

Scripture, A Rich Lode For Mining Treasure of Prayer

(As Bishop Sheen continues his "Open Letter to Seminarians," he touches on the Bible as a source of inspiration for prayer, on prayer as love and the intercessory character of the priest's prayer.)

In the Bible we find that God is looking for us, rather than we are looking for Him. We are in flight: "Adam, where are you? Where is thy brother?" God is the Shepherd, we are His sheep. It is unbelievable that we should be loved by Love. Among commentaries on the New Testament which combine scholarship and food for meditation, are all the writings of William Barclay.

In reading the inspired words, apply them personally. If you feel unloved and lonesome, read the story of Zacheus; if you despise the old, read about Moses at eighty leading the people out of Egypt; if you despise the young, read Timothy praised because his first zeal was right; if you are fond of saying: "My conscience tells me I am right," read about David whose conscience did not bother him until Nathan came on the scene; if you think you have troubles, read St. Paul:

"I have served prison sentences
I have been beaten times without number
I have faced death again and again
I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes by the Jews five times
I have been beaten with rods three times
I have been shipwrecked three times
I have been twenty-four hours in the open sea
I have been in constant danger from rivers and floods
From bandits, from my own countrymen and from pagans
I have faced danger in city streets

Dangers in the desert, danger on the high seas
Danger among false Christians
I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils,
Hunger and thirst, doing without meals, cold and lack of clothing
Apart from all external trials, I have the daily burden of responsibility
For all churches
Do you think anyone is weak without my feeling his weakness
Does anyone have his faith upset without my longing to restore him?"
(2 Cor. 11/24-29)

Prayer Is Love

The attitude of a priest toward prayer is different from that of a layman, because the priest is called to be Jacob's ladder, bringing the tears and pleas of man to God, and bringing the joy of forgiveness of God to man. His prayer is essentially love, for "God is love." What does a man do who is in love with a woman? Does he not like to visit her, think about her, read her letters, make sacrifices for her, talk to others about her, interpret her acts, rejoice in her favors, take every opportunity to know her better, even put up with her brief moods?

To pray is merely to translate all these love-dispositions to God. Everyone has to be at one with someone, and the priest is at one with God: "Therein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4/10). Love is a response. You can be a good Communist without a clear picture of Karl Marx in your mind, but you cannot be a good priest without Christ ablaze in your heart.

Prayer Is Intercession

Your prayer as a priest, more than anyone else's, is a prayer for others, i.e., intercession. The model of your prayer, as a priest, you will find in Chapter 17 of John where Our Lord prays not only for his disciples but for all who will believe in Him through them. Intercession demands a deep sense of the fellowship in the suffering, the loneliness, the biting remorse, the unhallowed griefs, the dagger wounds in tender hearts; but especially we are one with those who have no one they love, and to whom they can offer pain.

Before the Blessed Sacrament, particularly at Holy Mass, what do we drag to the altar? We drag the hunger of India, the degradation of the Inner City, the sufferings of our missionaries, the woes of our parish, the defection of our brother priests. Whose burden is this? The Pope's, the Bishop's, the pastor's? No! It is ours — all of us —! It keeps us awake at night! It worries us as we live better than our people! It frightens us as we spend more on a car than we do on books to improve our mind. Prayer is concern, care, a struggle to fulfill even in our flesh the sufferings wanting to the Passion of Christ (2 Cor. 4/10). Intercession is not just a lip-prayer, but psychosomatic like Moses interceding for his people, or Paul asking to be cursed for the sake of his people; it is a soul prayer and also a body prayer, an action, a doing for others. "Glorify God by making your bodies the shrines of His Presence." (1 Cor. 6/19, 20)

My dear People of God:

Imagine writing a Lenten Letter in these un-mortified days? Who wants to hear about the Cross in the Secular City? When the air is filled with placards of Protest, what room is there for the Placard of the Cross? When throats are hoarse with "This is what I want," how can ears hear the whisper of grace: "This is what you need"?

But did not all this happen before? Did not a Secular City once drive God out of its city limits to die on a garbage heap? And what is our age doing but pushing God, not out of a city, but off the very earth He created? And why? Because God is dead! Where is His Power compared to Technology? Where does one see a sign of the activity of God?

But does God prove Himself, always by being active? Is He not most loving when He is Passive? Where was God's Love most shown in the face of the power of men, except when nails, thorns, and ropes combined in His Death. Here evil was at maximum strength, clothed in its mightiest armor when it nailed Goodness to a tree. And yet as a tree will sometimes bathe with perfume the very axe which cuts it down, so He forgave us, saying we were ignorant of what Love really is.

Today is just like Calvary. Some are saying God is Dead because He has no Power to unshackle a Hand or unpinion a Foot, or come down from a Cross. But this is how He saves us: by soaking up our sins as a sponge, by absolving the taunts and sneers of all whose passion is "and" — the anti-moral, the anti-church, the anti-religious, the anti-Christ.

If God chose to be active today, He might punish us in His justice. God is still to be feared when He does nothing, even when we rebellious children prepare the

fuse to blow up the earth. God is most likely to rise at the moment we write the certificate of His Death. Did not St. Paul say that He would come at such a moment?

"When men are saying 'Peace and Security' catastrophe will sweep down upon them as suddenly and inescapably as birth pangs to a pregnant woman." (1 Thess. 5/3)

But because the Lord is passive today, as on Calvary, He gives us time for repentance. And that is what Lent means: — sharing in the defeat of the Cross in the age-long struggle against evil, that we may also glory in the Resurrection.

Keep the Faith in these days of doubt, license and apostasy, remembering the incident recorded by Matthew: "But while the chief priests and elders were making their accusations, He made no reply. So Pilate said to Him, 'Can you not hear the evidence they are bringing against you?' And to the governor's amazement, Jesus did not answer a single one of their accusations." (Matt. 27/12-14)

You choose your own way of drawing closer to the Passive and Crucified Christ during Lent. What is important in these days, when He and His Mystical Body are under attack, is that we be found with Him on the Cross, and not with them under it. A Christian is one who stands by God in His Hour of Crucifixion.

Pray for me.
Your servant in the Crucified,

The Church in Our Day

(Today's installment of the American Bishops' Collective Pastoral Letter digs into an extremely topical, yet very old question: the relation of the visible and the invisible elements of the Church)

How Are the Visible and the Invisible Elements United in the Church?

The visible structuring of the Church is no less the Church than her invisible reality. The sacramental Church is the spontaneous result of grace which, like love, seeks visible expression and identifies with it. The grace of Christ in which the Church is created is not imprisoned in the visible structure of the Church, but neither is it independent of her. For the Church is a sign or sacrament of grace. This means that the grace of the Lord, requiring visible presence among us (even as did He), is destined to triumph when time shall be no more and is expressed through the institutional structures of the Church and is inseparable from them. This is not to say that grace, salvation, or the Kingdom of God is found only where the organized Church is seen to be at work, but it is to say that all grace seeks to become manifest not only in the Incarnation of Christ, but also in those visible elements of His Church which are not merely human but sacramental in the fullest sense of the word.

Is the Church a Sacramental—the Visible Communicating the Invisible?

As is a sacrament, the Church is the result of grace, an intensification of grace and an effective sign of grace at work among us. One who belongs to the Church through faith, hope and charity has found where God's graces converge concretely. In the visible Church, grace is given an earthly habitation and a name; in the visible Church, Christ's victorious saving presence is recognized and celebrated; in the visible Church, the invisible mystery of the Church achieves its history.

Is Spirituality Separate From Renewal of the Church and Ecumenism?

The invitation to a more intense following of Christ is not an invitation to quietism. It calls us to labor more ardently than ever before. We must renew and reform the Church. We must enter into dialogue with each other, with other religions, with the world of unbelief. Yet all this must be done with a serenity and peace of heart which only Christ gives. If we see ourselves as the Body of Jesus, then we shall strive to be one with Christ in His consecration to the Father, one with Him in His openness to the Spirit, one with Him in His love for His brethren even unto death.

How Did the Vatican Council Express This—Divine-Human Reality?

"As the assumed nature inseparably united to Christ serves the Divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body. This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Savior, after His resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and with the other Apostles to extend and rule, establishing it for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of truth' (1 Tim. 3:15). This Church, constituted and organized in the world as a society, exists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward Catholic unity" (Lumen Gentium, 8).

When One Leaves the Visible Church — Where Does He Go?

There recurs in history the temptation to take scandal at the idea of God present among men in flesh like their own, or of a Church audible, visible, human as well as divine, and therefore inevitably imperfect. Hence some men turn away impatiently from the Church when they find her less than ideal. This turning away from the Church would be less harmful if there were any beneficial alternative to the Church. History records none.

Men may criticize the Church but no one can create the indispensable substitute for her. One who lives the life of the Church senses in his heart not only the sentiments expressed by Peter's haunting question "Lord, to whom else shall we go?" (John 6:68), but also the conviction that there is no better place to be in than in the Church: "It is good for us to be here" (Mark 9:5). In other words, the Church brings into history an experience we would not wish to forego even were it possible to do so without harm to ourselves and to our brethren.

What is the Meaning of "Outside the Church There is No Salvation"?

And so, in a sense even more profound than the polemic of past centuries could have supposed, we are beginning to discover new meaning in such seemingly harsh but nonetheless inescapable formulations of theological truth as "Neither is there salvation in any other (than Christ)" (Acts 4:12) . . . "Outside of Christ, there is no salvation" . . . "Outside the Church, no salvation."

Speaking of certain non-Christians and even of some atheists, the council remarked:

"Nor is God Himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift and who as Savior wills that all men be saved . . . Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace" (Lumen Gentium, 16).

Did Pope Paul Say Anything About the Implicit and Explicit Knowledge and Love of God?

Pope Paul wrote: "We see these men (i.e. atheists) full of yearning, prompted sometimes by passion and desire for the unattainable, but also by great-hearted dreams of justice and progress. In such dreams noble social aims are set up in the place of the absolute and necessary God, testifying thereby to the ineradicable need for the Divine Source and End of all things, whose transcendence and imminence it is the task of our teaching office to reveal with patience and wisdom" (Ecclesiam Suam, 108).

What is true of men who have not yet explicitly found God, is certainly true of those who explicitly acknowledge God. For man is saved not only in the solitude of his heart but also by means of those legitimate human, religious and ecclesial communities which, under God's mercy, not only announce but somehow minister salvation to their conscientious members.

Does There Still Remain Only One Way of Salvation?

In any case, Christians reject the notion that there are many divergent ways to salvation, ways which by-pass the Church and yet arrive in Christ or ways which turn aside from even Christ, who is the only Way (John 14:6); and yet result in God. The formulations of the theology of salvation which we have cited are more subtle than we may have appreciated; they are not, however, any less valid today than in the past. When one has found Christ and come into the Church, he has discovered not one of many equal ways to salvation.

(To be continued next week)



Catholic Theologian Addresses Masons

Danville, Ill. — Father John A. O'Brien, theologian at Notre Dame University, returns a \$200 honorarium for speaking at the Masonic Temple in Danville, Ill., to Comdr. Bernard A. Ward of the Danville Masonic Consistory. The Catholic priest's gift will help provide nursing scholarships at Illinois Masonic Hospital in Chicago.

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African Prelate Prods Catholic Conscience

By GARY MACEOIN

Archbishop Raymond-Marie Tchidimbo of Conakry (Guinea) has issued a frightening challenge to the conscience of the Catholics of the world in a 2,500-word letter to the French Catholic newspaper, Informations Catholiques Internationales.

How can you remain silent, he asks, when Catholic Church authorities collaborate with a professedly Catholic country in violating human rights?

The country in question is Portugal, and the situation about which Archbishop Tchidimbo testifies is that of Angola. His denunciations begin with a list of Angolan priests exiled to Portugal and detained in religious houses there. In all cases, the charge is the same: support for one or other of the independence movements in their country.

First on the list comes Msgr. Manuel Mendes Das Neves, dean of the Chapter of Luanda cathedral and vicar-general of the archdiocese of Luanda when he was arrested and deported in 1961. In spite

of the protests of his archbishop, which the Nuncio in Lisbon is believed to have supported diplomatically, he was held in Portugal until his death in December, 1966. He was then buried secretly at night, the Portuguese government denying the request of the Archbishop of Luanda to allow the repatriation of the remains.

These occurrences, writes Archbishop Tchidimbo, "forces us to speak up and remind the free world that Portugal still holds eight Angolan priests in illegal detention. They are in forced residence in Portugal for the sole crime of wanting to be what they are by birth—Angoles, not Portuguese."

The exiles are identified by name, with the address of the religious house in which each is detained. One was editor-in-chief of a Catholic newspaper; another, the chancellor of the archdiocese of Luanda; another, a seminary professor of theology; and yet another, a graduate of the Gregorian University, Rome, and a professor of philosophy. Two of them are said to have been tortured by the secret police when first arrested.

"The most crucial aspect of this unhappy detention," comments Archbishop Tchidimbo, "is that the exiled Angolan priests are watched constantly by their Portuguese fellow priests, some of whom report their every movement to the secret police. Here we are witnesses of a total confusion between the Cross and the Flag."

This unfortunately is not the only area of confusion of Church and State in Portugal's dealings with its African colonies. I encountered another in Johannesburg, South Africa, a couple of years ago, when I was "smuggled" into a compound housing thousands of laborers in the gold mines in conditions of material and moral degradation.

Many of them were from Portuguese territories, impressed from their tribes under a quota system. By agreement between the Portuguese and South African governments, percentages were deducted from their miserable wages and handed over to the Portuguese authorities as state taxes and church contributions. Since all of them were "technically" classed as Catholics, the Catholic Church was the

exclusive beneficiary, although no priests were sent by the Portuguese Church authorities to minister to them in the mines.

There would seem to be ample justification for the conclusion which Archbishop Tchidimbo draws. "If this crying injustice is not remedied, and that by the intervention of the Catholic hierarchy of Portugal, it will not be surprising if the people of these countries come one day — if they have not already done so — to charge the Church with being the accomplice of the SALAZAR government."

Such is also the conclusion of Informations Catholiques Internationales. "Our readers are already familiar with the facts which urged Archbishop Tchidimbo to make this appeal," it commented editorially. "We were one of the few publications which did everything possible — though without too much success — to break the wall of silence, from the date of his first arrest right up to the death of Msgr. Mendes Das Neves. . . . We hope that the public intervention of an African archbishop will finally put the issue in the spotlight."

Inner City Where th

(Continued from Page 1)

Sister Josepha and Trinity Presbyterian. Through this work, Sister Josepha has become familiar with almost every element of a school system—staff, students, finances, organization, community relations.

Sister Kieran is involved with the elderly in the Third Ward, of which there are many since there are two housing developments for senior citizens nearby. After locating these often overlooked people,



Sisters Josepha and

Father Kress First Friday

Father Robert L. Kress, pastor of St. Michael Church, will be the speaker at the First Friday Luncheon Club, March 1 at Hotel Sheraton at 12:30 p.m.

He is a brother of Urban G. Kress, chairman of the Knights of Columbus Sponsoring committee. Father William Donnell, club moderator and chaplain of Rochester Council, K. of C. will make the introduction.

Father Kress, ordained in 1958, attended St. Andrew School, Aquinas Institute, Niagara University and St. Bernard Seminary.

He has served as assistant pastor at Immaculate Conception Church, Ithaca; St. Mary's, Auburn; St. John's, the Evangelist, Rochester; and St. Alphonsus, Auburn.

He was pastor of St. Mary Church, Reville and St. Joachim, Canisteo going there in 1959.

Parents

Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Rochester will embark on a carefully planned program of sex instruction for students, it was announced this week.

The first of a series of informational meetings designed to describe the program for parents was held at Kings Preparatory last Friday. Father Daniel Brent, associate superintendent of Catholic Schools, noted three reasons for the advent of the program:

• Vatican II Council emphasized the need for a "prudent and reverent" formation of children in sex education.



LONG STUDY, CARE Sex Education to be off clog, and Joseph San worked on the pioneer