



WORD FOR SUNDAY
Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Reading: (R1) Acts 12:1-11. (R2) 2 Tim. 4:6-8, 17-18. (R3) Mt. 16:13-19.

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Today there is so much concern about what people think — especially what they think about us. "If we only knew," quipped somebody, "how little people think; and when they think; how often it is not about us, we would think less about what they think."

Yet our Lord asked what people thought about Him, not because He was concerned about public opinion, but because He was concerned that people have the right opinion.

As usual, public opinion was wrong about Jesus. Only one man was right—Peter. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." "Messiah," therefore, man; "Son of the living God," therefore God. Peter got this insight, not from men, but from God — "no mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father." Never in the history of Christianity have we had more and better proofs from ancient traditions, histories, monuments, of the truth of Christianity; and yet never has infidelity prevailed so much as in this age of ours. To see the truth about Christ one needs to be illumined from within, as Peter was. It means to be prayerful and open. What an indictment on our age!

Yet a confession of faith is not everything. How many people there are whose God is no bigger than a confession of faith! To know a man's faith, ask not what is his creed but what are his deeds!

The first and second Readings show us two great confessors of the faith—Peter and Paul. And where are they? They are both in prison. And why are they there? Because of their faith!

But iron bars do not a prison make. Faith is stronger. What a

tribute to Peter that Herod stationed four squads of soldiers (16 men) to guard him, that double chains, locked gates, guards before them were used. These precautions were not unlike those used after Jesus had been buried. As Jesus burst out of the tomb, so did Peter, for the Church prayed and prayer is mightier than chains and the conspiracies of men.

For Paul, deliverance was of another kind. His work of preaching the Gospel was finished. All that remained for him was the laurel wreath. His freedom would come by the sword. This was no evil, for the sword would part head from body only; whereas it would unite body and soul with Christ—"the Lord will bring me safe to his heavenly kingdom."

Paul, who has labored so long in Greece, concluded his life with a reference to the Olympic games.

"I have fought the good fight" — "I've done my best." And we?

"I have finished the race" — "I didn't 'cop' out." To begin is easy, to finish is hard. Staying-power is one thing so necessary for life. Do we have it? "I have kept the faith" — "I've kept all the rules. I've played the game, I've never lost confidence in Him." Have we?

As for Peter, he lives on in the Pope. Today, so often, the Pope's confession of faith clashes with public opinion. Socrates once asked Crito, his old friend, if one ought to follow the opinion of the many or of the one man who has understanding. "Ought the pupil," he asked, "who is training to be an athlete pay attention to the crowd, the tumult and the shouting, or to his trainer and coach?" So Socrates concluded, "Ought we not to reverence the opinion of the one man who has understanding more than all the rest of the world!"

On this feast of Saints Peter and Paul, ought not all Catholics reaffirm their love and loyalty for the Holy Father — for the faith of Peter's successor is greater than the public opinion of all the rest of the world.



Library on Way

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan takes turn at groundbreaking ceremony for the new library at St. John Fisher College. At right is Bishop James E. Kearney, who participated, along with Father Hugh B. Haffey, CSB, in the groundbreaking for the college back in 1949. Others participating in the ceremony last week were Bishop Raphael Ndingi [a 1969 Fisher graduate and bishop of Nakuru, Kenya] and Father Charles J. Lavery, Fisher president.

No Pension For Chaplains In N.Y. City

Albany [RNS] — Acceding to the request of Mayor John Lindsay, Gov. Rockefeller has vetoed a bill that would give pension benefits to chaplains assigned to the New York City Fire Department.

In his veto message, Rockefeller said:

"The mayor opposes this bill because a chaplain is not constantly called upon to perform the hazardous duties of a fireman, duties that have resulted in the acquisition of a more lucrative pension earned mainly through the collective bargaining process."

GOLDEN WEDDING

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Voellinger of Durnan Street celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary yesterday, June 26, at a dinner given by their children, Mrs. Albert Tortoretti and James Voellinger.

BLACK REAPPOINTED

Techny, Ill. [RNS] — Father Dominic Carmon, SVD, 42, the first black Divine Word priest to head a Chicago parish, has been reappointed as a provincial consultant for the Northern Province of Divine Word Missionaries.

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