

# WORD FOR SUNDAY

Father Albert Skamou

Sunday's Readings: (R1) 2 Mc. 7:1-2, 9-14. (R2) 2 Thes. 2:16, 3:5. (R3) Lk. 20:27-38.

In the last months of our Lord's life, St. Luke shows Him again and again in conflict, not with the people, but with the leaders of the people. Twice before the incident in Sunday's gospel, the Sadducees had tried to trap Jesus. Worsted in every confrontation, one can readily see why the Sadducees, who ruled the Sanhedrin, would play an extensive role in condemning Jesus to death.

The Sadducees were a priestly and aristocratic party from among whom the High Priest was appointed. Their attitude, in contrast with the popular Pharisee party, was conservative and traditional. They based their belief on the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. According to the opinion of the time, Moses authored these books. They rejected later books which the Pharisee had accepted, like Second Maccabees, for instance, from which the first reading is taken. It was in Second Maccabees, and in another contemporary book, Daniel, that the resurrection of the body is asserted clearly for the first time in the Old Testament. Hebrew thought made no distinction between soul and body. Any survival after death, therefore, meant physical resurrection.

The incident alluded to in Sunday's Gospel is concerned with a levirate marriage (Dt. 25:5). Should a sister-in-law become a childless widow, her deceased husband's brother was duty bound to marry her and raise up the first child in the deceased man's name. The Sadducees had trumped up a case, like those drummed up by Joseph Fletcher in his Situation Ethics, that was supposed to make anyone believing in the resurrection look foolish. The case revolved around a widow who had been married to seven brothers. Whose wife would she be in the resurrection? It was an argument, called in logic "a reduction to absurdity."

Before going to the very heart of the problem, Jesus cleared up a misconception about the resurrection that had opened the way to such ridicule. The Pharisees believed that the resurrection was but a continuation of and a return to earthly life, only on a grander scale. Jesus pointed out that life in the next world would be as totally different from this life as God's life is from human. For one thing, there will be no death and consequently no need for marrying. For a primary purpose of marriage is to perpetuate a race constantly thinned out by death.

From there, Jesus went on to meet the Sadducees on their own grounds. He argued the resurrection from the one section of the Bible they held sacrosanct — the Pentateuch. "Did not Moses," Jesus asked, "call the Lord 'the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob'?" What Jesus implied, as the Sadducees well understood, was that since God is not the God of the dead but of the living, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must be still alive when God spoke to Moses four hundred years after their death.

Once an Irishman came to the wake of an atheist. He looked at the corpse nattily groomed and

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remarked, "What's he all dressed up for, he has no place to go?"

An atheist might deny a resurrection, but the Christian cannot. Furthermore he cannot deny a purgatory, for people die who are too good for hell, yet too bad for heaven. There has to be an intermediary state of purification, where sins are forgiven even in the next world (Mt. 12:31). If there were no purgatory, why pray for the dead? Prayers do not help those in hell; those in heaven don't need them. Yet God said it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.

When God called himself the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, He said in effect that death does not shatter relationships between God and men. Nor should it between man and man. That is why the Church sets aside November for the poor souls in purgatory — "poor" because they cannot help themselves. But we can. We should. Shall we?

Holy Year activities in the diocese of Rochester are heard around the world.

A recent newsletter from the Holy Year Office in the Vatican included the report that follows. The language is exact and despite some trivial errors still points up the universality of the Church.

"In the diocese of Rochester (U.S.A.) between spring and summer a series of manifestations of a jubilee character took place. On 30th April, the national Day of Humility was held, fasts and prayer, framed in the spirit of Holy Year. In May the pilgrimages to the Churches of St. Frances of Sales in Genoa and St. Louis in Pittsford took place. On 31st, therefore, the manifestations of the North-West region were concluded in the Cathedral of St. Michele, under the presidency of the Bishop, Mons. Hogan, and with the collaboration of the

regional coordinator P. Aman. An enormous crowd, representatives of all the parishes and diocesan associations thronged the church. In June the pilgrimages continued to St. Colomba, Caledonia, St. Patrizio a Owego; in July, to St. Peter's and Paul's in Elmira, to St. Anna, St. Thomas in Irondequoit and other 10 churches. Meanwhile the following people were made responsible for the coordination of the functions: P. Tormey for the region of Yates-Ontario-Wayne; Mons. Gefell for the region of Seneca-Cayuga.

"The diocesan organ, the Courier-Journal, gave regular accounts of the manifestations and has published a series of explanatory articles of the jubilee aims, written by Mons. Hogan."

We reiterate that the facts may not all be straight and something may be lost in translation but the important thing is that the

diocese of Rochester does make an impact half way across the world. And indeed the family is closer than some would think.

### 50th WEDDING

The parents of Father Frederick J. Eisemann, pastor of Holy Family Church, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Frederick C. Eisemann were married Oct. 4, 1924 at St. Peter and Paul Church. Eisemann was born in OkerTheres, Bavaria, which is one mile from his one mile from his wife, Anna's birthplace in Steinsfeld. The couple met, however, in Rochester.

# Hicks

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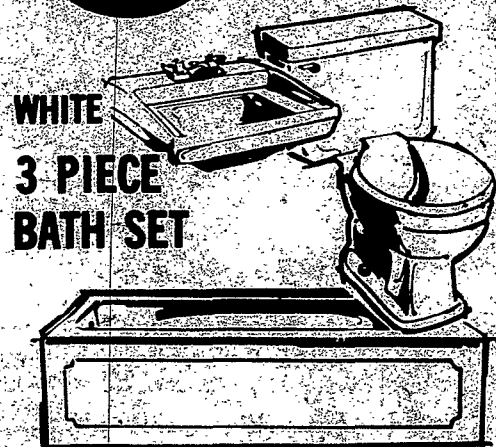
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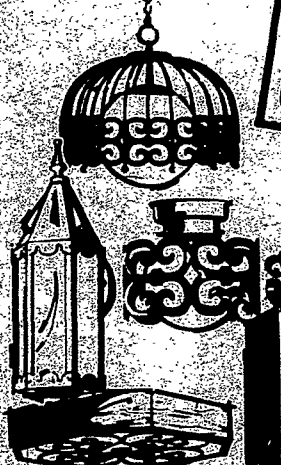
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