

LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

Son of God

A Contradiction

Editor:

The memory of the recent Christmas observance still lingers. It is the time when we commemorate the fact that God did what to some is very perplexing — He cast aside the majesty which was His alone and condescended to take upon Himself a human nature and to be born in a humble age and in humble surroundings. In doing this, He was to Herod then, and to many men still, a contradiction.

Humble! A sign of contradiction! These He was at His birth,

and these he remained throughout His sojourn in this world.

He did the things that great men are not supposed to do. His friends were not the rich, the powerful, the self-styled wise; they were not those who could

give him prominence, fame and glory. His friends were the poor, the oppressed, the sick, the suffering, the abused. He Who could have claimed his rightful place to be first among men was content to be last. He Who would could have demanded that all men serve Him was content to serve all men.

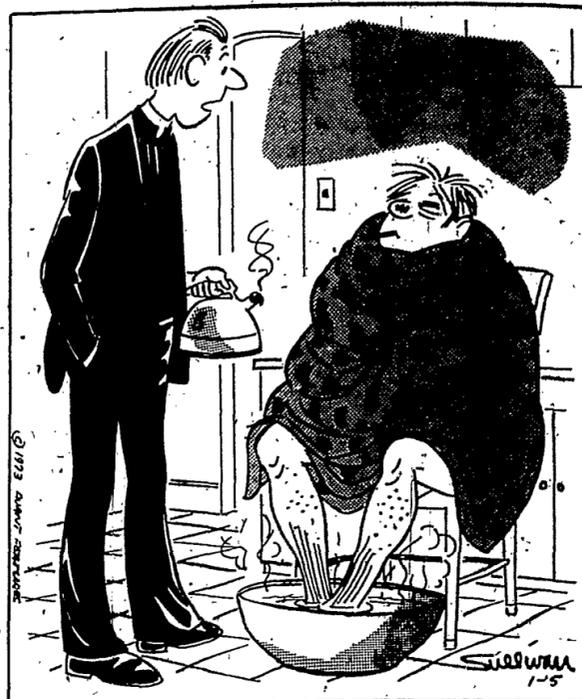
You would like to be like Him, you say? Are you sure? Others

once expressed this same desire to Him. "The world will despise you," He responded, "because you are not of the world."

If you would walk with Him, there are two things you must do. One is to cast aside forever the desire for status and for applause. The other is, according to your capacity, to become like Him, the servant of men through prayer, through asceticism, and through some special ministry. (For example, the type of ministry I have elected, which holds special appeal for me, is the teaching profession.)

Make no mistake about this. If you choose to walk with Him, you, too, will have scars. You, too, will face hatred and rejection. Are you ready for this YET? Are you brave enough YET? Are you strong enough YET?

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"YOU MEAN THERE ARE TWENTY-THREE IN THE PARISH AND YOU BLESSED EVERY ONE? MAN! THAT'S A LOT OF SNOWMOBILES!"

FR. ALBERT SHAMON

Word For Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R1) Jon. 3: 1-5, 10. (R2) 1 Cor. 7: 29-31. (R3) Mk. 1: 14-20.

The Book of Jonah takes just two pages in the Bible. Why not read it this week? It really is a humorous story, full of satire and irony. Probably the only historical thing about it is the name of the prophet Jonah. But he is not the author of the book. Jonah lived in the 8th century B.C., whereas the story was written around 400 B.C.

The Jews had just come back from exile in Babylon. They found that pagans had settled in Palestine. In a short time the Jews started to intermarry with them, to the great detriment of their religion.

In the crisis, God raised up Nehemiah, who went around breaking up marriages. As a result of this cleansing movement, the Jews got the idea that God was their particular possession and that he had no interest in other people. Theologically, this is unsound. God is the God of all men, no matter what their nation may be. If they repent, he will be merciful. "God is good and upright, he shows sinners the way" (Resp. Ps.). That is what the author of Jonah wanted to teach.

To get this teaching across the author used a story, a delightful and fictitious one. God sends Jonah to Nineveh, the capital of cruel Assyria. Assyria had destroyed ten of the twelve tribes of Israel. Hence for the Jew, it

personified evil and enmity with God. Yet Jonah was to preach penance to the despised Assyrians. He by no means relishes the role. In fact, he takes off in the opposite direction to escape fulfilling it. He boards a ship.

God, of course, is not to be frustrated. There is miracle after miracle — a storm, a choice by lot, and a big fish. After a three-day retreat in the fish's belly, Jonah decides to go along with God.

Conveniently spewed up in the northern section of the Mediterranean, he goes to Nineveh and preaches. The worst possible thing happens. He is a success. The Ninivites listen and are converted — and saved. Horrors! So Jonah sulks. God's mercy saved Jonah from drowning. God's mercy forgave Jonah his disobedience. And yet, Jonah would deny this mercy to others. What a satire on the narrow-mindedness of those who all along have been the recipients of God's mercy, yet begrudge it to others.

St. Mark shows Christ preaching the same message as the author of Jonah. "The good news of God," which he proclaimed is the good news about God, namely, that God is the God of all men — "a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, rich in clemency, loath to punish" (Jon. 4: 2).

Only one condition is set to receive God's favors. It is the same condition set for the Ninivites — "Reform your lives." This means more than "keep the Ten Commandments." In the mouth of Jesus, it meant "believe in the Gospel." To "believe in the Gospel" obviously meant doing what the four apostles called by Jesus did: to follow him unconditionally and share his task of spreading the good news about God's love for men.

The following of Christ is the reformation, the renewal asked for by the Gospel. This means re-orienting one's entire personality so that it radiates Christ.

Without God's help this is impossible. Prayer is the quest for that help. Thus every day Cardinal Newman prayed that he might become more Christlike. "We can well cut out this prayer and say it daily:

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere. Flood my soul with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may be only a radiance of yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus.

Paul says the time is short (R2). So get with it!

Sexual Love Not Everything

Editor:

Terri and Jerry Patti describe with beautiful words the use of human sexuality in a good marriage, "happiness", "closeness", "harmony", and "love". But what they, and all who write in a similar manner, seem to conclude is that all of this will decrease if one uses rhythm method or periodic abstinence.

One can see why they reason this way. They have been told so often and so subtly by the media that sex is the main thing in life that brings happiness and so soon they begin to conclude that less sex means less happiness. Is that really so?

Just because unselfish use of sexuality may increase happiness and love, must it follow that

abstinence decreases happiness and love? Of course not. There are so many other ways to increase happiness and love.

Shaking hands can be an expression of friendship just as the use of sex can be an expression of love. If for some economic, social, or physical reason, one had to limit handshaking would that mean that friendship would decrease? Of course not, for there are other ways to express friendship. Likewise if one needs to limit the use of sex, love does not decrease. There are many other ways of expressing love.

Yes, Patti, marriage is an answer to the desire to give all of ourselves to each other, but you know that sexual love is only one part of marriage and giving. Don't ask us to believe that if sexual love need decrease, giving need decrease.

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'Haszlauer Tells It As It Is'

Editor:

Congratulations to Mr. Joseph Haszlauer on telling it as it is. I thought at first I was reading George Beahon "In this Corner."

But don't quit, "Joe". As Father Notepart used to tell us kids: "A quitter never wins, and a winner never quits." Wait until you receive the Holy Eucharist from the anointed hands of a ward healer, better known as a politician, like I did in one of our local churches.

And as Bill Klem, the old National League umpire use to say: "You're not one until they call you one!" (Catholic that is). Only as individuals can we hope to see a renewal of vitality in the church.

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