

Church Unity Octave  
begins Thurs. Start praying  
for conversion of friends.

University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
January 17, 1945

Thurs. is CASUALTY DAY.  
Assist at Mass for dead,  
missing, prisoners, wounded.

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"I Can Read Anything."

You bet you can. You've got eyes, an education, an understanding of things. Sure, you can read anything you want, and nobody is going to stop you, because you have free will, you are on your own, the boss of your own life. But here's the rub, fellow, don't forget there are some books, stories and articles that are dangerous for you to read, and if you read them sensing the danger, you offend God, you commit sin. In some cases the sin may be big enough to send you to hell, if you die before getting the chance to repent.

What brings up all this? Some of our recent best sellers, one in particular. A recent novel is selling like mad today. Maybe you got your hands on it, or one like it. So what? Well, listen.

"Not since Manhattan Island was sold for \$24.00 has so much dirt cost so little." A current best seller merited this comment of a New York Public Library executive. The same book drew out this comment from a newspaper columnist, a recognized critic, "sinsational," he called it, and because one of Hollywood's biggest producers plans to film this leading novel, the same critic has the "sincere hope that he will burn his fingers to a crisp in the process." Be careful, the devil can be behind a best seller.

About "hot" best sellers, the question always comes up, "Is it on the Index? May I read it, Father?" In case you don't know, the Index is a list of books the Catholic Church forbids Her members to read, without permission. In some cases the Index Laws name the book by title and author, in other cases, it merely specifies the subject matter that would make a book or article forbidden. The "sinsational" best seller is not in the Index by name. So then you can read it and books of a similar bawdy tone? Not on your life.

You have another Index that you must contend with. God gave it to you in potency at your birth. It began to operate when you reached the age of reason. You have an Index of Forbidden Books, an Index that the Church did not make, one that no professor made, nor your mother, nor any priest. God gave you a CONSCIENCE, a guide to follow. Sometimes, maybe often, that conscience tells you, "Don't touch this book, it's dangerous to your Faith." At other times conscience will whisper, "Stop, can't you see that this reading matter is whetting your curiosity for things sexual? It's bringing on bad thoughts and desires you can't cope with. You slipped before, remember? and it was in a situation just like this one." When you close your eyes to the cry of conscience, you commit sin, because you deliberately step into danger. It's a mortal sin if the danger places you on the doorsteps of serious sin.

So you can't read everything. You can't even touch the cover of some books, namely those books you know from more than one reliable source is filled with "sinsational" stuff. There is a sin of curiosity, a sin of snooping where you know you should not snoop. The Catechism question about the occasion of sin still applies to you, even though you have grown up and have gone to war: "ANY PERSON, PLACE, OR THING, THAT WOULD LEAD ONE INTO SIN MUST BE AVOIDED." Books can be booby traps, and you can turn out to be the boob.

Boob isn't the half of it; you can be a devil. A devil is a tempter, and tempt you do when you pass along a book filled with dangerous matter on Faith or Morals to Catholic or non-Catholic. If it's your book, magazine, joke, song, or picture, get rid of it. If it belongs to someone else, give it back to its owner with a prayer that he will take it out of circulation. There are devils in top hats and evening clothes.

PRAYERS: (deceased) Rev. Maurice Frische, C.S.S.R.; mother of Father James Moran, C.S.C.