

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 14: 15-21. (R1) Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17. (R2) 1 Pt. 3: 15-18

The theme of Sunday's liturgy is joy. "Let all the earth cry out to God with joy."

There was an old man who was always cheerful, despite all his trouble. People used to ask him for the secret of his cheer. He would answer, "The Bible always says, 'It came to pass,' never 'It came to stay.'"

The source of Christian joy is not merely the truth that earthly evils are short-lived, but that God is gracious toward us. First, He gives us His Son; then His Holy Spirit. From now till Pentecost the liturgy shifts from a contemplation of the appearances of the risen Christ to His continued presence in the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the Gospel promises the Holy Spirit: "He will give you another Paraclete." A "paraclete" is someone who makes up for our shortcomings, inadequacies and helps us cope with everything that comes up when we try to live a Christian life (R2). Certainly a cause for joy.

In the first reading we see the promise of Jesus fulfilled and we read of the joy the gift of the Spirit brought to Samaria.

The apostle of Samaria was Philip. "There he proclaimed the Messiah"—Christ, not himself. The crowds attended closely to what he had to say. As a result, they saw miracles—a power that impressed them. They saw unclean spirits shrieking loudly in protest against being exorcised. They were surprised. Paralytics and cripples were cured. Joy in the town rose to fever pitch. Blessing always follows the acceptance of the Gospel—the blessing of joy.

On the contrary wherever the Gospel is rejected, man is most brutalized and dejected. The mayor of Auburn, Mr. Paul Lattimore, returned recently from a visit to Moscow. He contracted a painful virus there. Interviewed at Auburn City Hospital, he quipped, "No wonder nobody ever laughs in Moscow—if they have this bug." There is no joy in Communist countries because of what they do not have: the good news of Christ.

It is interesting to note that the two sent to Samaria to complete the work of Philip were Peter and John. Peter, because head of the apostles and keeper of the keys. And John, because once in anger he had asked Jesus to rain down fire on Samaria. With a divine sense of humor, our Lord answered his request in an undreamed-of way. Here he was raining down fire on Samaria, not the fire of destruction, but the creative fire of the Holy Spirit.

The response to this account of the conversion of Samaria is an invitation to rejoice: "Let all the earth cry out to God with joy." Why we should rejoice may not be so obvious from the first reading. That account sounds like a committee report at a Parish Council Meeting—dry as an Egyptian mummy.

But once we grasp the full import of this report it comes to life, calls for joyful celebration. Bringing the faith to the Samaritans was a breakthrough. The Samaritans were half Gentiles. The first Christians were all Jews. Jewish exclusivism tended to spill over into their Christianity. Some felt that Christianity was for God's Chosen People only. The deacon Stephen died for his saying that this was not so. The deacon Philip just showed it was not so by preaching to the enemy of the Jews, the Samaritans. In other

words this event marked the beginning of the evangelization of the world; therefore, "shout joyfully to God!" Well might the entrance hymn for this Sunday's liturgy be—"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

A great third-century martyr, St. Cyprian, wrote to Donatus that from his garden the world was a cheerful world. "If, however," St. Cyprian said, "I were to climb a high mountain and look over the wide, wide world, I would see that it is a bad, bad world. I would see brigands and robbers, armies fighting and burning cities, men being murdered in cold blood, selfishness, cruelty, misery abounding" (sounds like today's newspaper).

Then St. Cyprian went on to say that in the midst of this sea of evil, he had discovered a quiet and holy people who had learned a great secret. They have found a joy that surpasses a thousand times the pleasures of the flesh. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have God's Spirit with them and through Him they have overcome the world. "These people, Donatus, are the Christians—and I am one of them." Are we?

Parish Sets Gospel Film

The Gospel According to St. Matthew, Paolo Pasolini's film on the life of Christ, will be shown at 7:15 p.m. Friday, May 2, in the St. Boniface School auditorium, 15 Whalin St. The parish education committee invites the public to attend. There is no admission charge.

The Pasolini movie has won several awards, including a special one from the National Council of Churches for its "revealing Christ's life and passion as a realistic and human experience for contemporary audiences."

JUBILEE MASS

The annual diocesan marriage Jubilee Celebration for couples observing their 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries will be held at Good Shepherd Church Sunday, June 1.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan will celebrate the 3 p.m. Mass.

Registration for the event must be made through the parishes by May 1.

Knights to Convene

The convention of the New York Grand Commandery and New York Grand Ladies Auxiliary, Knights of St. John, will be held in Rochester on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, May 2, 3 and 4.

Father Joseph Reinhardt, diocesan director of the Propagation of the Faith will open and bless the Ladies Auxiliary mission exhibit in the Plaza Room of the 111 East Ave. Hotel on Friday evening May 2 at 7:30 p.m.

Father Albert J. Reiser, CSSR, will be celebrant of a memorial Mass, followed by Fatima devotions at our Lady of Victory Church on Saturday, May 3 at 9 a.m. A brunch will follow at 11 at the hotel with Rochester Mayor Thomas Ryan in attendance. Competitive drills will be held at the Rochester Turners on Saturday afternoon starting at 2 p.m.

The convention banquet will be held at the hotel on Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. with Bishop John E. McCafferty, spiritual

advisor of the New York Grand Commandery, as the speaker.

Bishop McCafferty also will be celebrant of a Mass of Thanksgiving at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Sunday morning May 4 at 11:15 a.m. The Knights and Ladies will appear in uniform.

Brig. Gen. Donald E. Belouin of Schenectady is president of the Knights and Helen W. Bittner of Rochester is president of the Ladies Auxiliary. The co-chairmen of the local committee making arrangements for the convention are Colonel Richard C. Korn, president of the District Commandery, and Mrs. Ruth Martindale, president of the District Ladies Auxiliary, both of Rochester.

VOLUNTEERS

Naples — Volunteers are still needed for the Ecumenical Bible School which will run June 23 through July 1. Persons wishing to teach or help in the venture are asked to call St. Januarius rectory.

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