

OPINIONS

Caught in Web of the Lust Bug

Catholic Courier

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1150 Buffalo Road
P.O. Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340
800/600-3628 outside Rochester
<http://www.catholiccourier.com>
e-mail: cathcour@frontiernet.net

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The Catholic Courier wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the letter writers' opinions.

Letters must not exceed 500 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

This editorial by Thomas J. Dermody appeared in the May 14 issue of The Catholic Post, newspaper of the Diocese of Peoria, Ill., where Dermody is editor. We reprint it with permission.

A virus carried by an e-mail titled "ILOVEYOU" has shaken the security of computer users around the globe. The so-called "Love Bug," reportedly sent to 45 million computers on May 4 alone, caused billions of dollars in damage as it overwrote files, clogged networks, and shut down personal and commerce e-mail systems. Variations of the bug soon appeared, as did warnings that far more menacing attacks are possible in the near future.

Realizing their vulnerability, heads of corporations and households alike acted quickly, updating their anti-virus software and issuing new cautions regarding e-mail usage.

Away from the headlines, hundreds of thousands of computer users receive e-mails each day bearing a "spiritual virus" that may not damage their computers, but can surely lead to a meltdown of users' souls. As with the Love Bug, the perpetrators of this virus often conceal it with innocent headings such as one that recently beckoned "I finally found you. Hi." When opened, the e-mail's message was "This is for you. You're going to love it."

The "gift" was a pornographic Web site only a mouse click away. Similar invitations from the 60,000-plus pornographic Web sites go out en masse every day. A more troubling thought is that so many computer users don't need an invitation to view porn — they're searching for it.

Pornography is sometimes dubbed the Internet's "dirty little secret." It is definitely dirty, but it's not little and it's no secret. According to Nielsen Net Ratings, 17.5 million Web surfers visited porn sites from their homes in January, a 40-percent increase compared with four months earlier. The top e-porn site boasted more unique visitors in January than such Internet giants as ESPN.com or barnesandnoble.com.

While the Love Bug virus resulted in a loss of billions of dollars, the spreading "Lust Bug" is creating profits to a similar degree. Incredibly, according to the cover story of the March 27 *U.S. News and World Report*, Web users are spending as much money online for pornographic videos and accessories as they are for books or plane tickets.

'Food for Poor' is stellar agency

To the editors:

Regarding Tom and Mary Connolly's letter about the good Food for the Poor does for the people of the Caribbean area, I felt compelled to add my own positive experience with this organization. The wonderful man in charge of Food for the Poor, Ferdinand Mahfood, has dedicated his life — as has his wife — to serving the poorest of the poor, those living in Haiti, Jamaica, and the other small countries dotting the Caribbean area.

A few years ago, through God's generosity, I was able to sponsor the building of a simple home for one of the families living there. I cannot tell you how touched I was when Ferdinand sent a picture of the family that was to occupy this house, standing there in front of it. Most of their meager earnings go for the purchase of food, so they have no way to break their cycle of poverty. Living in shacks made of cardboard, scrap wood and tin is no way to live.

I beg anyone reading this letter to respond as the Connollys have. They are correct about a little going a long way there. A total home, including land and foundation, can be built for \$2,000 (it was \$1000 five years ago). Think of what little that amount can buy here, compared to a home that changes a whole family's life — to say nothing of the protection it offers from the violent weather that often strikes so hard in that area.

The editors' note clarified that the "article" was actually a paid advertisement. Perhaps a *Catholic Courier* article about Food for the Poor and the work it does is a next step. I have only touched the surface of all they do. There is much more to report, and I am sure Ferdinand would be more than happy to provide the story of his "miracle in the Caribbean."

Joseph M. Kessler
Chambers Street
Spencerport

GUEST EDITORIAL

So what happens when a person, especially a person of faith, is infected by the pornographic Lust Bug?

Calling it "a grave offense," the Catechism of the Catholic Church says pornography does "great injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public) since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others."

Speaking at a Catholic Men's Conference in Peoria in 1998, Jeff Cavins of the Eternal Word Television Network said the "secret sin" of Internet porn use "is responsible for more men being shackled emotionally and spiritually, causing them to be ineffective as husbands and fathers, than almost anything I know of right now. ... You wouldn't believe the number of men who tell me 'I am addicted.'"

Researchers at Stanford and Duquesne universities support Cavins' view. They conservatively estimated earlier this year that at least 200,000 Americans are hopelessly addicted to e-porn. How many others, while not necessarily to the point of addiction, have allowed the porn "virus" to infiltrate their thoughts, devalue their attitudes toward human sexuality or respect among people, place their jobs at risk, and threaten their marriages, family, and spiritual lives?

When the Love Bug hit earlier this month, immediate action followed. What is society — and especially what are Catholics — doing to confront the more prolific and, to our minds, more dangerous Internet Lust Bug? Have we even realized our vulnerability?

Have we investigated software or Internet services that block pornography sites? Have we asked our legislators to enforce existing obscenity and child pornography laws, and look into ways of regulating this international concern? Have we discussed the threat in our families? In our parishes?

And if we have already fallen victim, have we made use of the sacrament of reconciliation, the support of family or friends, the guidance of the church, daily prayer, and the grace of the Eucharist to protect us from the temptation of this virus?

Pornography long predates technology, but never has it been so easily and privately accessible. Users be warned: This virus attacks spiritual life. It's way past time to squash this bug.

Soldiers place flags at Arlington Cemetery

Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry place flags at graves in Arlington National Cemetery for Memorial Day. It takes about three hours to distribute flags to more than 250,000 graves.



Reuters/CNS

Christ could not commit venial sins

To the editors:

The letter of Peter Dzwonkoski (May 25: "Wonders about 'honoring'") deserves a considered response.

To speak of the "venial sin" of the Christ child at the finding in the temple it is necessary first to consider that essentially sin — mortal or venial — is a turning away from God to do one's own will. Since the Incarnation gives Christ a unique relationship with God the Father, it is obviously impossible for Him to perform any act which is contrary to the will of God.

As for any disrespect shown to His mother or His earthly father, Christ says else-

where (Luke 14:36-37) "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

The rather mysterious episode of the finding in the temple shows that Christ was fulfilling a mandate from His Father which had to take precedence over any other worldly duties His humanity required.

We all need prayerful reflection on episodes in Scripture which give us pause for thought at first reading. There is simply no way to talk rationally about "venial sin" of Christ.

Margaret Vincent
Avon-on-the-Green, Avon

Defend and honor the Blessed Virgin Mary

To the editors:

Always we should defend our Catholic faith! It includes honoring Mary, Mother of God. Her name is Blessed among all generations, states the Magnificat.

A number of years ago we at St. Anne's, Palmyra, celebrated the first Saturdays of the month with Mass, then luncheon at different located parishes. There would be a guest

priest speaker whose talk was about Mary.

As years passed, I could identify my life with the Mystery decades of the rosary.

Since I'm almost 70 years old, I hope to be enjoying the Glorious Mysteries.

Cheers for our Blessed Mother.
Rena B. Camblin
Meadow Drive
Palmyra