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Getting the Gospel past the frat house door

Phyllis Zagano | Oct. 13, 2010 Just Catholic

I don?t think I actually ever knew a ?Mattress Queen? when I was in college, but I certainly heard the rumors. That was before the ?Duke ?F? List? (this is a family newspaper), which chronicles the adventures of one Karen F. Owen, who apparently sampled the wares of thirteen Duke University lacrosse and baseball players.

Owen?s faux Senior Honors Thesis, ?An education beyond the classroom: excelling in the realm of horizontal academics,? is a 42-slide PowerPoint presentation on how she worked her way through a fraternity of undergraduate men and rated their performances.

I am not kidding. This is real.

Well, at least the ?thesis? really exists and it?s gone viral online. Whether Owen is as crude and downright dumb as she presents herself remains to be seen. Since her pornographic PowerPoint made national news she?s gone into hiding. Well, not exactly hiding. As ?The Young Turks? -- an online streaming video site -- reports, her hiding means no more tweets or Facebook posts.

Brave? I?m not so sure. But it certainly is a new world.

Duke students average Math and Science SAT scores in the 1300-1500 range. Where did these dummies come from? And where are they going? I?d hate to think that in a few years the person handling my retirement portfolio or my knee surgery was one of these slobs.

I also wonder if big money will become complicit in Owen?s intracollegiate porno-tournament. Will she become a rock star, or publish her extended essay in a million-dollar book deal?

You have to know they?ll all be ?successful? somehow.

I think that?s the bottom line. Morality aside, what kinds of lives will these young people live and will the world reward their, shall we say, indiscretions? She might really get a book deal.

Youthful hi-jinks and back-seat introductory biology lessons are one thing, but the ?hook-up? culture that permeates too many colleges and universities degrades the men and the women who buy into it. It also fosters a continuing sense of impermanence in relationships. Another day, another ... well, you get the picture.

But I don?t think these kids do. Separating sex from relationship is a very dangerous thing. Separating sex from self is even worse. They (and we) are inundated with all manner of media preaching a different story: overtly, subtly, daily, nightly. If it feels good, do it. Nobody seems to say it?s just not smart.

Oh, you say, the kids will just grow out of it. Yes, it?s possible they will. But they can never get away from it. You play, you pay. The hook-up culture marks them in very real and very deep recesses of their psyches.

Now, I am not in favor of throwing blankets over young peoples? eyes to shade them from ?the world.? Nor do I

get upset about a little this or that. But some day soon they?ll all be out there with high heels and briefcases, ties and haircuts, one hopes becoming productive members of society.

Yet there will be something qualitatively different about their personalities, about their histories, about the way they view the world and every one of us. And that?s more than a little scary.

What to do? That?s the kicker. What would convince the ?Duke ?F? List? fourteen that their behavior is not smart? Ours is a post-religion culture, where any opinion, any behavior is OK, as long as it is not religious. Not that they would listen to anyone else. I don?t think a fleet of gynecologists, urologists and psychologists would convince these party-hearty undergraduates any more than a Methodist preacher from Duke?s historic past.

Even so, I do believe good answers are in the pages of the Gospels. But I am not so sure how to get those answers past the frat house door.

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