

FR. ALBERT SHAMON

## Word For Sunday



Sunday Readings: (R1) Is. 60: 1-6 (R2) Mt. 2: 1-2. (R3) Eph. 3: 2-6.

The book of Isaiah is really three volumes in one. Volume One (Chs. 1-39) was written by the royal prophet Isaiah who delivered his oracles in Jerusalem around 740-701 B.C. Volume Two (Chs. 40-55) is attributed to an unknown prophet called Second Isaiah, who spoke from 548 to 538 B.C. to console the Jews exiled in Babylon. Volume Three (Chs. 56-66) was perhaps the work of a group of disciples of Second Isaiah, who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild it (538-500 B.C.). For convenience, these authors are called the Third Isaiah.

Sunday's first reading is from the third Isaiah. What a depressing sight Jerusalem must have been to the remnant of Jews returned to the city devastated seventy years before by the Babylonian colossus! Jeremiah had wept over her: "How lonely the once crowded city! Widowed, the mistress over nations." But as the Third Isaiah contemplated the sad sight he beheld a vision: a new Jerusalem, transformed by the presence of God. Like a once-desolate mother, he saw her radiant with joy at the restoration of her children.

What is the new Jerusalem the prophet saw? Who is the mother made joyful by all nations coming to her? Whose is the shining radiance by which kings shall walk? To whom shall the wealth of nations be brought? The new Jerusalem, the new heaven and earth, is the Church, splendid with the light of divine truth and illuminated with the Spirit of Love.

And what is her role in the world today? To rise and shine. "Rise in the splendor of your light, and shine," urged the prophet.

There are two extreme ways of looking at the Church today: that of the idealist and that of the realist. The idealist sees the Church only as divine: pure spotless, blameless, holy, concerned only with the things of

God. The realist sees the Church only as human, worldly, churchy, stifling freedom with structures; wealthy, political, full of very kind of failing. Who is right — the idealist or the realist? Both are in different ways—and both are wrong.

The idealist is right because the Church has a divine side; he is wrong in that he does not see the human side. The realist is wrong because he sees only the human side and is blind to the divine. Both are fundamentally uninterested in a renewal of the Church: the idealist feels the Church has no need to rise and shine; the realist feels it cannot rise and shine.

Yet renewal of the Church was the prime purpose of Vatican II. Because there is a human element in the Church, a human element that is sinful, renewal is a permanent necessity—not something done but something always to be done. None knew this better than John XXIII. His dream was to have the Council restore the Church to what Christ meant it to be, so that he could say to those separated from the Church — the Orthodox Protestants, and the rest: "Look here, brothers, this is the Church of Christ. We have tried to be true to her, to present her for what Christ willed her to be. Come. Here the way lies open for meeting and home-coming."

John's dream was for an epiphany, a manifestation of the Church as being so truly the Bride of Christ, that wise men would stream toward her. He had hoped for reunion of Christendom through renewal of the Church.

What a responsibility that throws on us. We all like to say we are the Church. If so, then it is we who must rise — rise from a charity grown cold, rise from our egomaniacal concern for self and our indifference to others. Only then shall a light shine, like a star, to lead wise men, our thinking twentieth century men, to Christ.

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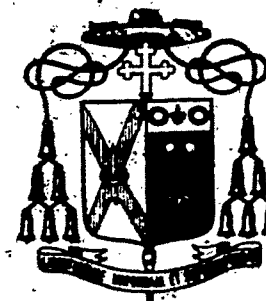
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## The Bishop's Public Appointments



January

- 10—Interdepartmental Staff Meeting—1:30 p.m.
- 11—Clergy Conference, Becket Hall—10 a.m.
- 20—Council Meeting with Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Motherhouse—10:30 a.m.
- 23—Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, St. Agnes, Avon—10:30 a.m.; Homily at noon Mass.
- 26—Blessing of Abbot John Eudes Bramberger, Our Lady of Genesee Abbey—10 a.m.
- 27—Celebration of Eucharist with Class of 1940, Bishop's Residence, Victor—5 p.m.

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