MOVE

"Being a teenager from other teens is 'f' this and 'f' that"

Kate Flanagan is typical of many well-meaning people who strive to refrain from using foul language ... but don't always wind up battling a thousand.

"There will be times I'll be in an argument, and it will just come out and I don't even notice it. You're all frustrated and you don't know what else to say," said Kate, 17, a parishioner at St. Columba/St. Patrick Parish in Caledonia and Mumford.

Kate admits that her tendency to swear has been at least partially shaped by her day-to-day environment.

"Being a teenager, all I hear from other teenagers is 'f' this and 'f' that," she said.

Josh Capogrossi agreed that profanity is so widespread in our society that it's impossible not to be affected by it.

"You've heard it on TV and in movies; it kind of seeps into your mind. It's very subliminal," said Josh, 17, from Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca.

Kate pointed out that movies, especially, contain an unnecessary amount of foul language.

"TV shows are censored, but they can get their points across without swearing," Kate said.

Despite these influences, Josh said that the "everyone else is doing it" line of thinking is not a strong enough argument to justify using profanity.

"There are other ways to get your frustrations out," Josh remarked. He added that, as Catholics, swearing is a matter we should never take for granted.

"It think it needs to be more addressed in church," Josh said.

The subject does receive special

attention from Father Fred Betti, SJ, an instructor at McQuaid Jesuit High School. As part of a social-justice class he teaches, Father Betti examines the effects of foul language by reviewing a profanity-laced video featuring comedian Andrew Dice Clay.

In most cases, Father Betti noted, Clay's words provide a very short-lived shock value for his students.

"The first couple of things you laugh at, because you've never heard it before," said Adam Andolina, 17, a parishioner at St. Thomas More Church in Brighton.

Matt Battisti, 17, agreed that Clay's humor is initially funny, but the repetition leads him to feel that "it's sick after a while."

"They get tired of it," Father Betti added. "The hope is that you have intelligent people with values, and they'll distance themselves from it."

However, although Adam and Matt agree that Clay takes profanity too far, both admit that they fall short of perfection in that area. The temptation to swear, both McQuaid seniors said, is especially high when they're competing in athletics.

"You're going on pure adrenaline instead of thinking about what you're going to say," explained Matt, 17, who attends St. Pius X Church in Chili.

"You're in the locker room or practice, and there's a lot of jawing with each other and stuff," Adam said.

Father Betti said that professional athletes help feed society's notion that "locker-room talk" is acceptable. He explained that these people are bleeped out when they swear during television interviews — but their lips leave no doubt about the words they utter.

"You still send a message," Father Betti said. "As a society, we've just kind of accepted it in certain environments. A lot of it is being presented to us in the people we model."

An even greater influence than media or friends, Josh observed, is the level of foul language experienced by teens in their own households.

"If the parents use it, then their kids are going to use it and then their kids are going to use it," Josh said.

On the other hand, Adam said he "maybe heard my dad swear twice in his life. My mom, never. They never had to sit down and tell me it's wrong — because by their example, I know that's not the way it's supposed to be."

Matt added that he has experienced similar role-modeling while growing up.

"I never heard my parents swear. Maybe they have when they're not around me, I don't know," he said.

Father Betti emphasized that individuals should not give in to profanity simply because society, friends or even family members say it's okay.

"It doesn't have to be that way," he remarked.

Adam agreed, saying, "You have to be able to make your own judgments and be your own person."

Matt pointed out that foul language is a habit that's more controllable than we may even realize. For example, he said he's much more conscious of his vocabulary when a girl is present.

"I'm at an all-boys' high school, and there's different things you say in the hall that you wouldn't say in front of a lady," Matt said.

Adam said that no matter how many times he might be inclined to swear, he

is able to refrain from using foul words.

"Using that language should never be an outburst," Adam said.

Josh noted, "I'm sure you can do it. Especially can do it."

"Oh, sugar" is a certain phrase.

He added that he wishes to control his language, but it's difficult to do so in an alternative society.

"To really control your language, you need to separate yourself from the group," Josh said.

On the other hand, Pashby emphasized that swearing regularly is as immoral as

profanity.

"They have profanity, but it's not a progression," he said.

Students at Immaculate Conception and Bishop Amat High Schools have grown up with profanity.

However, Father Betti's stance on profanity is clear. "Therefore, I gently remind you to have a limit."

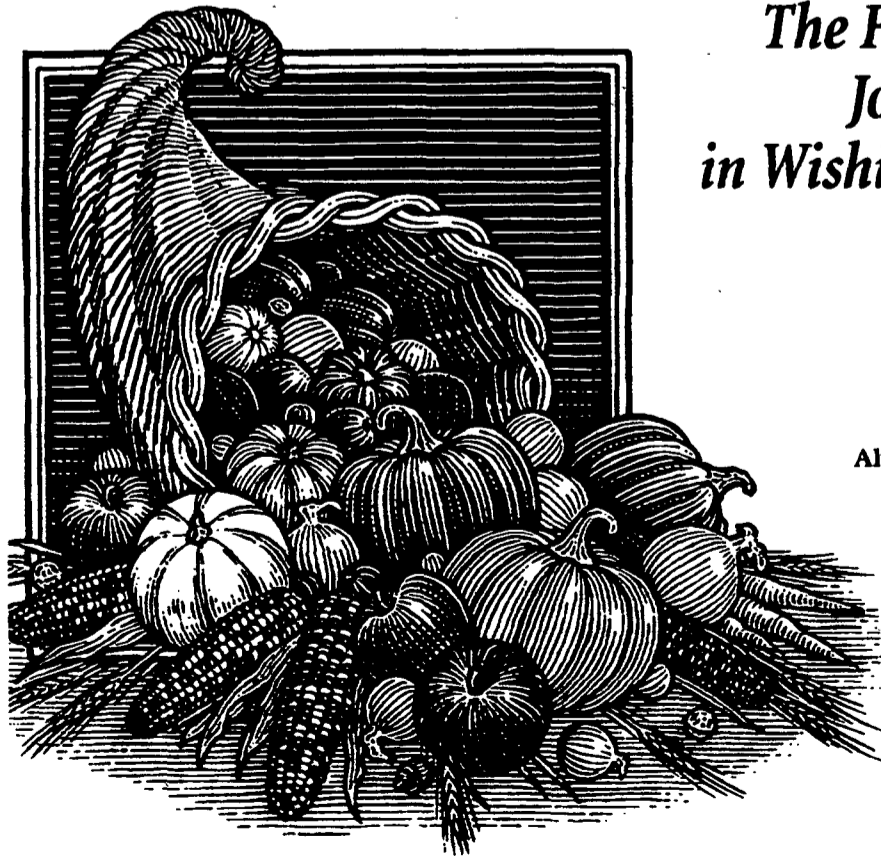
"The danger is that it becomes the norm," said Pashby.

For those who thought about profanity, it should put the people in a different perspective.

"People say it doesn't mean anything, but it does hurt people."

"But it does hurt people."

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