

**08/30/15 ..... 22B**

*Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile.*

-- Ashley Madison is not the name of a rich socialite. It's an extra-marital dating web site. Its motto is: *Life is short, have an affair*. Over 30 million people have visited the site, and there are over 3 million paid accounts on it, for married people to explore "dating possibilities."

-- Some accounts are under assumed names and some people set up accounts to blackmail their enemies (which is a whole other issue). But even those who cruise the site simply because "they are thinking about the possibility" are on dangerous ground.

-- Sin in action is almost always preceded by sin in thought. Even our impulsive bad actions take place because we've cultivated or at least allowed thoughts of evil to invade our minds and hearts.

-- The end of our gospel lists some of those evil thoughts, but we can add to that list. The results of fostering those evil thoughts can range from gossip which hurts someone's character to something horrible like the shooting of a Virginia reporter and her cameraman this week by a former employee of the station who'd been fired.

-- The Ashley Madison hacking has focused our attention on the attitudes of unchastity and adultery in our society. But equally, if not more dangerous, are the attitudes of anger and arrogance which pervade so much of our chatter today, especially on social media.

-- Some of it even comes under the disguise of virtue. Anger, in particular, can be portrayed that way. Someone will say that their anger is righteous because they are fighting evil. They will even point to Jesus' anger on certain occasions. They might even say they are being prophetic.

-- And there's an element of truth in that. But there's a big difference between someone who occasionally shows anger at something evil and

someone whose primary attitude toward the world is angry, or someone who deliberately fosters anger in his followers to rally support.

-- How different that is from someone like Mother Teresa. There were times when she could be pointed in her criticism of certain modern attitudes. But no one would have confused her for an angry person.

-- I remember when she came to Toledo long ago she was asked what she looked for in candidates for her order. While she said she looked for someone who loved God and was dedicated to serving the poor, she also said she looked for women with a sense of humor.

-- Perhaps we can take a lesson from her words. It is important to have a passion for doing what is right and encouraging others to do the same. But that passion should never degenerate into rage. If we have a sense of humor, which admits that life has its quirks, we can guard against that.

-- It's a challenge to resist the baser instincts that reside within us. Our society tends to reward those who cater to anger and rage, even as we say we want to see more civility in our public conversations.

-- We also say we want to encourage better and more stable family life, while at the same time we find it hard to resist the forces that work against it.

-- This is nothing new. St. Paul said that he found it difficult to do the good he desired to do, so strong was the pull of evil thoughts.

-- In the end, he threw himself into the arms of Jesus, asking for his strength and his mercy. When we are torn by the inward forces of evil thoughts, we would do well to do the same thing.