

CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL

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Father David Scotchie, my Catholic Priest came to me in the gym recently and asked me a really penetrating question. “I read your book on speaking. Tell me, what do you *really* think of our Priest’s homilies here in the Diocese or Orlando?”

“With all due respect, Padre,” I said, “I’m afraid I’ll have to go to confession if I answer that question. If I tell you what you *need* to hear, I’ll go to hell for being.... well... me. If I tell you what you *want* to hear, I’ll be like all those guys in the speaking business who begin to believe their own brochures. One way or the other, I’ll see you in confession because I’ll be looking for redemption and confession is good for the soul.”

Father David’s predecessor, Father Kent Walker, was a great speaker who loved to work the entire parish. He had a wireless microphone that allowed him to drift among the people. He was pounding away one Sunday morning when he floated down my isle and caught me writing in my journal.

My grandfather, who was my childhood hero, gave me my first journal when I was only 11 years old. He called me his “hyetti,” an Arabic word which, roughly translated, means “the breath of my life or my heart.” He said to me, “Here’s a book for you hyetti.”

I responded to him “Jiddy (Lebanese for grandfather) it’s empty; it has no value. There’s nothing in it.”

His response “what you put in it will make it valuable.” That was the first of over 250 journals I have today, all of which will be a wonderful legacy to my great, great grandchildren one of these days.

Anyway, here I am in Mass doing a very Protestant thing, taking notes in my journal. Protestants have been doing this kind of thing for years, but we Catholics.... well.. we don’t do notes. Father Kent goes ballistic when he sees me writing in my journal and literally confronts me in front of a thousand people in our parish.

“What are you doing?” he asked, as if I was stealing something. “I’m taking notes.”

“What are you writing?”

“So far... not much. I’ve got milk, eggs, bread, beer.”

“You’re making your grocery list in church?” he asked incredulously.

“No,” I responded, “When you get around to saying something, I promise you, I’ll write it down. You haven’t said squat yet.”

“You’re kidding me, a grocery list in church?”

“No,” I responded to his challenge, “Would you like to hear last week’s homily?”

Disbelievingly, he said yes and I proceeded to read him the homily he delivered from the previous week to all one thousand members of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in St. Cloud, Florida. He freaked out. He had given a terrific homily, and I took three pages of journal notes on it. We both got a standing ovation right there at 10:00 o’clock Mass.

With all due respect, all the Priests in the Orlando Diocese (*or any other Diocese for that matter*) aren’t Father Kent Walker or Father David Scotchie, who is studying for his doctorate degree in Communications. Most pretty much “suck” as Larry Winget, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame would put it.

To that end, Father David and I sat down over a beer and lunch at our favorite watering hole, “*The Corvette Lounge*” and discussed ways to improve the Homily of the Priests in the Diocese. Turns out his boss the Bishop has an interest in turning this ship around, and he’s turning to Father David for help.

My suggestion, let’s form a Toastmasters Club for the Diocese of Orlando, which we’re in the process of doing. He was so excited about the idea that we’ve sold the Bishop on doing this. My advice was to invite non-clergy and especially women to be a part of the mix. The problem with Priests is the same problem we speakers have; we start believing our own press releases. You need others that are not of the cloth.

I'm several weeks into this project and we have several Priests who have joined clubs in the area with the intention of forming a Diocesan Club

Now I'm in the process of doing something similar project with our local Central Florida Chapter of the National Speakers Association, one of the country's very best chapters. Our incoming President, Donna Cutting, is looking for ways to reach out to would-be speakers who really need to get better as speakers before they worry about selling themselves as professionals.

For years I've felt that many of our members joined the wrong association. They should have joined Toastmasters first to become better speakers. Then they might have something to sell.

So Donna is thinking about adding an optional segment to our monthly meeting for those interested in attending. We normally meet from 8:30 until 12:30 on Saturday. She's considering adding a couple of hours for folks interested in an NSA-Toastmasters Club for professional and/or would be professional speakers.

Stay tuned... we'll let you know if it's working!

Michael Aun, FIC, LUTCF, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame is a businessman and motivational speaker. He is the author of four books. Michael won the World Championship of Public Speaking for Toastmasters International in 1978. He is the only living speaker in the world to hold the earned Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation from the National Speakers Association, the World Championship of Public Speaking from Toastmasters and to be a member of the Speakers Hall of Fame for both the National Speakers Association and Toastmasters International. To reach Michael, call toll free 1-800-356-0567 or visit his web site at <http://www.aunline.com>

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