

Plagiarizing priest gives no comfort to mourning daughter

DEAR ABBY: My 81-year-old mother died suddenly, and as her oldest daughter, I was asked to give her eulogy. I was told by our church that I needed to submit my remarks to the priest beforehand, to make sure they were "appropriate."

At the funeral Mass, when the priest, who knew my mother only by sight, began his homily, he used the exact words and phrases from my own eulogy. I was, naturally, taken aback at his using my own heartfelt words, which I had labored over and rehearsed for two days. When it was time to speak, I was able to recover enough to reference "Father's" remarks earlier — but it was extremely upsetting to suddenly hear my words coming out of his mouth. I could understand if he had wanted to coordinate his remarks with mine, but he outright stole them.

I feel that by requiring me to submit my eulogy in advance, the priest was provided with the "CliffsNotes" he needed to do his homily. I was also upset that he did not counsel my family, attend her wake or the interment.

When I returned to the funeral home to pick up the photographs of my mother, I discussed my feelings of profound disappointment with the funeral director. He told me it wasn't the first time he'd heard this complaint about this priest, and I should write the priest a letter.

On one hand, I feel my mother would be upset if I create a conflict with the parish. On the other, I wonder how many other grieving mourners will sit in a front pew during a funeral Mass, astounded when this priest pre-empts their eulogy. Should I write a letter to the priest or let it go?

— UPSET IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

DEAR UPSET: Your feelings are justified. The priest who plagiarized your eulogy was a thief. He stole your intellectual property to make himself look good at your expense, and he should be ashamed of his laziness. Clearly, however, he is not — because according to the funeral director he has done it before, and he'll continue to do it unless held accountable.

By all means write a letter to the priest telling him how, rather than comforting you, his homily upset you. Then copy the bishop with the letter.

DEAR ABBY: I'm a college student who lives in a dorm. My problem is I live next door to a moocher. One time, "Ms. Moocher" came into my room and asked if she could unplug my TV and take it into her room to watch "The O.C." on it. Another time, she came waltzing in my room carrying my hairbrush, which she had taken without my permission.

Recently I returned from a weekend away to find that half my popcorn was gone. It turned out that Ms. Moocher had taken and eaten it.

She has my cell phone number and can easily call and ask me when she wants to borrow my things. I have no problem with sharing with her, but her taking my things without asking is just plain rude. I know I need to talk to her, but I don't know what to say because I have to co-exist with her for the rest of the year. Please help!

— FED UP IN ATHENS, GA.

DEAR FED UP: Unless you can find the backbone to face your neighbor and tell her firmly, "I do not want you taking my things without asking first," it's time to buy a lock for your dorm room door and use it when you're not there. Either way, Ms. Moocher will get the message.

DEAR ABBY: I'm writing in response to "Bored Husband, Akron, Ohio," whose wife is addicted to soap operas. Several years ago, I, too, was addicted to them. I'd cry when my favorite soap stars got married, I'd cry when someone died on one of my favorite shows, and be extremely elated when something good happened to one of them. In short, I lived my life vicariously through the soaps.

I finally went to my doctor for a checkup and — guess what! I was diagnosed with chronic depression. I was put on medication, a new diet, and told to find something to do to fill my daytime hours that did not include watching soaps.

When life is not exciting or challenging, people tend to look for something to spark their lives. "Bored" should, first of all, take his wife to the doctor to be screened for depression, and possibly counseling. After that, they should find something they can do together — like bowling, golf or volunteering.



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

Most important of all, he should keep trying to find a solution to the problem and not give up. I wish him luck.

— ROSE IN OREGON
DEAR ROSE: Thank you for

your generosity in sharing your personal experience. Predictably, the mail I received commenting on "Bored Husband's" letter was all over the map — including some from staunch soap

opera fans declaring that after 50 years of marriage, the wife "had a right" to spend her remaining years doing exactly as she wished. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: The man complaining about his wife's "addiction" to the soaps hit a nerve. Obviously the soaps have been her company for years. Where was he? Where were the kids? She has filled her time with soaps, which apparently have never let her down.

After 50 years, maybe she just doesn't like her husband anymore and uses the soaps for an excuse. I'm on her side!

— SOAP OPERA LOVER IN HOUSTON

DEAR ABBY: When I saw that letter, I had to chuckle. My mom got me addicted to soaps back in the '70s, when I was in my early 20s. I finally decided that sitting for three hours a day listening to other people's problems was about the dumbest thing I had ever done. I stopped — cold turkey.

In 1988, my dear mother was in the hospital with a terminal illness. I sat at her bedside for days, and of course, she had the soaps on. Abby, I could follow the story lines perfectly! I knew all the people and what was going on. It had been more than eight years since I had watched. It was then that I realized how much time in my life had been wasted on those shows. Mom died shortly after that, and I've never watched a soap opera since.

— FORMER ADDICT, SAWYER, OKLA.

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