

Let Jesus' spirit rule our choices

I was going to send the following story to Reader's Digest to make some money. However, since I share my best stories in The Catholic Review, I thought you could send the story in and make all the money!

The story: Recently, there was a farewell party for one of the staff members at the Cathedral. Jenny was leaving to be a full time mother to her baby, David. As I was chatting with Jenny during the party, I asked: "Jenny, do you think David will meet his Goliath?" Without missing a beat, Jenny replied: "Father Joe, I'm not worried about David meeting his Goliath. I'm worried about David meeting his Bathsheba!"

A true mother! She was worried about what these girls might do to her boy! No doubt, other mothers worry about what boys will do to their girls!

Interestingly, David's finest hour was when he faced the enemy "out there," Goliath. As the late Father Blair Raum was fond of saying: "Everyone else looked at Goliath and said: 'This guy's too big to beat'. David looked at Goliath and said: 'This guy's too big to miss!'"

The enemy within is more difficult to defeat. From what the Bible tells us, Bathsheba was pretty much minding her own business taking a bath. It was David who lusted after her. It was David who sent for her. It was David who plotted the death of Uriah, her husband, to cover up the adultery.

A more profound question is: "Is the 'enemy' ever really out there?" Another man could have looked at Bathsheba and moved along. David looked and lusted. What was the difference? Was she an occasion of sin? Or, were his thoughts conditioning him?

There's a powerful saying that goes: "It's not what you look at. It's what you see."

In war we are taught who our enemies are. Yet, I always think of that moment during the World War, when soldiers on Christmas Eve sang Christmas Carols to each other across the battlefield. For a day they were not enemies. They had to wait until the day after Christmas to start killing each other again.

Most of us are taught who our enemies are. We can even be conditioned by our religions. What we would consider a terrorist, someone else would consider a martyr! Our villains are someone else's heroes!

A more profound question: How free are we really? We hear constant talk in our society about freedom, and yet we might be the least free people ever. Think for a moment about the constant conditioning coming at us all the time through the media. We are bombarded through commercials with messages about what we should wear, how we should look, what car to drive, what home to live in and on and on. People who wouldn't think twice about missing Mass wouldn't dream of carrying a white purse before Memorial Day!

How free are we? Perhaps Father Fred Cwiekowski put it best: "If Jesus is not Lord of your life, something else will be!" On our own, we are manipulated by many forces. Choosing Jesus, we choose to allow his spirit to rule our choices. So allow me to close with a hymn that I recite each day.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew, that I may love the things you love and do what you would do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with you I have one will, to live and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, my soul with grace refine, until this earthly part of me glows with your fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, that I may never die, but live with you the perfect life in Your eternity!"

A powerful prayer isn't it? I still make lousy choices from time to time, but at least I know where to go for help, and for forgiveness!