



WORD FOR SUNDAY

Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday Readings: (R1) Acts 9:26-31. (R2) 1 Jn. 3:18-24. (R3) Jn. 15:1-8.

Last Sunday Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd." This Sunday, He declared "I am the true Vine." This declaration is the last of the seven great "I am's" in John's Gospel. On our ears the significance of these simple statements can be lost unless we avert to the fact that "I am" was for the Jews the name of God.

The key work in "I am the true Vine" is the word "true." On the door of the Holy of Holies in the temple, a vine was sculptured in massive gold. It was the symbol of Israel, "The Vine of Yahweh," clinging to the house of her God! By calling Himself the true Vine, Jesus was saying in effect, "The Judaic religion is no longer the vine; nor is the Israelitic nation. Salvation is not to be found in being a Jew nor in practicing the Jewish religion. It is to be sought only by living in union with Me!"

Our Lord used the image of vine, for the great relationships of life cannot be expressed in the stark language of prose. Plain language is all right for teaching; it befits instructions that come with a new car, for instance. But to express the deep relationship between God and man, the language of poetry, figurative language, is needed. Because our Lord's hearers were farmers or shepherds, He often drew His comparisons from their direct experiences; hence His talk was often of shepherds and sowers, vines and harvests.

To describe the intimacy of the relationship between Himself and His disciples and to explain why union with Himself was so necessary, our Lord did not use the image of a palm tree. A palm tree has no branches. Nor did He use a fig tree, or other fruit bearing trees, because they do not need husbandry. Instead, He used the image of the vine, for it has branches; and in addition it needs a vine-dresser, for without

N.Y.: More Abortions Than Births.

Albany [RNS] — A report by the New York State Health Department shows that there were more abortions than births in the state last year — 278,000 abortions to 252,278 live births.

However, almost all of the births were to mothers who were state residents, while more than half of the reported abortions were performed on out-of-state women.

The ratio of induced abortions to live births has been steadily rising in New York State since the liberalized abortion laws were passed in 1970.

There was an average of four births to every abortion in the first year of the liberalized law. The ratio rose to about three births per abortion in 1971. In 1972, for the first time, abortions outnumbered live births.

drastic pruning the luxuriant vine will never produce the grapes of which it is capable.

The pruning process is twofold. Dead wood (like Judas) is cut away and burned, for the wood of the vine is so soft, it is good for nothing but a bonfire. On the contrary, the living branches (like Peter) are trimmed to make them more fruitful. The cross, physical pain, anxieties, anguish, doubts, fears, dismay — by such trials, the living branches are pruned.

And what is the purpose of this all — the branches clinging to the vine and their pruning? To bear fruit. Israel was not a true vine, for Israel hoarded her spiritual wealth and did not become a light to the Gentiles. Jesus is the true Vine, for He is rooted in the Father and draws to Himself branches — disciples like Saul (R1) and John (R2) — which bear the fruit of giving witness to the world that the death of Jesus is not just the death of an itinerant preacher, but the decisive act by which the world is redeemed.

And the condition for fruitful witnessing to Jesus is to live in Him. As the hand is not a hand unless joined to an arm of a living body, and can do no work unless it is so joined, so a vine branch is not a branch unless it is joined to the vine stock, and it cannot bear grapes unless it is so joined.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, one of the cardinal conditions for success in overcoming the vicious habit of drunkenness is to keep in contact with at least some one person in the group. To go off alone before one has mastered the virtue of sobriety is to court disaster.

Living on in Christ is something like that. As the branch cannot endure apart from the vine, neither can we survive spiritually, apart from Christ. In His own words, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." "Apart from Me," not "without Me," for dependence on Him is a total absolute. "You can do nothing," not "you will do nothing," for it not a question of our wanting to, but of our capability. Apart from Him we are incapable of doing anything salvific. "You can do nothing," not "you can do little" — the sum total of our own efforts, apart from Him, is zero! Thus seven times at least, St. John urges, "Live on in . . . Live in . . . Stay part of Christ."

To keep this contact we, unless we are mystics, have to take deliberate steps. We have to build prayer, for instance, into the rhythm of our daily lives: morning and night prayers, grace before and after meals, the rosary (for those who are not faint-hearted); a little Bible reading, and reflection on Jesus each day.

The result? Abundant fruit. Such a person will turn men's minds to God, and God will be glorified.



Miss Rita Schwalb, treasurer [left; Mrs. James Keenan, vice president; Mrs. William Kramer, president; and Mrs. Raymond Zimmer, secretary, of the Cenacle Retreat League, plan for the Silver Jubilee Celebration May 30-June 2.

Cenacle to Note Birthday

The Sisters of the Cenacle Retreat House and members of the Retreat League will open a general celebration of the House's 25th anniversary at the beginning of June.

The silver jubilee celebration opens with a triduum and culminates in a Jubilee Mass at the Cenacle, Saturday, June 2, 10 a.m., celebrated by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan. Bishop James E. Kearney will be guest of honor. Refreshments will follow the Mass.

Demachaut Music Featured at Mass

The Gregorian Chant Choir of the Eastman School of Music will sing a Latin High Mass on Sunday, May 20, at 4 p.m. at the Cenacle Chapel.

The Gregorian Chant Choir, directed by Dr. Erich Schwandt, sings a monthly Latin Mass during the school year. Father Robert

the triduum will be conducted by three friends of the Cenacle. Father Albert Bartlett, SJ, former rector of McQuaid Jesuit High School, will talk on retreats; followed by benediction Wednesday, May 30, at 7:45 p.m. Father Albert Shamon will talk on the Eucharist, followed by Mass, Thursday, May 31, starting at 7:45 p.m. Father Henry Atwell will talk on the Holy Spirit, Friday, June 1 at 7:45 p.m.

At the invitation of Bishop James E. Kearney, the retreat

Birchmeyer will be celebrant. He will be assisted by deacons and acolytes from St. Bernard's Seminary.

Music for the Mass includes the traditional chant, as well as polyphonic music by Guillaume de Machaut.

EAGLE AWARD

Michael Huey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Glen Huey of Perinton, received both the Eagle Badge and Bronze Palm at a Boy Scout awards ceremony May 1 in St. John of Rochester parish center. He was the first scout from Troop 325 to achieve the Eagle.

First Class badges were given to William Busch, Tim Lane, Thomas Tanner and Joseph and Tim Woolston. Paul Rasmussen received the Star badge.

house opened its doors for women in June, 1948. The house and adjoining property on East Avenue in Rochester was a gift from the late Nora Conway Todd.

The house was expanded in the 1950's to enable over fifty more people to attend. Vatican II has prompted many and various programs of ecumenical groups.

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