

## Angry outbursts a mirror for us all

May 12, 2013 by Daniel J. Bauer

Two odd incidents in which people lost their cool and physically attacked someone surfaced in our local news this past week. Although the stories may have appeared trivial, they offer fodder for reflection on the topics of anger and basic, old-fashioned respect.

In story number one, a man brought his mother to Changhua Christian Hospital for treatment in the emergency room last Monday. Dissatisfied with the service he felt she was receiving, the gentleman struck a physician several times. Now, the newspaper reporter covering the incident may lack the abilities of a, shall we say, Howard Cosell or Bob Sheridan, but does show a knack for turning a phrase. The upset fellow “connected a flurry of winding right hooks” to the back of the doctor’s head (CP 5-9-13 p. 14). A camera caught the scene live, and a photo showed the unlucky physician, garbed head to toe in a blue emergency room gown, “ready to go,” as Howard might have put it, and about to hit the floor. “Down goes the doctor, down goes - -.” You can just about hear Howey old boy calling the action.

There is nothing humorous about this sad affair, of course. A photo beside the one of the fight underscored the seriousness here. In that photo, doctors at Changhua Christian Hospital hold a poster at a press conference that denounces violence against doctors. The very fact that authorities thought that a news conference was necessary to call public attention to the ridiculousness of this and other recent outbursts in Taiwan hospitals is cause for pause. An additional detail that adds to the sense of the bizarre here is that the attacker is a soap opera actor. You can say that again.

Story number two is even loonier. The headline over it captures the gist of it quite nicely: “Family fight over chocolates leads to court case” (TT 5 – 9 – 13 p. 5).

It seems a nephew in his 20s put a box of chocolates in his family’s refrigerator one day. He intended to give the candy to a friend. No, this was not for Valentine’s Day. This all transpired last October. Imagine that. A few pieces of chocolate, and 8 months later, this story is still fresh, and with

no artificial preservatives! Boy, that’s my idea of fine shelf-life.

Just for fun, I’ll drop a few “the”s here to make the text more cozy. Nephew stores candy in family “fridge.” Later he opens the door and finds the box has been opened. Horror of horrors, a few hunks of chocolate have vanished, positively flown away. Nephew goes straight to uncle, who lives on a different floor of the building, and says, “Did you act like a thief and eat my chocolates?” Uncle denies that he is the culprit. Later, with the benefit of some time to stew over the words of nephew, uncle climbs the steps upstairs, pounds on nephew’s door and, when the door opens, grabs the poor guy. He manhandles him (one of Cosell and Sheridan’s favorite words). Nephew winds up with “reddish welts” on chest, neck, left forearm and other parts of his body.

The clincher here is the uncle’s question, apparently in the courtroom. “Even if I did eat the chocolates, does he need to treat me like this?” In a curious twist reminiscent of the Bible’s Adam in the Garden of Eden, the nephew is left to wonder in the end if his aunt is the guilty party. That’s a good idea. Blame it on the woman.

All sorts of useful reminders come to thoughtful minds as a response to incidents such as these.

First, hotheaded people in all cultures act out and hurt others. Today in this space, the locus is Taiwan. Tomorrow it could be the USA or France or Japan.

Second, angry acts usually lead to negative results. That is partly because they tend to be rash acts, lacking the wisdom of a calm, sensitive, and reasonable mind. Not only do people get hurt when anger goes awry, but people who strike in anger may look like classic buffoons. (I know, because I’ve been a buffoon a time or two in my life.)

Finally, doesn’t it seem as if shouts and flying fists expose a gaping hole in our appreciation for the fundamental respect we owe both to others, as well as ourselves? (Father Daniel J. Bauer SVD is a priest and associate professor in the English Department at Fu Jen Catholic University.)

Talking points:

1. This column reflects on incidents of anger in a hospital and in a family relationship. Does it surprise you that the family situation here occurred? A few pieces of chocolate led to a physical assault upon a nephew?
2. To express anger publicly in Taiwan seems to be a big "no no." Is this true, or is it only an "impression" that foreigners may have about Taiwan's culture?
3. What do you do when you feel really angry?

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