

Probing the Word

By FATHER ALBERT J. SHAMON

Parable of the Vineyard Laborers (Septuagesima Sunday)

The Gospel of the Mass on Septuagesima Sunday is the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. In its liturgical setting, the parable is obviously interpreted as a call to get psychologically set for labor in the vineyard of Lent. This interpretation is not the point of the parable.

To grasp its point, we must ignore the two maxims at the end. The evangelist often appended sayings of Jesus to a parable. To this one, two were added. One, "the last will be first, and the first, last" has no real connection with the parable. The same maxim appears elsewhere in the context of judgment (Mk. 10:31; Lk. 13:30). The other, "For many are called but few are chosen" probably does not even belong here. It was borrowed from the parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt. 22:15).

Historically, Jesus addressed the parable to the Scribes and the Pharisees. They had badgered Him with "Why do you mix with the rabble?" Jesus' retort was this parable: as the employer out of sheer generosity and compassion hired all and paid all, even the latecomers, the same wages, so God is equally generous and calls sinners and pagans, though strictly undeserving, to the same reward. That was the point of the parable—"because I am generous."

The early Christians, however, updated the parable to explain that pagan converts, Johnny's-comelately, enjoyed the same status in Christianity as Jewish converts. There is no such thing in Christianity as a herenvolk—a master race. God loves all and offers grace to all.

But the Gentiles wondered why they, and not the Jews, were having the Gospel preached to them. So the application of the parable was broadened by appending Jesus' saying, "the last will be first, and the first ones, the Jews, would (as a collectivity) enter the Church last — after the whole pagan world had entered" (Rom. 11:25).

The landowner of this parable was certainly an odd fellow, wasn't he? He had his own way of doing things and didn't care what others thought. He had to be such because he represented God in his dealings with men — and God's ways are not our ways. We value length of service, God values the spirit of it. With Him quality, not quantity, counts. "The gift without the giver is bare."



WCC-Vatican Appointee

Washington, D.C. — Father George H. Dunne, S.J., of Washington has been named by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace and the World Council of Churches as full-time secretary of their Joint Exploratory Committee on Society, Development and Peace.

Paul VI: Search For God Is Compass of Life

Vatican City — Man has stopped looking for God, and this is "the great aberration of the modern mind," Pope Paul VI told an Epiphany audience.

"Such failure has very serious practical consequences in every field of human activity," he said.

"Searching for God in Christ represents the compass of life; it is a search which can be unfolded on every path of human experience," he declared, and he mentioned conscience, thought, action, history, politics, work, sorrow, progress.

"Christ stands at the intersection of all human paths," the Pope said.

The Church In Our Day

(Today's installment of the American Bishops' collective pastoral deals with the mystery of the Church under the various images which have been used to describe it: the House of God, the Bride of Christ, the Mystical Body of Christ.)

What Images Can Help Us Understand The Church?

In seeking to describe the Church, we discover that images often convey more than definitions or precise words. There is more mystery here than categories can manage or scientific phrases exhaust. Ever since the council adjourned, Pope Paul in his occasional discourses has been using a variety of figures and symbols with which to clarify the mystery of the Church. He has reminded us that the Church is the House of God (1 Tim. 3:15), the home in which man meets God, an inner place where a family gathers, a loving community of kinsmen. It is the temple of the Spirit; it is a city, a community united and governed by a distinct social law; it is the Bride of Christ and the mother of the spiritually reborn. The Church is a pledge of great love, the light of the nations, a beacon bringing hope and charity and courage. The Church is a pilgrim pointing out the sure way to order and salvation, a school where Christ is taught, faith fostered, prayer encouraged.

Is Marriage An Image of The Church?

For centuries the Church has thought of herself as the "Bride of Christ." St. Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives "just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed Himself for her to make her holy" (Eph. 5:25).

This latter image has always had great meaning for the Church's theologians. For example, Cardinal Franzelin recalls that "in marriage . . . two become 'one flesh,' one moral person, one belongs to the other and both become, as it were, parts of one unity in an indissoluble common life; and hence the love of one for the other is the same as the love for himself. . . ." He appeals to St. Paul's description of the Church as Bride:

"Christ is the Proto-type forming, sanctifying, conserving, glorifying His Church . . . the sanctified unity of man and wife is the sacred sign and likeness by which this Proto-type is represented" (De Ecclesia).

What Is Meant By The Church As the Mystical Body of Christ?

The theme of the Church as the Bride of Christ immediately suggests another Pauline doctrine. The Apostle did not hesitate to call the Church the Body of Christ. Of all the many images of the Church, surely this is the most difficult to comprehend and yet the most eloquent. It reminds us

that the Church has a sanctity, a holiness which no one of us would have imagined had not the Apostle assured us of this under God's own inspiration. We have been chosen as a body, indeed as the Body of Christ, to be the People of God.

"By communicating His Spirit mystically, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, the components of His own Body" (Lumen Gentium, 7). United to Him by baptism, really and truly partaking of the Body of the Lord in the sacred Eucharist, we are raised into fellowship with Him and with one another (1 Cor. 10:17). In this way, all of us are made members of Christ and through Him, members of one another (Rom. 12:5). This union we call the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Church, seen as the family of God but even more profoundly when seen as the Body of the Lord, is the doctrinal justification and the premise of the mandate for our social apostolate to the world. It insists that in a unity so intimate men are more than brothers; each is a living part of all the others. In such a community of life, beyond mere community of interest, I am no longer my brother's keeper; I am one with my brother and somehow we are both Christ.

What Scriptural Episode Reveals That The Church Is The Prolongation of Christ in Space and Time?

St. Paul returns to this mystery of faith frequently (Eph. 5; 1 Cor. 12; Col. 1; Rom. 12). He himself learned in a vivid manner how intimately the Church is Christ. Bent on the persecution of the Christian community, an insignificant minority with scant sign of divine power, he was asked by the Lord: "Saul, why do you persecute Me?" (Act. 9:4). Left Paul be mistaken, he was reminded: "I am Jesus and you are persecuting Me" (Acts 22:7).

Thus the Church does not see herself as one more human institution in a world of many institutions. She does not view herself as an organization of social service at a time when there are so many such services available to us. The Church is a sacred, religious, charismatic, incarnational reality. The Church is "the complement of the Redeemer, while Christ, in a sense, attains through the Church a fullness in all things" (Mystici Corporis, 77).

May Our Spirituality Be Divorced From The Church?

Catholic spirituality, therefore, is always an ecclesial spirituality. It is a spirituality which lives the life of the Church, her worship, her tradition, her sacraments, her liturgical year. The Church seen as the Body of Jesus should inspire all our prayer and lead us to the full celebration of the Church's sacramental Liturgy. A Catholic spirituality brings us especially to the Eucharist which is, in another and real way, the Body of Christ and, therefore, the cause of our unity and its final expression.

Celibacy, A Gift of God, To Help the Priest Love More

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

My first three letters to you had the following themes:

- The laity and the priest may do the same work in the world, such as teaching, but — the priest is the layman merely by the work he does, but in virtue of the power given to him by Christ.
- The second letter acknowledged the need of the "Go-Go" spirit in relation to the world, but insisted that it must be prefaced by the response of the "Come-Come" invitation of Christ to receive His strength, His power and His light.
- The third letter pictured the world with three crosses: at either side of Christ are those who say "yes" or "no" to Divine Love. But we, too, are "in the middle" with Christ, redeeming, forgiving, caring for the bereaved, thirsting, commending and saving.

Now in this fourth letter we come to the kind of love which should burn in the heart of a priest — a love that must be like fire: its light communicating Truth, its heat warming cold hearts with the Spirit.

Love Is Never Taken Back

Two things in life once given, must never be taken back: one is the air we breathe, and the other is the love we give. To live again on the air is to poison oneself. To take back love once given, poisons the soul.

This is because even in the natural order, though stolen goods can be returned or compensated for, though a lie can be retracted and corrected, once a bond of love is established with another person, a link has been forged which endures; we can much less put ourselves back in the former state, than a dewdrop removed by the finger can be placed back again on the rose. As a learned man cannot put himself back again in ignorance, so, too, love once given and accepted cannot restore itself to its primal state.

Once we accept the Love of Christ in response to His call, we may never ask for a divorce, even though, as some divorce couples try to maintain: "we still are friends."

Gift-Love and Need-Love

A priest is a man in love with Love. He is not sexless, for ordination requires that the candidate have complete virility. He who does not feel Need-Love is unfit for the altar. This is because there are two kinds of love: Gift-Love and Need-Love.

Need-Love flows from our incompleteness; as we need Gift-light for our eyes; Gift-harmony for our ears; Gift-truth for our minds, so we need Gift-Love for our whole being.

The Gift-Love may come from a creature, or it may come from God, but it must come; no man is happy who is unloved.

When the Gift-Love comes from a creature to fill up the pit of the Need-Love, there is marriage. When the Gift-Love comes directly from God to supply the Need-Love, there is celibacy.

Celibacy

Celibacy is not something we OFFER to God, but something we ACCEPT from God: *Qui potest capere, caplat.* (Matt. 19/11,12)

Our Lord said there were three kinds of celibates:

1. Celibates through nature, i.e., those who were born incapable of loving, through birth defect.
2. Celibates through human manipulation, such as an operation which produces eunuchs.
3. Celibates through an act of the will, who make themselves "eunuchs" for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. But this is a GIFT — "He who is able to receive this, let him receive it."

Celibacy Is Not An Imposed Duty

Celibacy is not an obligation any more than engagement in marriage is a forced obligation. It is not something imposed on priests, as being un-married was an obligation once imposed on stewardesses.

When a maid bestows her love on a man, is he under any civil law to give her a ring? The ring is the response to the gift. If she says, "Are there not 212,684 other young women in this city, why

not see if you love them?" He may answer, "In a certain sense, I do know them, for my love for you is not only positive; it is also negative. In responding to your love, I reject all the others. Furthermore, I do not want my freedom. All men give away their freedom; — some to drink, some to love of money, some to business, as for me, to serve you, my greatest freedom."

The Lover Always Feels Unworthy

When the giver is Christ, not a woman, why should not the priest who is offered that Love say: "To serve You is to reign." This gift is not given to everyone. And when it comes, there is always a deep sense of unworthiness. That is why even in human love, the language is always: "I do not deserve you." The lover is always on his knees; the beloved is always on the pedestal.

That deep sense of unfitness before the beautiful gift of the Eucharistic Lord is in the Communion prayer: "Lord! I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come into my heart." The Roman soldier who first lippled this humble prayer was staggered by the distance between the Giver and the Receiver, between the Gift-Love and the Need-Love.

Preoccupation with the other is the effect of a Need-Love receiving a Gift-Love. "I need you and you give yourself to me. From that moment on, your wish is my dread desire. I cannot help giving because I love, and I need to be loved." In a certain sense, did not God "almost have to" create a humanity? That furnace of Love, though it was circling back upon itself in a community of Life, Truth, and Love, thought of possibilities, and almost "had" to go outside Himself to give to others, to create replicas, to beget likenesses, in order to let that Love be shared.

When Love Is Taken Back

Bonum est diffusivum sui. Heaven's Love cannot stop giving, and a priest's love cannot stop responding. As there are husbands of one wife, so there will be priests of one Spouse. (1 Cor. 7/32, 33) When the priest no longer loves Love, no longer loves to be in His Presence, no longer yearns for that ecstasy of union in the Mass and Communion, no longer reads the love-letters called the Scriptures, then, like an unfaithful husband he feels frustrated. His carnal aggressiveness ceases to be sublimated in the humanity of feet-washing and service; he looks for canonical escapes, historical exceptions and psychological rationalizations.

To say to a lover of Christ who accepts that Gift-Love, "Why do you keep celibacy when it is hard?" is as unintelligible as to say to a devoted husband, "Why do you love that sick wife when there are so many other lovely and healthy women around and available?"

O Yes! When we fall out of love, marriage is unbearable; so is living with unbearable friends on a European trip, or loving a mongoloid, or helping an aged mother who is losing her mind. So does celibacy seem to be an unpastoral thralldom when we fall out of Love for Christ. But, when we love, even in a consciousness of weakness, one is a soldier who fights, not a Judas who deserts the ranks; the priest, then is a sheep who may fall into the mud, but not a pig who falls into it and stays there. Love is always a burden when it "alteration finds"

Celibacy Is Creativeness

The celibacy of the priest is spiritual before it is physical; it is theological, before it is physiological; it is Eucharistic, before it is hygienic. It is a reflection of faith; it is attitude before an act; a reverent inwardness, not a biological intactness.

Celibacy in the priest is not the result of something he "gives" up; it is reverence for mystery — and the mystery is creativeness. God has allowed creatures to share in His creation. Husband and wife prolong it by begetting fruit of their marriage, an incarnation of their mutual love. The ambassador of Christ is called to another kind of creativeness — he begets souls. He consecrates; he baptizes; he recreates souls in the confessional. In all these acts his body shares. Therefore, he has not surrendered certain functions of the body; he has transformed them, merged them into the Divine-plan of redemption.

Celibacy Is Not The Opposite of Love

Consecrated celibacy is the highest form of sacred or sacrificial love; it seeks nothing for itself; it seeks only the will of the Beloved. The world makes the mistake of assuming that virginity

is opposed to love, as poverty is opposed to wealth. Rather, it is related to love, as a university education is related to a grammar-school education. Celibacy is the mountain peak of love, as marriage is its hill.

Simply because it is often associated with asceticism and penance, it is thought to mean only the giving up of something. The true picture is that asceticism is only the fence around the garden of virginity. A guard is always stationed around the crown jewels of England, not because England loves soldiers, but because it needs them to protect the jewels. So, the more precious the love, the greater the precautions to guard it. Since no love is more precious than that of the soul in love with God, the soul must ever be on the watch against lions who would overrun its green pastures. The grating in a Carmelite monastery is not to keep the sisters in, but to keep the world out.

Celibacy Is Fecund

As celibacy is not the opposite of love neither is it the opposite of generation. The Christian blessing on celibacy did not abrogate the order of Genesis (1:22) to 'increase and multiply,' for virginity has its own generation. Mary's consecration of virginity was unique in that it resulted in a physical generation — the Word made Flesh. But it also set the pattern for spiritual generation, for she also begot the Christ-like. In like manner, consecrated love must not be barren. Rather must it say with Paul:

It was I that begot you in Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 4:15

When the woman in the crowd praised the Mother of Our Lord, He turned the praise to spiritual motherhood, and said that she who did the will of His Father in heaven was His mother. Relationship was here lifted from the level of the flesh, to the spirit. To beget a body is blessed; to save a soul, is more blessed, for such is the Father's Will. An idea thus can transform a vital function, not by condemning it to sterility, but by elevating it to a new fecundity of the Spirit.

There would, therefore, seem to be implied in all celibacy the necessity of apostleship and the begetting of souls for Christ. God, Who hated the man who buried his talent in the ground, will certainly despise those who pledge themselves to be in love with Him, and yet show no new life — converts or souls saved through contemplation.

Shall not the Divine Lover Who infused Gift-Love in the heart of a maiden, not also possess it Himself? "Shall not I that make others bring forth children, myself not bring forth?" (Isaiah 66/9) What is human love anyway but the spark from the Flame which is God.

Danger In De-Christ-ing Celibacy

No one in the world who has ever been given a Gift-Love ever thought himself under any legal obligation to be faithful to that gift. Indeed, husbands may forget the beauty and loveliness of the wife, but there is no such change in the Love of God Who loves even when we never think about Him, or yearn to do His Will.

The fecundity of the priest comes not from some unknown right of love, but is a deliberate apostolate with fully reasoned commitments. To de-Christify celibacy, to regard it as a canonical or conciliar obligation, is like analyzing the deep love of husband and wife into a physiological contact. Why do parents find it hard to give sex education to their children? Because, though it is easy enough to explain the physiology of sex, it is difficult to communicate to the child the meaning of love which lies beyond the physiology of sex. Camels hear words but not meanings; poetry has metre, but it also has beauty.

To de-Christify celibacy is to treat it apart from love that lies too deep for words; it is like reducing the love of husband and wife to two ships that pass in the night. Love for Christ is real, it is intense, and it is overwhelming, and one I come to accept that Tremendous Lover — well! That leads me to the "Love that leaves all other love a pain." Such Love is indeed possessive; it is sweet tyranny; it is ungalting chain! It is freedom — only the Christ-fettered are free!

In union of love for Our Lord and His Mother, I am,

Your co-worker in Christ,
— J. Fulton J. Sheen

Christ

In the annual Christmas Seaf Drive, the school children of the diocese brought in a total of \$38,598.28, according to Monsignor John

School

Sacred Heart Cathedral	.....
Annunciation	.....
Blessed Sacrament	.....
Christ the King	.....
Holy Apostles	.....
Holy Cross	.....
Holy Family	.....
Holy Ghost	.....
Holy Redeemer	.....
Holy Rosary	.....
Immaculate Conception	.....
Most Precious Blood	.....
O. L. of Good Counsel	.....
O. L. of Lourdes	.....
O. L. of Mercy	.....
O. L. of Mt. Carmel	.....
O. L. Perpetual Help	.....
O. L. Queen of Peace	.....
St. Ambrose	.....
St. Andrew	.....
St. Anthony	.....
St. Augustine	.....
St. Boniface	.....
St. Cecilia	.....
St. Charles Borromeo	.....
St. Francis Xavier	.....
St. James	.....
St. John Evangelist, Greece	.....
St. Lawrence	.....
St. Lucy	.....
St. Margaret Mary	.....
St. Michael	.....
St. Monica	.....
St. Peter and Paul	.....
St. Philip Neri	.....
St. Pius X	.....
St. Salome	.....
St. Stanislaus	.....
St. Theodore	.....
St. Theresa	.....
St. Thomas the Apostle	.....

AUBURN:

Holy Family	.....
St. Aloysius	.....
St. Francis	.....
St. Hyacinth	.....
St. Mary	.....

AVON

BATH

BROCKPORT

CANANDAIGUA

CLYDE

Auburn Catholic

Auburn — A report on a survey of Cayuga County Catholic schools is expected soon, member of the School Board Contract Committee announce this week.

The study of the school system is being made by the educational consulting firm Engelhardt, Engelhardt and Leggett of New York City.

The contract committee the Cayuga County Catholic Schools is headed by Ms. James D. Cuffney, Dean of the Cayuga Deaneery and pastor of St. Mary's Church. Other committee members are Sam Cichello, Joseph P. Cuddy, Urban Faubion and Myron Maslin.

The study was started July and at that time it was stated that the project would take six months to a year to complete.

Msgr. Cuffney stated that the purpose of the study was to determine the best way of providing the most meaningful community related Catholic education in Auburn and Cayuga County.

"The most economical and efficient means of providing continued improvement in the quality of education in Catholic schools" will also be reviewed, Msgr. Cuffney said.

The committee chairman remarked, "These objectives can be realized only by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of organizing the parish schools into one complete system and considering the questions of whether or not programs and curriculum content

African Music Lecture

Dr. Alan P. Merriam, chairman of the Indiana University Department of Anthropology will present a public lecture African Music at the Nazarene College Arts Center Friday, Feb. 9 at 8:15 p.m.

This lecture is sponsored by the Rochester area Inter-Colle and University Faculty seminar in Foreign Area Studies. Nazareth is the host college for the February meeting.
He is the author of several books, including "The Anthropology of Music," "Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indian," "The Background of Jazz," and co-author of "Ethnomusicology and Folk Music."