

WORD FOR SUNDAY

Sunday Readings: (R1) Jer. 1:4-5, 17-19. (R2) 1 Cor. 12:31-13:13. (R3) Lk. 4:21-30.

Sometimes you may have wondered what were the first words spoken by Jesus at the beginning of His public life. According to St. Matthew, it was the beatitudes; according to St. Luke, it was not the Sermon on the Mount but the sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. Probably neither sermon inaugurated Jesus's public life.

Why, then, does St. Luke introduce our Lord's public life with the sermon in the synagogue? Probably for two reasons: to show the graciousness of our Lord's discourse (last Sunday's Gospel) and to indicate that the Gospel was destined for all men, not just for the Jews.

The folk of Nazareth were charmed by the gracious words of Jesus despite themselves. Should we examine the full text of our Lord's quotation from the prophet Isaiah, which was read in last Sunday's Gospel, we shall discover that our Lord stopped just before the words, "The day of vengeance of our God." He would not break into that new train of thought which might clash with the spirit of His mission. In fact, so meek and peaceful was Jesus's initial appearance that John the Baptist, who spoke of a Messiah of vengeance and judgment, asked, "Art thou He who is to come?"

Despite the graciousness of Jesus manifested in this first talk of His, an upsurge of bitter jealousy became apparent. "Is not this Joseph's son?" Note, the Nazarenes would not even use His name; rather in scorn they used the word "this" — this fellow! Is He not one of us? The tragedy was that the question was utterly irrelevant.

So often it happens that those nearest to an offered blessing fail to lay hold of it. Others — like the Phoenician woman or the Syrian soldier — receive it. That was why Luke, the associate of St. Paul, who shared his global vision of the Gospel, put this incident in the forefront of his Gospel story. It revealed not only the graciousness of Jesus's message but also its universality.

Further, it foreshadowed the ever-recurring response of the Jews to Jesus and later to St. Paul. They would reject Him and He would walk out of their midst. And as the rejected Elijah and Elisha went to the Gentiles, so the Gospel would be given to the Gentiles.

This apparent compliment to the Nazarenes was what angered the Nazarenes. The Jews were so certain they were God's people that they utterly despised all other peoples. "God created the Gentiles," they believed, "to be fuel for the fires of hell." And yet this young Jew preached as if the Gentiles were specially favored by God. Here was spark enough to enkindle envy into a blaze of murderous hate. The morality of a crowd tends to become that of its lowest components. They hurried Him to a cliff-top with murder in their hearts. "But He went straight through their midst and walked away."

MUSIC COMPETITION

The Greece Performing Arts Society is looking for musical talent among the young people of the town. Prizes of \$50 and \$25 will be awarded at vocal, piano and instrumental solo auditions next month. Winners will be asked to perform at the annual Arts Festival April 5-7.

The auditions are scheduled for March 2 in Athena High School. They are open to all high school pupils who live in the town. Entry blanks are available through schools and music organizations and from Mrs. H. Glen Alleman, 663-4693. Feb. 23 is the deadline for applying.

It is a fact that men seldom spot the greatness in their midst. Why is this? Sometimes it is because **envy blinds**. There was a lady who excelled in making wax flowers and fruits. But her friends often severely criticized her productions — unjustly so, thought the artist. So, one day she showed them an apple. As usual, her lady friends found fault with it — one as to the shape, another as to the color, and so on. When they had finished their diatribes, the lady cut the apple and ate it. None so blind as those who will not see.

Today's Gospel is not strange history, but an illustration of daily facts; a great spirit rejected by friends and neighbors because of envy and blind intellectual pride. It is only the carpenter's son. The boy grew up in their midst. Now he claims to be a prophet! So, they drive him out of their city. The frightening catastrophe: He never came back!



Pray for Snow!

Photo by Susan McKinney

Sister Patricia Gouse, (front row, right) has her hands full as she heads for Frost Ridge with an eager group of fifth through eighth grade students. This is the fourth year for an after-school skiing program which Sister initiated at St. John the Evangelist, Greece.



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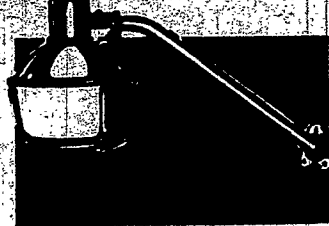
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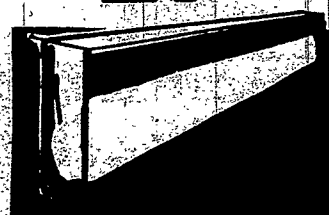


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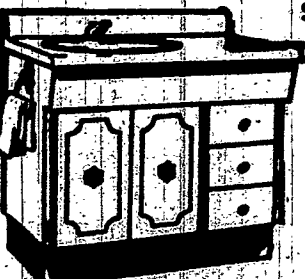
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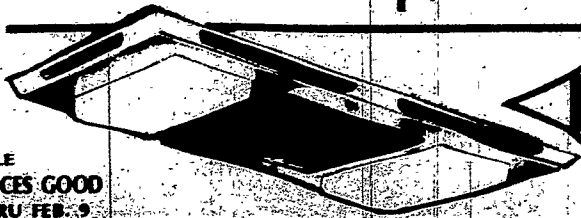


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