Catholic family pressures sister

Annie's Mailbox
Creators Syndicate Inc.
Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar

Dear Annie: I was raised in a devout Catholic family. When my husband and I married 30 years ago, we independently decided to leave the religious fold, but we never imposed our views on others. My eight siblings live within close proximity of each other, and I live 3,000 miles away.

Over the years, most of my family has never missed an opportunity to impose their religious views on me. Even though I have made it clear that I am not interested, I am often subjected to family members sending me religious material, making offhand cynical remarks about my soul, or cornering me at gatherings to coax me back, share their anger or try to make me feel guilty.

A few years ago, when my sister "Louise" and I had a disagreement, I was brutally chastised, told by her and others that it was my fault because I did not read the Bible. What is even more insulting is that most of my siblings have had major life problems (affairs, money issues, fraud, child abuse), but my husband and I have had none of that. We have welcomed my family into our home on many occasions, treating them to fantastic stays in our city, which is a vacation destination.

Recently, Louise sent me a misleading email, asking what seemed to be an innocuous question, but which was intended to get me to research material that would create an "aha" moment to get me back into the fold.

I have had it with this passive-aggressive behavior. We are going to their town soon, and I know I will encounter Louise. I want to tell her to stop this nonsense, but she will play the martyr and use it against me. What do I do? — *Number Eight*

Dear Eight: You are not going to convince your family, especially Louise, to stop trying to "save" you. So we recommend you stop being drawn in. It's annoying to be sure, but not worth your time. When they email you material that you find offensive, send it to the trash folder. Ignore the remarks. When they try to make you feel guilty, respond politely, "Thanks for your concern," and walk away. You may need to limit contact with family members who are especially difficult, but please try not to be so angry. It serves no purpose and only makes them redouble their efforts.

Dear Annie: The holidays are over, but I have a suggestion for people who don't know what to give family and friends next year.

So many people are struggling with unemployment, underemployment or living on a fixed income, and prices are rising all the time. The very best present you can give is the gift of food — a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant or supermarket. Everyone needs to eat. — *Underemployed and Hungry in Connecticut*

Dear Connecticut: Gift cards for the grocery or a local restaurant are usually welcome and appreciated. As you said, everyone needs to eat and these cards won't go to waste. We hope our readers will keep this in mind.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're apt to change the game plan fairly often, and that's why it will be better to go solo. You need the flexibility to turn on a dime without having to explain yourself or lead the troops.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Don't worry about the trend. You're making classic moves that will cement your place, whatever happens. If it makes old-fashioned good sense, it will make new-fashioned good sense, too.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Are you still trying to draw a tidy conclusion to a messy problem? Give it up for the day. Here's a distraction: Put a meal together for your crew tonight. Share your gift for pairing interesting flavors.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You're entitled to have mixed feelings about anything at all. Don't let anyone pressure you into coming up with a slogan for your emotions. Un-mixing them into a single phrase is too reductive.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). There's a change you'd like to see in another person, and this is something that could really happen. The way to get there is to make the very same change. Your model will inspire and motivate a transformation.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You may identify with your possessions more than usual and hopefully this will not cause you to envy or overspend. Truly, the problem can be fixed with imagination, not money.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Silence isn't golden; it's worth far more than that today. If you're having trouble, know that if you chase the silence it will always outrun you. It must be seized unaware when you come upon it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Remember when you had to give up the thing that was taking up too much space in your life to be healthy for you? Well, now a cosmic present will drop in to fill its place, slim, efficient and a beauty to behold.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There are buttons to be pushed and you have many fingers to push them with. So, what's necessary? What's kind? What's just for fun? These are the questions to ask before you start poking.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You'll call; they'll unleash the minutiae of their daily lives, including, seemingly, each detail of every thought that has crossed their mental landscape lately. Take this as a compliment. You're fun to talk to.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Intimacy can be a rocky field of contradictions. You need good shoes to navigate it, and perhaps a walking stick to lean on. A close friend is ready to hear what's on your mind and heart.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You don't require constant reminders of your greatness or tons of reinforcement to feel stable. You know what you've done, what you have, and, most importantly, who you are, and this will give you confidence.

WEDNESDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 6). You stay out of the drama, do what's right and seize a coveted position in the early part of the year. Opponents will become partners in February. March brings the start of a quest that may take years to accomplish and will bring many thrills along the way. Romance and promises fill the summer months. Pisces and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 10, 15, 7 and 40.

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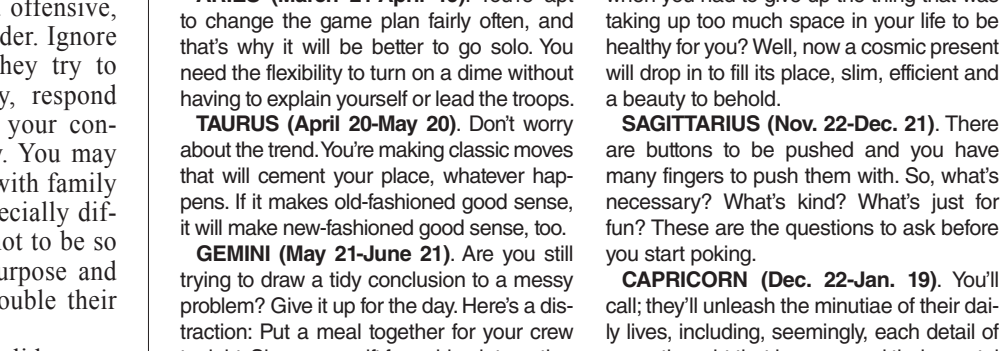

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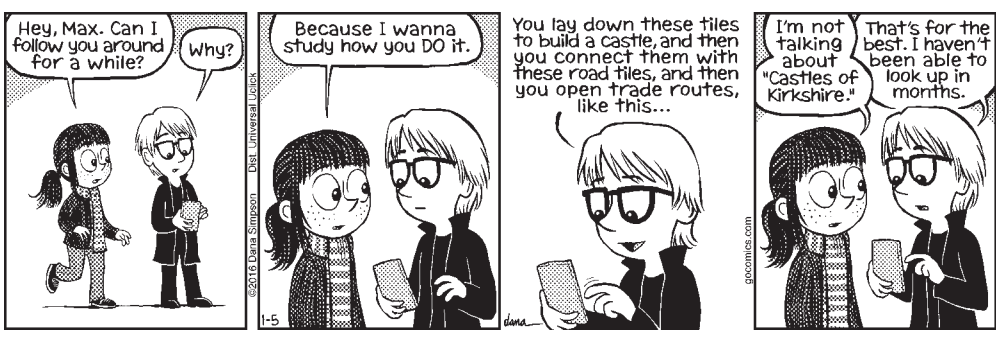

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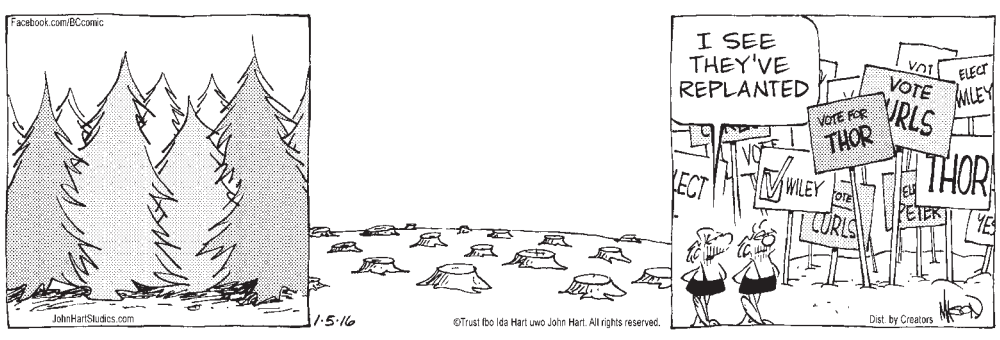

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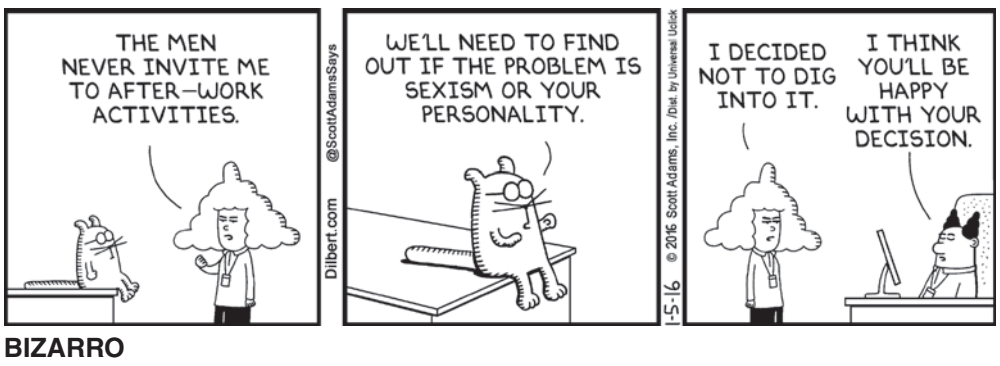

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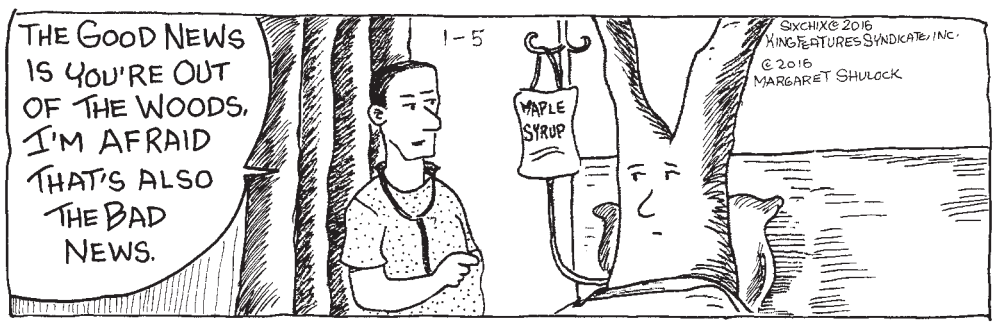

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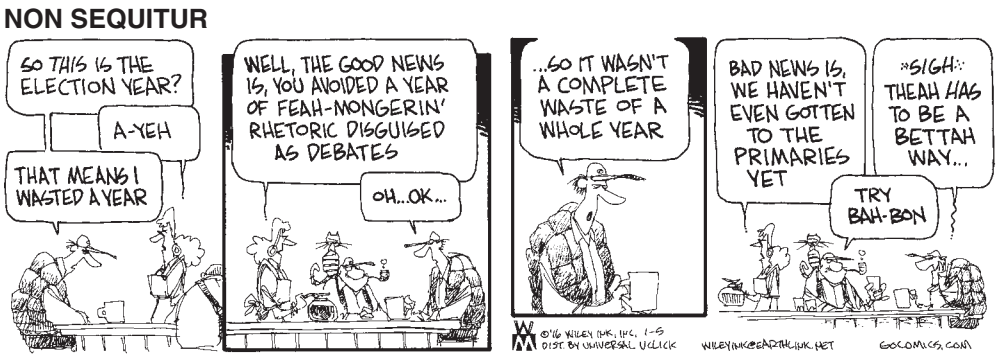

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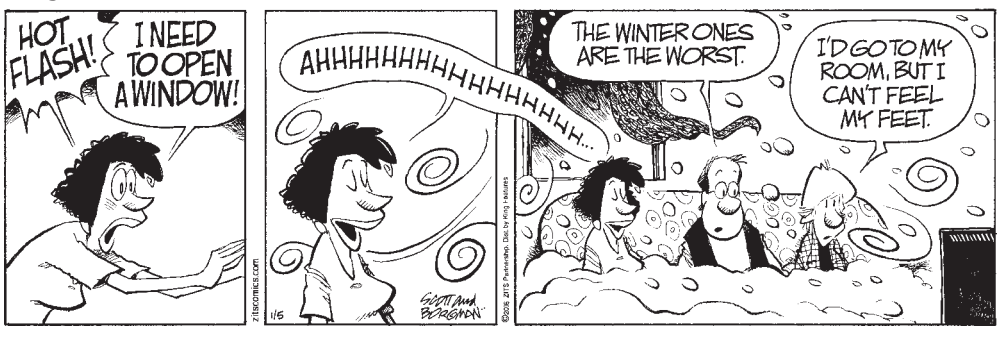
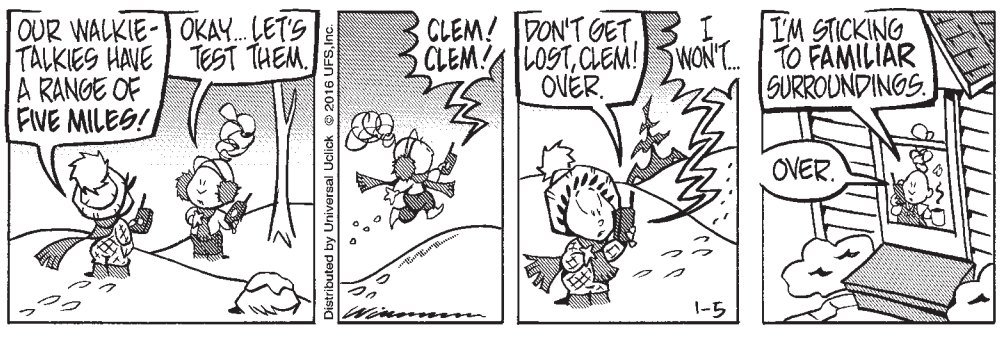
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