

# Church must hit streets, malls to teach men the message of life

The church, that's you and me, has to accept the responsibility of being visible by going into the public square to address the social ills that plague our society. We do that very well in many social ministries, and many who are in those ministries feel not enough is being done. It is also true that pro-life groups provide many services to women in a crisis pregnancy and there are various private and public services for the children saved from abortion. However, there is one group of people to whom we really need to turn our attention.

I am referring to the men who are responsible for the crisis pregnancy. Most men who are responsible do not accompany their partner to the abortuary or the crisis pregnancy center, or accept responsibility for their participation in the situation. We are not talking about half, but less than 5 percent. An unwanted pregnancy has become the "woman's problem," and we have been addressing that attitude in many ways with various programs, but the number of pregnancies outside of wedlock is skyrocketing along with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

In discussing the male participation in the crisis pregnancy and what is being done, I was shocked to learn that youngsters as young as 14 and 15 years old in the city are responsible. Immorality and promiscuous behavior is the norm among our young people. We can all understand why by just turning on the radio, watching TV or the Internet, going to the movies and being bombarded by the advertising industry. Schools and government don't help by teaching safe sex, and they do not place a value on chastity. However, statistics worldwide have shown that teaching no sex before marriage has reduced the plague of STDs and crisis pregnancies, but we are not there yet.

So what is the easy solution? There is none! These men don't go to church where morality is being preached or read The Catholic Review. They hang out in the street's popular locations and in the malls. So the solution is that we have to go where they are.

Every church community has to know where they are hanging out and what they are doing, and an effective plan to reach these young people has to be worked out.

I have checked out a couple of Web sites on male mentoring programs, but they do not work in street ministry. Most private organizations and government agencies offer classroom-type programs, and most are not religious based. They fall back on safe sex training, STD testing and most place an emphasis on how and why young women should not consider an early pregnancy. The problem I learned is that the young men's attitude toward sexual encounters is a kind of "badge of entry" into the adult world that is very hard to change.

How can we instruct our young men to treat girls like we would want our mothers and sisters to be treated, when many mothers have children of several partners and their step-sisters are not blood relationships? I think we have to look to the success of AA and NA and recruit men who have changed their lives from a promiscuous lifestyle to chaste living to reach these young men. I haven't found that group yet.

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