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President's Page

Donald E. McIntosh

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At the last meeting of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, Father Michael Mulhern, C.M., Ph.D., a practicing psychologist in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, presented a panel of teenagers and young adults with some startling views concerning their own sexual behavior and that of their peer groups. These young people were students in or graduates of a good cross-section of our Catholic high schools. Although most of their concepts and ideas concerning norms and standards of acceptable modes of sexual behavior for the unmarried shocked our audience, I doubt whether a serious study of our student bodies would come up with concepts much in variance with them. Although these ideas, I assure you, are not taught in our diocesan schools, they certainly are what our young people have learned. It is a small, but unsettling indication of how persuasive and permeating are the concepts and examples promulgated by our humanistic, secularistic, and hedonistic society. Chastity and abstinence have become religious concepts and appear to have little place with our democracy of subjective standards in a society that has replaced the sacredness of the God-given expression of conjugal love with the banality of recreational sex.

The pages of this journal have many times been devoted to the multiple causes and complex reasons for the breakdown of the family, "modernization" of ethical standards, and rise in promiscuity ideas which these young people espoused, and I will not go into their causes here. However, if we can hope to do anything to restore the traditional standards and teachings on human sexuality of the Catholic Church, we
have to reform and restore our own lives and behavior within our families and our medical practice as a role model for our children and as an example to our fellowman. Christ-like ideals must permeate our lives in our entertainment selections, dress codes, recreation, relationship to others, and in all aspects of our lives.

We also must get involved and participate more in the education of our young people and see that they are exposed to the wholesome concepts of human sexuality. This means we will have to sit on school boards, become teachers and educators, and participate in evolution and selection of educational programs in our Catholic schools. The education of our young on human sexuality extends well beyond what they are taught at home. We have to be challenged by the program so ably developed by Sister Hanna Klaus, M.D., the STAR Teen Program, or Sexuality Teaching in the Context of Adult Responsibility Program, which she has shown has reduced sexual activity in a group of teenagers. We need to become involved or participate in this or similar programs when we are able.

Almost every counseling program for troubled youth has proposed that these young people needed more parental concern, supervision, involvement and time. We need to re-evaluate our own lives and prioritize our own commitments with our children and family that demand our involvement. Time is needed to share concepts, to review ideas, to discuss standards to reinforce our Church's teaching and Christian morality. The young need our help to blunt the massive assault of all the secular and satanic forces on their evolving consciences and concepts of morality.

Finally, on our own and with our own efforts, we are doomed to failure. As St. Paul exhorts, we must pray constantly in order to ward off the forces trying to take our very souls. Only with prayer and the help of God can we protect these charges, the young, the children God has entrusted to our care.

—Donald E. McIntosh, M.D.
President