

'Junior Miss' Trying To Keep Pageant Going

Lorraine Sekel of Spencerport, last year's "Junior Miss" of New York State, has undertaken to save the local contest from extinction.

She will be chairman of the Monroe County Junior Miss pageant with a committee of parents in the area, she announced last week.

The competition, based on scholastic achievement, talent and personality qualities, has been sponsored locally by various organizations, the last of which was the Rochester Jaycees.

Lorraine, who won more than \$2,600 in scholarships through the pageant, has entered Columbia (Mo.) College. She is one of eight children of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Sekel. She sings, writes songs, and plays clarinet, guitar and piano. Last year, she led the folk music group at St. Jude's parish, and also taught a CCD class.

Without the pageant prizes, she probably would not have been able to go to college, according to Mrs. Rita Becker, a member of the local committee.

"If this pageant helps a girl to get to college, then it's a good thing, and shouldn't be dropped," Mrs. Becker observed. Elsewhere in the state and nation, it still has organizational support, she said.

Contestants will be recruited through school guidance counselors, while committee members raise prize money, Mrs. Becker said. There will be an orientation meeting next month at St. Jude's Hall for high school seniors and their parents, and the pageant is planned for Dec. 10, in Xerox Square auditorium.

Mrs. Becker can be contacted at 4750 Lyell Road, Spencerport, N.Y. 14459; telephone, 352-1777.

Parish Fetes Seniors

St. Augustine's Day at St. Ann's Home was held on Aug. 28, the feast of St. Augustine.

Sponsored by the Senior and Junior Legion of Mary from St. Augustine's Church, with the cooperation of other parish organizations, a special tribute was paid to former parishioners who had contributed to spiritual and financial welfare of the parish over the past years.

Entertainment was provided by the Men's Glee Club who sang traditional songs, and by the Folk Group who involved all present in a sing-along.

Father Neil Miller, co-pastor, and Father Edwin Metzger who resides at St. Augustine's, along with Msgr. John M. Duffy, former pastor, and Father Robert Bradler, former assistant, took part in the program.

The refreshments were provided by the Parish Life and the Liturgy Committee and served by the Girl Scouts. The Women's Club and the Mother's Circle presented each guest with a floral remembrance. The Junior Legion of Mary acted as wheel chair jockies for those residents who needed assistance. More than 125 parishioners, many representing various parish organizations, were in attendance.

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WORD FOR SUNDAY

Father Albert Shanon

Sunday's Readings: (R1) Ex. 32:7-11, 13-14; (R2) 1 Tim. 1:12-17; (R3) Lk. 15:1-13.

Sunday's gospel is a gospel within a gospel. It proclaims the good news of God's mercy and love in three of the most touching parables in the New Testament — those of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sons.

The first two parables point out a feature of Christianity that makes it different from all other world religions. In other world religions, it is man who seeks God. In Christianity, it is God who seeks man — the shepherd, the woman of the parables.

The third parable — that of the prodigal son — is really misnamed. It should be called the parable of the prodigal father. The parable begins with "a man had two sons." The man is the hero, not the sons. The sons are the wayward ones. One falls as low as a Jew can, tending swine. The other acts with unbrotherly hate. Both deserve rebuke. Yet the father receives both with tender, loving care. The father here symbolizes our Father in heaven. Ever is He loving, ever is He merciful — no matter our frailties or our faults.

Even when His Chosen People wander to other gods, worship a golden calf, the pious prayer of Moses is enough to stern the Father's wrath (R1). Paul likens Jesus to another Moses come to save sinners (R2). When he, Paul, was lost, had become prodigal, the same Lord Jesus sought him on the road to Damascus and found him. Paul reminds us all that if God would do this for him, a persecutor of the Church, how much more for each of us. "I was dealt with mercifully," Paul wrote, for two reasons: first, to display the patience of Jesus Christ, and secondly to become an example to us sinners.

Through the readings of this Sunday there runs the theme that the greater the sinner, the greater God's love and the greater the joy in heaven over finding that which had been lost.

Karl Menninger, director of the famous Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, has said: "If we can love enough — this is the touchstone. This is the key to the entire therapeutic programs of the modern psychiatric hospital. Love is the medicine for the sicknesses of the world."

That is exactly what Sunday's liturgy is saying: love heals. Why is this? Because God is love and He loves us despite our unlovableness.

Yet because so few understand that God is love, feel it, or believe it, there is so little healing in the world today. So many feel that God is just like Momma and Poppa, teacher and Santa Clause. If they are good little boys and girls, if they are already perfect (which none of us are), He will give them a flabby affection. It never occurs to us that we are all right at this moment, as perfect as we are able to be. Unless we can accept the love of God embracing us now, with all our faults, frailties and shortcomings, we will be no whit better tomorrow than we are today. Unless we can believe in a God of love, we can never learn to be honest at prayer. Fear will always stand between us and Him who can heal us.

A second point that is necessary for healing is that this concept "God is love" must become a living reality for us. Unless we can feel God is love, unless we can actually experience in some measure His loving presence, it will be completely sterile to know God intellectually.

How many belong to the Christmas-Easter-Sometimes-on-Sunday type of Catholic! Their concept of God is vague, undefined, a Somebody way "out there" or "in heaven." They pray and they get cold comfort. Their prayer is a groping effort to contact a faraway Stranger. A breakthrough will come only if we realize that a God of love cannot be separated from His activity. That love is not a passive ideal. That caring is love in action. To separate God from His activity is to end up with a comfortless, intellectual abstraction. The parables of Jesus do not present this kind of God, but a God who cares, seeks, pursues, pardons, heals!

God caring, God doing is creative power lovingly directed — here and now! To realize this hereness and nowness of God's love is to experience His presence. And as we experience this presence more continuously, then, like wandering sheep, unthinking coins or wayward sons, we shall begin to find ourselves — cease to be lost!

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