

# Probing the Word

By FATHER ALBERT J. SHAMON

## Parable of the Darnel (5th Sunday After Epiphany)

A Chinese proverb says, one picture is better than 10,000 words. That was why our Lord used parables. Parables are word-pictures. They paint religious truths so vividly that the mind can hardly forget them. For a truth seen delivers more impact than a truth heard.

Parables differ from fables. In fables animals and trees walk and talk; parables draw from true life occurrences.

Parables also differ from allegories. An allegory is generally a literary creation, like Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* — every character represents something. Because an allegory is a literary device, some think a preacher would not use it. Thus some have theorized that the early Church, not Christ, created the allegorical interpretation of the parable in Sunday's Gospel (Matt. 13:36-43). But why dream up such theories? The prophets often used allegory in sermons. Why not Christ?

In interpreting a parable there are two good rules to follow. First, do not allegorize it. Second, remember that in the parables on the Kingdom, the real object of the comparison often does not follow the word "like." The Sunday Gospel says, "The Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field." Actually the comparison is not to the man, but to the whole situation of the darnel and wheat growing together.

To get the point of a parable, find the basis for the comparison. Do this by using "as" and "so." Thus: as the householder permitted the wheat and the darnel to grow together till the harvest, so God permits good and evil, good and bad people, to intermingle in His Church till Judgment Day. That is the point of the parable; it has, as you see, only one point. Even though, a parable may be allegorized, as the darnel was by Christ, still it is basically a parable — one comparison, no more.

"Once Christ's followers realized that the Kingdom of Heaven was to be spiritual and not political, they next wondered why the good were not separated from the bad; why a community of the 'pure' was not set up, like the Qumran sect. The parable of the darnel was the answer to his question: the mixture of good and evil will exist to the end of time for the sake of the good.

Did not Shakespeare say, "Sweet are the uses of adversity"? A piano must have black keys as well as white ones. Helen Keller said, "I thank God for my handicaps, for through them I found myself, my work, and my God."

Trials, darnel, have made common Christians, the wheat, into uncommon saints, and have fitted them for uncommon service. So the Master said, "Let them both grow till the harvest."

## Let Yourself Grow

American Catholics are urged this year — in connection with Catholic Press Month in February — to open their minds and their horizons, to take in more knowledge, so they can grow in their faith and grow as persons.

Mental inertia is the great obstacle — the human wish to do things as we always have, to look at our faith and our fellow men, our jobs and our cities, in the same way we always have.

But none of these is the same; nothing of life is really the same as it was, nor ever will be again. If we are to see life and people and the world clearly — in their changed and changing forms — we ought to change our view — put on new vision, so to speak.

Knowledge helps to give us this new vision. And the press helps to give us this knowledge. Newspapers, magazines, books — all help us to find the facts, ideas, attitudes we need to know the new world we live in. But we must want this knowledge, we must seek it, we must let it come in. Let Yourself Grow... Read Your Catholic Press.

# South Africa Returns to Barbarism

By GARY MacEOIN

The regression from civilization to barbarism under Nazi and Communist dictatorships during the twentieth century was marked by many inhuman actions. Not less serious, and probably even more harmful in the long run to the forward march of mankind, was the perversion of law to serve political purposes.

Few of the achievements of the Judeo-Christian culture did more for the dignity of man than the formulation and gradual implementation of the rule of law, the concept that every individual's rights are the same, and that they will be equally protected and vindicated by the courts.

The reflection is not dedicated by the foolish attempt of an aging general to turn draft boards into courts for determining if draft laws had been violated and meting punishment to those they convicted without due process. The public outcry against that outrageous usurpation of power brought prompt redress from the Attorney General and an assurance that we shall continue in the United States to enforce law in the manner provided under the Constitution.

The case I have in mind is far more monstrous. Those involved are not U.S. citizens, but they are men whose human rights and fundamental freedoms the United States is committed to protect by what is presumably the most solemn international treaty it ever signed, the Charter of the United Nations.

The victims are 35 members of the Ovambo tribe in South-West Africa, a territory controlled by the United Nations under Art. 77 of the Charter. Last year, the General Assembly terminated the authority to South Africa to administer the territory or legislate for it, with only Portugal and South Africa dissenting.

Ignoring that decision, South Africa is holding in its own territory 35 Ovambos

seized in their homeland and transported 2,000 miles for trial before a court whose language many of them don't even understand. The law under which they are being tried did not exist when they were imprisoned. In violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of all civilized jurisprudence, it makes an act a crime which was not a crime when committed.

The "criminal act" with which they are charged is terrorism. The term is so broadly defined as to include any action judged embarrassing to the administration of the state. A police officer can arrest without warrant and hold indefinitely anyone he believes to be a terrorist. Habeas corpus and bail are excluded, and nobody can see him. He cannot even consult a lawyer until the authorities choose to arraign him.

Two further provisions of the law are noteworthy. One is the presumption of guilt. A person charged with terrorism is adjudged guilty until he can prove his innocence. "Beyond a reasonable doubt." The possibility of such proof is, of course, nonexistence for the 35 Ovambos held incommunicado 2,000 miles away from home illiterate tribesmen involved with languages they don't understand. The second point is punishment. Terrorism carries the same penalties as treason, including death.

The British Government has so far been successful in preventing the carrying out of death sentences in nearby Rhodesia with the warning to the illegal regime in that country that every member of the government will be held personally responsible for murder.

Similar notice should be served by all members of the United Nations, starting with the most powerful, on the South African regime for their piratical seizure of persons under our protection and their behavior towards their victims in violation of natural right, international law and civilized conventions.



## Leprosy Fighter Cited

New Brunswick, N.J.—Dr. Frans Hemerijckx, Belgian physician who has been fighting leprosy for nearly 40 years, was named to receive the 1968 Damien-Dutton Award. Dr. Hemerijckx, who resides in Grimbergen, Belgium, has spearheaded in starting of leprosy clinics in Africa and India, and has served as a Catholic medical missionary.

# The Church In Our Day

(Today's installment of the American Bishops' collective pastoral continues the discussion of the individual in the Christian community.)

## If Humanity Is Inseparable from Christ, Is Not Christ Also Inseparable From the Church?

What, then, shall we say of the Church? It is a mystery so deep that every word which gives us awareness of her sacredness gives us also experience of our ignorance. We see the Church-to-be in the dawn of history, in the alliance God forged with man on Sinai, in the new commitment made during the Lord's Last Supper. God's plan was always "to raise men to a sharing of divine life. When man had fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave man to himself, but constantly offered helps to salvation in view of Christ... He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. From the very beginning of the world, the foreshadowing of the Church took place" (Lumen Gentium, 2). If the human phenomenon cannot be separated from the Incarnation of Christ, Christ cannot be considered in His fullness without the Church.

## What Is Meant by the Church as a Community?

"God does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals; without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people..." (Lumen Gentium, 9).

The Holy Spirit is given in His fullness only to the community. No one member or one structure in the Church receives the Spirit for itself alone. Likewise, the liturgy of the Church is never unimpartial of the community.

In His mercy, God has joined us together in such a way that we share not only our lives but His life as well. Thus, the Church is not only the sum total of all the persons who are her members but something mysteriously more. As one lives the life of the Church, he discovers not only his brethren but his God.

## But Does Community Destroy the Individual?

This emphasis on community is needed. It must not lead us, however, to neglect the individual person. Man is not a creature made only for the good of others. Each man shares with all others a common good at the core of which is Eternal Life and God. He has, however, an inalienable value in himself. Though he is saved in community, he is saved in virtue of his individual response to the call to share in that community's life. No other, certainly no community, can bear for a man the cross of his own existence or wear for him the crown of his own responsibility. He comes into community as Someone. Though he is never absent from the prayer and concern of his brethren, there is an inevitable solitude about his living and his dying. Though he faces God in the midst of his family, there is always something God requires of him uniquely, something which He does not ask of others.

## Is The Church as a Community Related to Humanity?

It is our visible coming together as a community in the power of the Spirit which makes the Church not only a way of life for us but a sign of salvation for the world. Our coming together signifies Christ for the community itself and for the human family not yet visibly one with us. Our coming together not only signifies Christ, of course, but makes Him effectively present to history so that through the Church Christ Himself acts and saves. Our community with each other is not only a witness to the Lord but an efficacious instrument of His dominion. Thus, formation into a lawfully structured Church is not only something we need ourselves; it is something we owe our brethren within the community to whom we make ourselves available, something we owe our brethren outside the community and for whom we become a saving sign of Christ, as well as something we owe God Himself who wishes to share His life with us in the most intimate manner possible.

# Like Christ, The Priest Must Be 'The Man in the Middle'

(Editor's Note: Bishop Sheen's "Open Letter to Seminarians" continues from last week)

## In the Middle

The answer is to be found in a text which is the burden of this letter:

"In Medio Eorum"

"He went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him with two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle." (John 19/18)

"In the middle." — The middle of what? In the middle of the representatives of the Secular City represented by the two thieves. Yes, even the people of God are represented for, in a certain sense, we are all thieves. "Can a man rob God? Yes, you are robbing Me" (Mal. 3/1). It makes little difference whether they were robbers, thieves or revolutionists; politically, they may have been anti-social; but theologically they were "sinners." "Everyone has sinned" (Rom. 5/12).

Sinners are divided into two classes, represented by the robbers: Those who say "No" to love and those who say "Yes" —

And where is Christ?

"In the middle."

## Not One Cross But Three

What do we do so often in the Church? We live as if there was one Cross — not three — We take the Cross of Christ out of the world, we separate Him from the muck, the slime, the dirt, the inner city, the junkies, the sex maniacs, the Long Since Demented and the whole lot of us who daily need the Bread of Life.

Once we lifted up the Cross from "the middle", we quieted Christ on His Cross, we carved it, painted it, sculptured it, hung it on a chain over the sanctuary or else, under the present mood of being "ashamed of the Cross" (Phil. 3/18), we reduce it to microscopic proportions of a brass image six inches high, unceremoniously set it down on what was once an altar of sacrifice, but now, what we call, to get away from the idea of sacrifice, a mensa or a banquet table.

Once you isolate Christ on the Cross from that middle position, then He becomes only a "memory". The Cross refers to something "that happened" like the Battle of Waterloo; it stands before our eyes like the faded photograph of a friend long since dead and almost forgotten.

Never forget that Christ is still "in medio eorum". There are three Crosses! On one is Christ in agony until the end of the world; on the other two hang suffering humanity, either cursing or asking for forgiveness; either mocking or begging remembrance; either wanting to be taken down or wanting to be taken up; either ridiculing a "Father, forgive them", or stumbling into His embrace; either rebellious under suffering or turning it into penance.

We all start, as the robbers did, as sinners; and we end as the rebels did, either by opting for or against that Love on the Central Cross.

## Priests Are in the Middle

Now, what is our role, as priests? We priests are "in medio eorum", in the midst of the faithful and the unfaithful, the people of God and the people without God. We are those forgiving or else patiently enduring hardness; being consoled by the repentance of some or being saddened by the distant sight of a friend hanging on a tree on the other side of the abyss — We are Christ, interceding, mediating, weeping over the Secular City one moment and then dying for it in the next. We thirst one second that there are no conversions, and in another we whisper "This day Paradise." We share the doubts of all the Camus, the Sartres, as we enter into their "Why" and then we blast the darkness with that lightning flash of the word of adoption, "Father."

This is our priesthood: We are related to the wretches, the despised; we are "in the middle" without being one with them; we are "separated from sinners", while at the same time being "made sin"; we are at one moment the ladder to heaven, and the next we are hanged on its wood sharing that awful Brotherhood of Pain.

We priests are "Lucky" in the play of Beckett; lucky to be priests as unworthy as we are; lucky to be Ambassadors of the Most High, knowing we are the least of the citizens of the Kingdom — We are not onlookers at the Cross, who beat their breasts (Luke 18/13); we are not riot-inciters, beating up policemen; we are not placard-carriers but Cross-bearers.

The world often expresses its discomfort and agony by saying: "I was caught in the middle." Well! We priests are "right" "in the middle." We are not citizens of the Secular City alone, because it has left out the Central Cross; we are not of the Divine City alone, for our Mission is to save the world.

Those who hang themselves are either on the right or left. To them we say with Paul: — "It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now and in my own body, to do what I can to make up for all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of His Body, the Church."

Indeed, "as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so through Christ does our consolation overflow." (Col. 1/24; 2 Cor. 1/5)

— Pray for me —

With every blessing, I am

Your brother in Christ,

+ Fulton J. Sheen

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Sister Mary Florence, files of her girls, for

# Sister M 5

By Sister Mary Plus, R.S.M.

"Be a teacher!" advises Thomas More, attempting to direct a young friend away from the false glamour of public office in a "Man For All Seasons." "You'd be a fine teacher. Perhaps a great one."

"And," asks the young man, "if I was, who would know it?" "You, your pupils, your friends, God—not a bad public life!"

Unlike the skeptical young man of More's acquaintance, Sister Mary Florence, Principal of Our Lady of Mercy High School, heeded that advice, finally giving to her back 1916, and now today—called a "great teacher"—her pupils, her friends and certainly God—witness to the fact that indeed she has been an is a "great" teacher.

Not a day passes without letter, a phone call, or a visit from a former pupil, attesting to the fact that lessons were both taught by, and caught from, Sister Mary Florence.

Twelve years at the elementary level, where she taught every grade from 1-8, at Holy Cross, St. Carmel, St. Andrew and St. Mary's Schools, helped immeasurably to equip Sister Mary Florence for teaching an understanding of the girls at would meet on the secondary level at Mercy High School.

The number of those girls touched by Sister's influence in her 40-year tenure at Mercy has climbed into the thousands for in the early days of it school, she was the English and history departments; later, she met every student either in the

## Pre-Cana Series Scheduled

A new Pre-Cana series will begin Sunday, Feb. 4, at St. Andrew's Church, 928 Jordan Ave. according to Father Gerald E. Dunn, director of the Family Life Bureau.

The series will be conducted on the four Sundays of February starting at 3 p.m.

Speaking at the first conference will be Father Walter J. Cushing, who will discuss "God's Plan in Love and Marriage." On Feb. 11, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Glechauf will treat on "The Adjustments in Marriage." Dr. Francis Dobzynski on Feb. 18 will have as his topic, "Catholic Doctor Looks at Marriage."

Closing the series on Feb. 25 will be Father Dunn who will speak on "Spirituality in Marriage."

Schedules for the series for the remainder of the year may be obtained by writing to Family Life Bureau, 34 Monks St., Rochester, N.Y. 14619.

## Inner City Center Needs Cooking and Sewing Instructors

St. Martin de Porres Center has issued an appeal for ladies who can teach afternoon cooking classes at the center located at 327 Clinton Ave. N.

The center wants to offer courses in cooking schools for grammar school youngsters during the hours from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

Interested volunteers should contact Mrs. Gerald McGuire at 266-7185.