



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Talk given by Fr. Michael for an all-school assembly--

A Reading from the Gospel of Saint Matthew (Matthew 15:8-20)

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you when he said:

"This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts."

He summoned the crowd and said to them,

"Hear and understand. It is not what enters one's mouth that defiles that person; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one."

Then his disciples approached and said to him,

"Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?"

He said in reply,

"Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind.

If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a pit."

Then Peter said to him in reply, "Explain (this) parable to us."

He said to them,

"Are even you still without understanding?

Do you not realize that everything that enters the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled into the latrine?

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile.

For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy.

These are what defile a person.

The Gospel of the Lord

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On December 15, 1939, a history making movie premiered in Atlanta, Georgia. With great excitement, the American public had followed the making of this movie for two years. The film was the longest American sound film made up to that time - three hours and forty four minutes in length. It received ten Academy Awards, and It has sold more tickets in the U.S. than any other film in history.

Gone with the Wind also made history with the last line spoken by the male lead actor, Clark Gable, who says "*Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn.*" No one had ever said a



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word like that on film or on the radio before. It was a foot in the door that has never been closed since.

It sounds harmless to us now, but people of that generation spoke much more civilly than we do now. For instance, in the 55 years I knew my father, I never heard him say even *Hell* (except in the prayer to St. Michael.)

The US was an overtly Judaeo Christian country in that almost everyone agreed on the 10 commandments, on the existence of God and on our obligations to him and to one another. There were film industry boards of censors, and a Catholic organization called the Legion of Decency, all working to keep up a level of public decency and morality.

This censorship too may seem quaint or even fascist to some people today. It is true the fascists and the communists went to great lengths not only in political but also in moral censorship, but in comparison.

our American censorship was both lenient and largely voluntary.

In 1968 one of the finest public servants in this country, Nelson Rockefeller, was deemed to be unelectable to the presidency because he was divorced. Just 12 years later in 1980 we elected a divorced Hollywood actor to that office without a thought about his marriage.

Yet growing up in the 1950's, I was not subjected to a barrage of pornography, sexual innuendo, violence, glamorization of drugs. I was fortunate.

You are not so fortunate as I was. You are surrounded and exposed everyday to all the things I was protected from. Oh I was exposed to them all eventually, but after my mind was trained to be more discriminating.

Whether you realize it or not, young minds are impressionable; they are fresh fast film that captures images and ideas very quickly and with stunning accuracy.

Jesus tells us in another place in the Gospels "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple – innocent- as doves.. (Matthew 10:16)

Now it's all up to you to be shrewd while remaining innocent, harmless to yourself and others.

No matter that the LightSabre firewall protects you here.



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You can bring in whatever you want on your i-pod or your laptop. When you leave here and go home you can expose yourself as much as you want or can to harmful media and games which promotes and advertise the glamour of evil.

And we must not kid ourselves. Our culture is now permeated with this kind of banal, unthinking evil. It is this unthinking acceptance of evil which has resulted in abortion, casual recreational sex which has spread deadly disease, epidemics of drug addiction and sex addiction, and destabilized families and marriages.

Now you must be self censors to protect not only your self but also this country. The moral degeneration of the US is one of the principal reasons Muslim nations want to keep us at arms length.

There is an old expression: If you put garbage in, you get garbage coming out. Jesus is saying as much in the passage we just heard. The things that defile our minds and hearts are not taken in by mouth, but by eye and ear and touch. So you must take care that the images and words you take in and the things you touch and which touch you are wholesome and healthy & harmless.

There is another old expression...Monkey see, monkey do. Unfortunately we humans are too much like monkeys, and we imitate what we see, sometimes thinking it is our own idea.

When your parents or a teacher tells you something is inappropriate, they are not trying to spoil your fun. They are very lovingly trying to protect you.

I worked for two years in New York for a very successful hotelier, who had built the Caribe Hilton in San Juan & other international hotels, and was then in charge of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in NYC. Upon his retirement he was asked "What is the secret of your success ? What advice do you give ?"

His answer was simple ...always associate with the best, the best people especially; look above yourself and not below yourself. We imitate the people who we associate with. If you want to know what a person is like, look at his friends.

You are fortunate to be here at Priory. You have good teachers; you have monks; all of these are people who love you. But most of all you have YOU, each other, good classmates who have been selected to be here because you are the best.

So you must help each other have high standards; help each other live up to the honor code and avoid the glamour of evil. Help each other by being the best of friends and classmates, by being the best influence. Above all, you must love one another.



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It's not easy and takes courage. I know you have what it takes.