

WORD FOR SUNDAY

Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R1) Zec. 12:10-11. (R2) Gal. 3:26-29. (R3) Lk. 9:18-24.

In a single sentence in Sunday's Gospel, Jesus explains the cost of discipleship. To be His follower, He said, "One must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps."

Why must the disciple of Christ deny his very self? Actually, there are two obstacles to our following Christ. One springs from within us: it is our ungenerous, selfish nature, the lust of the flesh. The other comes from outside us, from the trials and afflictions of life. The former, our selfish self, must be denied; the latter, our daily crosses, must be taken up.

Self-denial is the law for following Christ, because the law of Christ is love and love is essentially other-oriented. Love gives, forgives, outlives and ever stands with open hands. And while it lives, it gives — for this is love's prerogative: to give and give and give! Self-denial is simply the reverse side of love.

As love is essentially self-denial, so sin is essentially self-assertion. Even in the middle of the word "sin" there is an "I." EVERY sin has some element of the ego or self in it.

Sin is self-sufficiency, a declaration of independence of God: "I don't need God."

Sin is self-will. "Nobody's going to tell me what to do or not to do."

Sin is self-seeking. It is the playboy philosophy: "Alternative life styles to indissoluble marriage," is what Hugh Hefner calls it.

Sin is self-righteousness. "I'm o.k. You're not o.k."

The disciple of Christ must "take up his cross." He must take up the cross, not seek it, nor just look at it, nor walk around it. Sufficient is it if he shoulders it when it is there.

He must take up his cross — not his neighbor's, but his very own.

And he must follow in His steps. Like Christ, his disciple will be misunderstood.

"What do people say of me?" asked Christ. He didn't ask this question for information. He did not ask it because He wanted to be flattered. He did not ask it because He intended to shape his life according to what people thought. He asked it that His disciples might grow in faith.

To Peter it did not matter what people said about Jesus. His answer was entirely independent of the world's judgment. To him, wrong is wrong even if everybody is wrong, and right is right even if nobody is right. The sneers of the Sadducees, the scorn of the Scribes and Pharisees, the divided opinions of the tumult did not sway Peter in the least. What people think changes neither Christ nor Christianity. Does it matter to me what people think of Christ? What matters is what I personally think of Christ.

However, it might be well for us to ask ourselves a question like Jesus' — namely, "What do people say of me?"

Is the answer, "Why nothing at all. They do not even think of you?"

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Or is it, "Why they say the tongue in your head travels farther than the tongue in your shoes"? Some call you, "The Morning Herald"; and others, "The Daily Advertiser."

Or do people say, "You are a busybody, meddling in other people's business?"

They say you are churlish and waspish. Some call you "Honey Bee" — sweet, but watch out for your sting.

It would be well for us if we knew what people say of us — our friends, especially our enemies. Robert Burns in his ode "To a Louse" prayed for the gift to see himself as others saw him: "O wad some Power the giftie gie us/ To see ourself as ithers see us!"

Well might we also pray: "Lord, give me a faithful friend; if not, then a faithful enemy that I may know my faults, for I desire to know them that I may, with your help, strive to correct them."

New Diocese Established

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — Pope Paul has established the new Diocese of Arlington in Northern Virginia, thus achieving the long-awaited subdivision of the Richmond diocese. Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Welsh of Philadelphia was named first bishop of Arlington.

At the same time, Bishop Walter F. Sullivan, who has been apostolic administrator of the Richmond diocese since the resignation of Bishop John J. Russell in 1973, was appointed bishop of Richmond.

The new Arlington diocese comprises 21 counties in Northern Virginia, and the Richmond diocese will cover the remainder of the state.

The establishment of the new Arlington diocese, just outside Washington, D.C., involves a complex realignment of counties and parishes affecting not only the Richmond diocese but the dioceses of Wheeling, W. Va., and Wilmington, Del.

The new diocese, whose See Cathedral will be the Church of St. Thomas More, Arlington, will comprise the following 21

counties: Arlington, Clarke, Culpepper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, King George, Lancaster, Loudon, Madison, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Prince William, Rappahanock, Richmond, Shenandoah, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Warren and Westmoreland.

The new diocese also includes the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg and Winchester. It has an area of more than 6,500 square miles, with a total population of 1.2 million, of whom more than 136,000 are Catholic.

The Arlington diocese has 49 parishes and seven missions, and almost 100 diocesan and religious order priests.

The existing, Richmond diocese will include all other counties in Virginia, including two counties, Accomack and Northampton, which had belonged to the Wilmington diocese. The Richmond See also will take over 17 1/2 Virginia counties which had been under the jurisdiction of the Wheeling (W. Va.) diocese.

In turn, the Wheeling diocese will receive eight counties of West Virginia which had been part of the Richmond diocese.

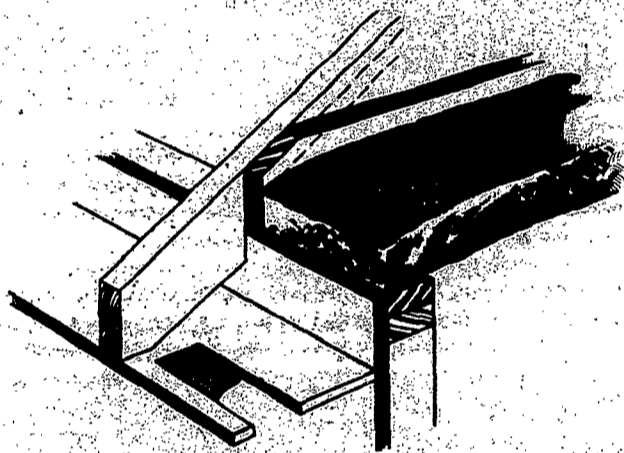
The Richmond see, covering an area of over 33,000 square miles in 75 counties, has a total population of some 3.4 million, of whom 113,000 are Catholic. It has 85 parishes, 27 missions, 93 diocesan priests and 56 religious order clergy.

COLLEGE PREP

Prospective college students and their parents are invited to a free, four-session seminar that begins June 24 at St. John Fisher College. They may attend any or all of the sessions, 7-9 p.m. in Basil Hall, on various aspects of the college experience.

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