

One of the alleged features of the 21st century is what are known as targeted advertisements. When you're surfing the web, supposedly the ads on the sides and top of the web page are targeted to who you are and what sort of articles and websites you visit.

I'm not certain that I believe that. While reading news articles on archeological finds in Great Britain, flashing across my screen are ads claiming "Lose Weight Now!" (No thanks.) "You Can Work From Home!" (I already do.) "Be Your Own Boss!" (Nah. Got that one worked out, too.)

And of course there are the ads that ... I guess ... are supposed to make you feel secure. "The 7 Foods You Should Never Eat!" "The 10 Things You Should Always Buy in Bulk!" And even "Top 6 Hidden Household Killers!"

Now, that last one got me curious. So, I clicked it. And there was a video presentation, and a book that I could buy. Not to mention a 1-800 number I could call for a free personal in-home consultation.

And while the bulk of the presentation was based on selling me their literature or selling me an extended visit from one of their "highly trained inspectors." It did raise a few valid points.

Of the "Hidden Household Killers" they mentioned, there are several that I am most likely contending with in my own older home. I'll touch on three of them. (1) Carbon Monoxide. I know it's there, and I know that on stormy or windy days, the chimney for the furnace doesn't draw very well; and the CO Monitor starts beeping in the furnace room, and I have to open a window. (2) Mold. I've had friends who've had problems with this - not just in old houses - like the 19th century home I live in next-door to the Cathedral; but also in newer houses it can be a problem. And finally, (3) Radon Gas. This sort of thing occurs in areas where there are mines. I don't know what that means for houses near foundries ... but it doesn't sound pretty.

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar story of the Prodigal Son. The youngest son claims his inheritance from his father; squanders it on wild living, gets hungry, comes home, and is warmly welcomed by his father whose own generosity, love, and mercy are meant to be an example of God's own mercy, love, and generosity. The. End.

Now you may have seen this painting up in a couple of places in the church. I put them there. It's sort of a familiar painting, and is by the 17th

century Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn. On one side you see the father and the younger son, on the other side are the servants.

But if you look closely, in the middle - which you would think is the most important part of the painting - in the middle you see ... nothing? No. There's a face hidden there. That face is the older son.

You might have missed that part. The older son sneaks in toward the end of the story. He's sort of an annoying jerk who whines and complains, tries to spoil the big party, acts all selfish in the midst of all the forgiving ... and then we forget about him until the next time this Gospel is read.

But the older son is very important. He sneaks in at the end ... and in the painting, if you look carefully, you'll see him lurking ... silently ... hidden in the image ... in the background ... angry, resentful, un-forgiving. And like the hidden household killers of radon, mold, and carbon dioxide ... anger, resentment, and un-forgiveness can also kill relationships in a family ... or in a community ... or in a parish church.

This week, there will be an opportunity for face-to-face confession on Tuesday night. The time is listed in the bulletin; and I'm sure there's an announcement for it at the end of Mass. That can be an opportunity to root out some of our own negative issues - call them sins, bad habits, personal baggage - what have you ... but they need to be rooted out ... in a spiritual sort of Spring Cleaning ... brought into the Light of Christ through the grace of the Sacrament ... and dealt with - lest they damage our relationships with each other ... or damage our relationship with God.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ; let us pray for an insight into any things in our hearts that need to be rooted out ... any "hidden household killers" that we may be hanging onto that we should probably deal with. May God's grace shine a light on these, and through the Precious Blood of Jesus, may they be dealt with, so that we might receive ... in abundance ... the infinite graces of the Holy Spirit ... as we move forward toward our annual celebration of the Paschal Mysteries ... the Easter Sacraments ... in a couple of weeks.