

'Sex party' upsetting, not surprising

March 4, 2012, By Daniel J. Bauer

A priest (“shen-fu”) who occasionally reads this column said to me the other day that finding a topic this week ought to be a cinch.

“Too much stuff already on that basketball player in the States though, eh?” he opined. “Politics, a lot there for you. But, ho, ho, that thing that happened on the train, that sex party. You ought to be all set this week!”

When I read about alleged sexual shenanigans on the rails last Sunday in *The China Post* (page 11), I at first wondered if I had suffered a case of temporary global amnesia. Was today April 1, I asked myself, and was the story simply the gem of a clever practical joker?

Then I realized that April Fool’s Day was still a month away.

My second thought agreed with sentiments that appeared in print. How plausible was all of this? Eighteen men had sex with a young woman in a sealed off railway car over the course of an 80 minute ride from Taipei to Zhunan in Miaoli County on February 19? And it cost the male participants NT \$ 800?

Last Sunday, as a “shen-fu,” I found this topic far indeed from my ken. Still, my fertile imagination told me that 18 men in 80 minutes had to have been fast work. Not impossible, however. As for the fee, NT \$ 800 seemed too cheap. On the other hand, I supposed, cheap behavior may not cost exorbitantly.

As the week unfolded and newspapers ran photographs of the clothing the woman reportedly wore upon entering the train, the sad and juicy tale seemed irrefutable. The young woman was 17 years old, goes the gist of it. She was a willing player, and may have already had a reputation fit for a rock star in a Carl Hiaasen novel. The “organizers” had recruited her on the Internet, and the entire affair went like clockwork. Assistants both male and female, and a security team to keep order, had been efficient.

I am on the side of Lee Li-fen, secretary-general of a group called End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism. The “party” was likely to have been far more damaging an experience for the young woman than she had imagined, and could have a lasting impact upon her (CP 3-1-12, p. 20).

I am less able to support the response in the same report of an official from a similar organization, who said “schools and parents should teach kids what’s right and wrong about sex.”

A spokeswoman for the Gender/Sexuality Rights Association Taiwan said there was “no need to put these people on public trial for what they did.” In her view, some folks just seem to think that sex is a bad thing (TT 3-1-12, p. 1).

As a matter of fact, I think sex must be a great thing. I also think, however, that there is a time and a place for everything. And yes, I do believe sex is most right for persons who are married to each other. I know many call this view medieval, but that doesn’t bother me.

Sex is an experience that demands that we respect the wholeness of a partner. A partner is not merely a toy or an object to offer us pleasure. A man and a woman making love are not only giving and receiving physical pleasure. They share a spiritual bond as well because human beings are far more than brute animals that operate on the level of physical instinct. Even if we deny the existence of a soul and cannot see the spiritual in sexual loving, we cannot avoid crucial and meaningful human emotions and a natural concern in our conscience for the best interests of a partner.

I have argued on other occasions in this column that it is flat out wrong to claim that sex education is the responsibility of teachers and schools. The primary task of talking with our “kids” (shouldn’t we question our terminology here?) about sex belongs to parents and guardians. Educators can help, but until parents lead the way, and I mean really lead the way, young people won’t be getting what they desperately need at home.

Limited space prevents our exploring the idea that societies that too often treat girls and women as commodities run the risk of indirectly encouraging the abuse handed to this 17 year old. This remains a story that deserves further contemplation. (Father Daniel J. Bauer SVD is a priest and associate professor in the English Department at Fu Jen Catholic University.)

Talking points

1) The "sex on the train" news story probably shocked many people. On the other hand, perhaps some people were not so shocked. How did you feel when you first heard the news? Was this so surprising to you?

2) The column argues at the end that one reason events like this happen is that our society does not consider girls and women as precious persons. Do you think that many people in Taiwan have the idea that girls and women are important because of their sexual attraction and not so much for other qualities?

3) This column says strongly that primary responsibility for sex education is in the hands of mothers and fathers, not teachers and students. Do you agree or disagree? Why?