

in a

# Word™

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**“The Hand That rocks the Cradle  
is the Hand That Rules the World”**

-William Ross Wallace

# AH, KNOWING WHAT/WHAT NOT TO SAY

by

Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD

Trigger words are those that can send us either into the depths of fear and depression or into the stratosphere of elation and well-being. All of us have experienced those words to some extent and we know people who have a traumatic reaction to one or the other word.

Are you among the number of those who are set off by one of those bad trigger words?

I say “bad trigger words” because there are good trigger words as well. Curiously, all of us are moved measurably by both good and bad trigger words, but only some of us are traumatized by bad trigger words relative to childhood, health or a diseased condition.

Immediately, as we barely broach the subject, the ministry dimensions and needs stare us flush in the face. Yes, word sensitivity is a huge part of our ministry to each other, enabling us to discern the individual emotional needs of our sisters and brothers. Once we have discerned those needs, we must either speak to the point or refrain from speaking.

**That, of course, is our universal problem: knowing when to speak or not to speak.**

As in everything, we must “eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive,” as the song of yesteryear advised. Much of the good we do by frequently using good trigger words can be diminished or destroyed by our slovenly use of bad trigger words.

Speech, good or bad, is always part of the fundamental mix that shapes our lives from the cradle through childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age into the twilight of our days. Even prenatal child development is a growing trend, as health scientists

see benefits to fetus and mother alike in focusing pleasant voices and music on the womb.

This blossoming phenomenon is apparently producing smarter babies who are not born with the familiar Latin “tabula rasa” (clean slate) for a brain. This could be accurately called the original, real “Head Start” program based on our innate prenatal abilities.



For sure, the home environment from its most impressionable first days bears out the truth of the 1865 poem by William Ross Wallace, “The Hand That rocks the Cradle is the Hand That Rules the world.” Politicians and world rulers are always trumpeting change, but mothers are the only basic well-spring and linchpin of any good change.

When children curse and use all sorts of obscenities and profanities, we know where they learned most of it. By the time they get to school with all this baggage, the teachers are at an extreme disadvantage trying to harness their completely ungoverned speech. Sadly, foul-mouthed, undisciplined parents often side with their children against teachers.

So, in our ministry of word sensitivity and



discernment of good and bad trigger words, where do we begin? Beyond a doubt, we must begin with our families. If we don’t reach children when small, we may not reach them at all later.



Of course, nowadays “home environment” means considerably more than crude, undisciplined, foul-mouthed parents. Painfully, it includes the incredible junk emanating from the TV and now even cell phones where reputedly intelligent people present their act, their shtick, their show as funny because it is laced with obscenities and profanities.



Moreover, grownups are attesting to the alarming finding of psychiatrists that there is a rapidly increasing number of cyberporn addicts who are mired in an addiction more severe than addiction to cocaine, heroin, the other hard drugs and barbiturates.

The clear inference is that governed, disciplined speech in today’s world is hobbled by a whole new array of modern obstacles, pitfalls and bad trigger words that poison the minds of even the smallest children as well as adolescents and adults of all ages.

We often hear, especially from politicians, “The devil is in the details.” Let it be said again for the record that “The devil is in the details” is not the original version. Gustave Flaubert (1831-80) is often quoted as saying, “The good God is in the detail.”

It is perversely intriguing that politicians, many of whom are known to play fast and loose with the truth, invariably say “The devil is in the details” instead of the true, original, “The good God is in the detail.” Considering their frequently undesirable interpretation of details and use of bad trigger words, are they telling on themselves?

Well, folks, we can surely say that the devil

tries to insinuate himself into the details of whatever we are doing. Nonetheless, it is our choice as to whether we want to dance with the devil or God. Temptation will even try to convince us that it is fun dancing with the devil. But temptation does not tell us we may have hell to pay at the end of the dance.

Naturally, the devil and his agents do not want us to use good trigger words that give everyone a lift and healing. Rather, they want us to use bad trigger words whenever we speak, especially when the hearers are ill, weakened people who will be traumatized.

Quite often, we conceive ministry to others as mainly actions or a structured exercise of actions to help them physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, economically and especially spiritually. All those goals are real and needed ministries, of course. However, the greatest personal need of individuals often resides in our ministry of the tongue.

Individual, personal need is frequently as straightforward and simple as the need to hear a cheerful, friendly, affirming, soothing voice, especially a familiar one. Thus, we notice that some folks call just to hear such a voice that brightens their day and lifts them out of the doldrums of depression and hurt to a haven of comfort, peace and healing.



James 3:2 lays the power of speech on the line, “We all fall short in many respects. If anyone does not fall short in speech, he is a perfect man, able to bridle his whole body also.” That gives us a precise point at which to control our behavior and spirituality.

*Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD is a syndicated columnist and pastor of Our Mother of Mercy Church in Fort Worth, Texas*

## in a word or two

**The Institute for Black Catholic Studies will be held this summer at Xavier University of New Orleans from July 1- July 23, 2011.** A number of programs are offered.

The Master Degree Program is the only Black Catholic graduate program in pastoral theology in the United States. The popular Certificate and Enrichment Programs are one week sessions that forms students for effective Catholic ministry in the African American community and Church at large.

**A new addition this year is the One Week Seminar for Cross Cultural Priests to be held from July 17-July 23, 2011.** Titled *PASTORAL LEADERSHIP IN BLACK CATHOLIC & MULTICULTURAL PARISHES* this one week seminar for cross-cultural and indigenous priests and pastors explores theological and practical pastoral issues that arise in the dynamics of the pastor's role in Black or multicultural Catholic parishes. The Institute and this course are ideal contexts for missionaries, cross-cultural priests and indigenous pastors to explore the historical and cultural realities of Black Catholics in the United States and to plan effective pastoral strategies. (2 sem. hr. credits)

Professor: Fr. Dr. Freddy Washington, C.S.S.p., D.Min. (Pastoral Theology) and Instructor: Fr. Gerard Marable, M.Div., Th.M. (Pastoral Theology)

The **INTERREGIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC EVANGELIZATION CONFERENCE** will be held on Friday, June 3 until Sunday, June 5, 2011 in Jackson, MS. The theme is "Lord of the Harvest: Send Forth The Reapers" (Matthew 9:37-38) On Thursday, June 2, the conference will host the *George Findley Training Institute* with a focus on youth ministry, religious education and evangelization from an Africentric perspective. Conference information can be found at [www.iaacec.com](http://www.iaacec.com)

**The National African American Catholic Youth Ministry Network invites you to our 25th Anniversary Gala on Friday, June 3, 2011 (6:30 p.m.) at the Jackson Marriott Hotel, 200 East Amite Street, Jackson, MS 39201.** We are so pleased to announce the "Arnetta Hogan Lifetime Achievement Award" will be given to Michael Youngblood. He embodies the essence of what Mrs. Hogan stood for as a minister. She was a faithful member of St. Peter Claver Church located in Lexington, KY in the Diocese of Lexington and became involved in the Network during the first year of its inception. Mrs. Hogan had a passion for young people and their faith development. Michael Youngblood is dedicated to youth, their development and their faith formation journey. Tickets for the Anniversary Gala are \$25.00 per person it includes an evening filled with jazz music, a cocktail hour, dinner and program. For more details and securing your ticket contact Vanessa Griffin Campbell at 216-696-6525 ext. 3020 or [vcampbell@dioceseofcleveland.org](mailto:vcampbell@dioceseofcleveland.org)

The National African American Catholic Youth Ministry Network (NAACYMN) was founded in 1986 by a dedicated group of African American Youth Ministers throughout the country. The founding members were responding to the call for increasing the number of African American Youth Ministers and Youth.

During a special liturgy on 24 February 2011, the Father Augustus Tolton Cause for Canonization was formally opened in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Please keep the Cause itself and all those involved in promoting the Cause in your prayers.

Bishop Joseph N. Perry, auxiliary bishop of Chicago and diocesan postulator for the Cause, continues his work of nurturing the development of the Father Tolton Cause.

Visit the website established for the Cause to learn more about Father Tolton and this historic effort.

[www.toltoncanonization.com](http://www.toltoncanonization.com)

**The 2011 National Black Catholic Men's Conference** will be held October 13 - 16, 2011 in Jackson, Mississippi. For more information contact: Fr. Chester P. Smith, SVD  
c/o Bowman-Francis Ministry Project  
815 East 58th Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46220



**Men To Men**  
Theme: Spiritual Legacy,  
Reach One, Teach One Part II  
October 13-16, 2011  
Jackson, Mississippi

**The Roberts Walthall Hotel**  
225 East Capitol Street  
Jackson, MS 39201  
Phone: (601) 948-6161

For More Information Call: (313) 259-6144 or  
Visit Our Website:  
[www.bowmanfrancisministry.com](http://www.bowmanfrancisministry.com)

**Divine Word Missionaries** is an international missionary community of over 6,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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Web page can be found at <http://www.inaword.com>