

# Peoples' statements ring with reality

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Mark 3:20-35  
June 9, 1991

This has been a strange week. Why? Because of all the people who've said such honest and interesting things to me. There must be something in the water.

Not since I worked in the mental hospital have I heard so many statements that ring with reality.

Most statements in the work-a-day world are either conventional and polite or cunning and deceitful. Both are predictable after a while.

But the kind of statements that I heard this week are the kind that surprise and unsettle. Some are searching and brave; others are confused and yearning; but all are marked by the willing vulnerability of the speaker, and all have something fresh and honest to communicate.

Statements that ring with reality  
1. A seventeen year old girl told me her thoughts: "I'd like to get pregnant. My best friend has a baby. All the girls on my street are pregnant. I might do it too."  
2. A young man said that he was into witchcraft. "It gives me power and control. I'm an outsider. Witches have always been



Religion and Reality  
by Jim Ryan

outsiders."

3. A young woman confessed that she was gay. She talked about her life and her relationships, and she made me laugh: "I hated it when my boyfriend French-kissed me."

4. An older man told me that he was an agnostic. "Not that I want to be. I'd like to believe but I can't. I have a job in telemarketing. It keeps me busy, otherwise I'd go crazy."

5. A young man told me that he and a friend had been beaten up outside a bar in Hull at 3:30 a.m. last weekend. "There were eight of them, grown men, at least twenty-eight years old. I heard a woman yell, 'Leave them alone. They're only kids.'"

6. A young woman said she'd

been approached by a grown man in a bar. "He had a moustache. He had delivered mirrors to our house that morning. I'd been in my pyjamas when I answered the door. It was weird seeing him later in the bar. He came right up to me. 'I know you,' he said."

7. A young man said he was afraid of what the summer would bring. "There are so many people with knives and guns. I'm afraid to go out."

8. A young woman said, "Nothing interesting ever happens to me."

9. A manager in a major international corporation said, "My company didn't make a cent last year. I don't know what's going to happen."

10. An older man allowed his daughter to put him up in a hotel so that he wouldn't have to drive home impaired from a wedding. He said, "Thanks."

The dirty ring around reality  
None of these people belong in a mental hospital, although they seem to recognize something that I learned when I worked there: Life is messy.

That's easy to forget in our culture.

Except perhaps during times of recession.

Jesus and Reality

In today's reading, Jesus is misunderstood by his family and by the religious authorities from Jerusalem. His family thought he was crazy. The authorities thought he was filled with a demon. In Mark's Gospel, even his disciples have difficulty understanding him.

If you didn't notice, we're back

in Ordinary Time. The feast of Pentecost ended the Easter Season. From now until November 25, we'll spend twenty-five weeks reading Mark's Gospel, and meditating on the life of Christ.

His statements are pretty honest. They certainly ring with reality. They're worth listening to.

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## United Church criticizes arms deal

Members of the 67th annual meeting of the United Church of Canada's Toronto Conference, have criticized the federal government's decision to sell automatic weapons abroad, urged the provincial government to consolidate its various farm stabilization programs and recommended that a program of multi-faith education be included in the Ontario public school curricula.

The 600 delegates meeting in Markham's Centennial Arena May 24 to 26, with the theme, "I Call You Friends", affirmed their support for Canada's aboriginal peoples in their struggle for land rights and self-government. Conference members urged the federal

government to include members of the aboriginal communities in the proposed royal commission on aboriginal issues, and the Conference created a new task group on multiculturalism to raise the profile of the ethnic congregations within its membership amongst the wider church.

Closer to home, Conference members expressed concern for aging church populations and dwindling financial resources. The meeting asked that congregations make a serious attempt to include teens and young adults in their committees and on their church boards. For its part, the Conference, agreed to reserve two spaces on each of its 22 standing committees and Conference executive for young peo-

ple under 25.

In recent years, the Conference's budget has been increasing as its membership declines, causing an increase in the per member assessment each congregation is required to pay to the Conference for its operation.

In April, church members for Grey Presbytery, many of whose members are fighting to save their farms, argued that they cannot afford further increases. The Conference pared \$28,000 from the 1992 proposed budget, but still had to increase the assessment rate by 26 cents per member over 1991's level.

The Conference also ordained 16 people as new United Church ministers.

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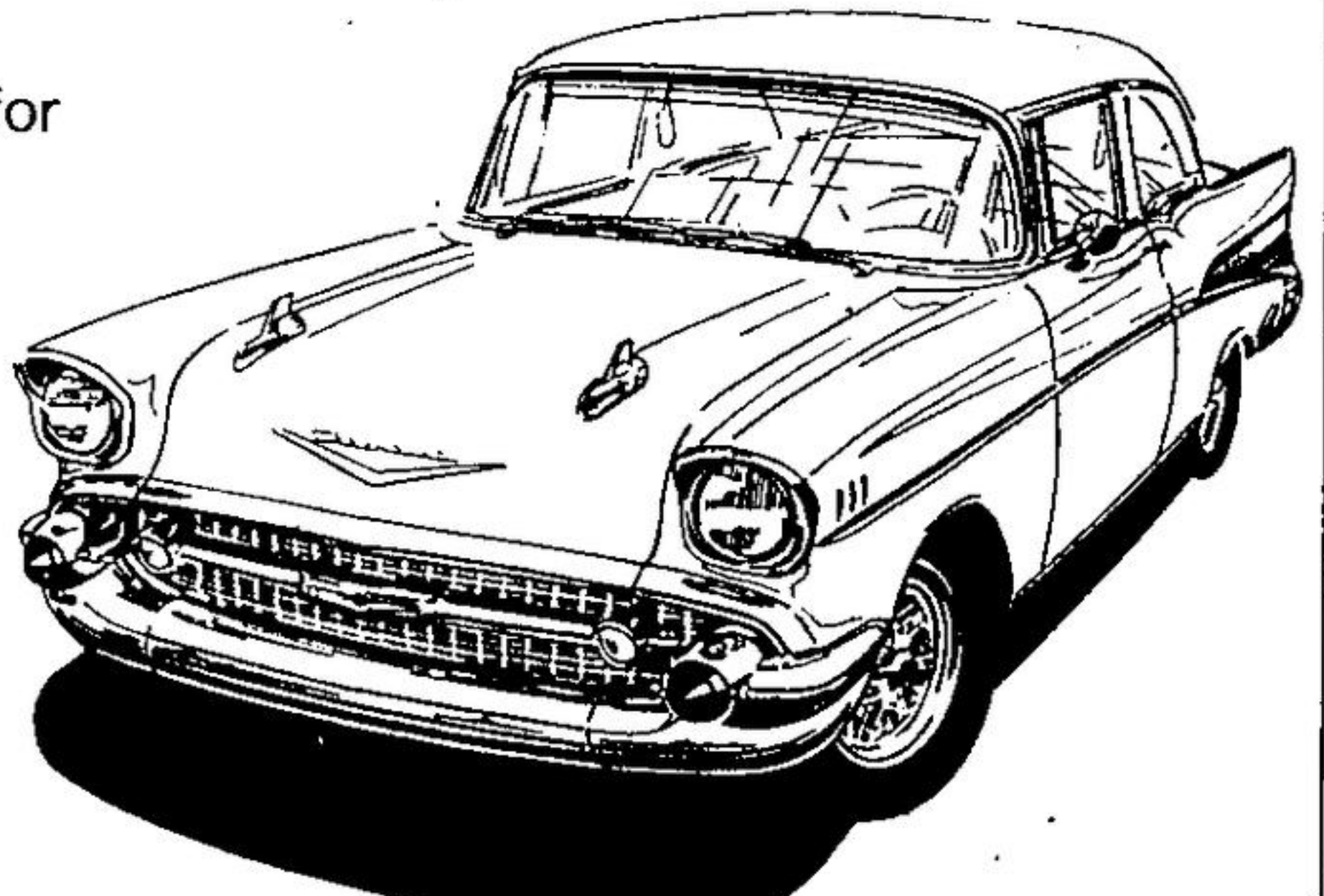
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