

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 12:28-34; (R1) Deut. 6:2-6; (R2) Hebr. 7:23-28

The last musical by the great team of Rodgers and Hammerstein turned out to be *The Sound of Music*. The show opened Nov. 16, 1959. Hammerstein died Aug. 23, 1960.

Hammerstein was a wonderful man. He believed in people and in goodness. Even his villains had a streak of goodness in them. For instance, the most unsavory of his scoundrels, Judd in *Oklahoma*, evokes pity.

The Sound of Music came about because of Hammerstein's love for the good. He had been offered a choice between a best-selling, highly romantic account of the life of Alexander Dumas, Sr. and *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*. He turned down the Dumas story explaining: "Basically, the man isn't decent enough. Dick and I like to work with good people—ones we wouldn't mind having around the place for months."

Everyone is familiar with the story of *The Sound of Music*. The musical dramatized the flight of the Trapp family from Austria as a "Hairbreath Harry" escape. How their emigration from Austria actually came about is factually described by Mrs. von Trapp in her autobiography, *Maria*. Their departure from Austria was a deliberate, painful choice made in the face of strong opposition and bitter criticism from friends and relatives.

The Anschluss (annexation of Austria to Germany by Hitler) took place March 13, 1938. Baron von Trapp, an admiral in the Austrian

navy, violently opposed Hitler. He would not allow the swastika around the house nor the greeting "Heil Hitler." He waited six months, hoping the storm might pass over. It did not. The Baron, then, according to Maria, called the family together and said:

"Now we have to find out what is the will of God. Do we want to keep our material goods, our house, our estate, our friends—or do we want to keep our spiritual goods, our faith and honor? We cannot have both any longer. Maria commented: 'There was no real question what God wanted. As a family it was decided that we wanted to keep Him.' They left Austria with little more than the clothes on their backs. They found fame in America.

Twelve years later (1950) when the von Trapp family went back to Europe to give a concert tour, they went to Austria. They met once again the friends and relatives who had stayed behind—had compromised with Hitler. "They had lost everything," Maria wrote, "and most of them had also lost their sons for Hitler. With very few words they admitted we had done the right thing. That was a solemn moment."

The whole message of Sunday's readings is about choice: when it is a question of choice between God and anything or anyone else, God comes first!

The first reading containing the *Shema, Ezech*, the daily Jewish profession of faith, formulates what is of supreme importance in both Testaments: **total commitment and devotion to God!** His fidelity must be matched by ours. In the Gospel Jesus added the command to love one's neighbor—and He meant by that everyone, not just Jews.

Martyrdom is not a spectacular act performed by remote spiritual persons of the past. It is, in fact, a common strategy for daily living. Life is made up of daily choices—and so is one's character. By making the right choices daily, we develop the kind of character that will make the right choice when it is a matter as serious as that which confronted the von Trapps: God or Hitler, good or evil.

Two Eucharistic Privileges

BY FATHER BENEDICT EHMANN

Communion from the Chalice

One of the oddities of the Mass is for the celebrant to say "Take this all of you, and drink from it," and then proceed at Communion to drink it all himself. When the Mass was in Latin, people did not sense the contradiction; perhaps. But now in English they do plainly and clearly. I'm one of 'em sure, many priests who now feel quite uncomfortable taking for ourselves alone the Blood of Christ, and giving only the Host to the people.

It was not so in the beginning, and for a long time. It was only much later, and for causes too complex even to outline here, that the practice began, and finally prevailed, for the celebrant alone to partake of the chalice. The causes were chiefly practical, and were supported by the assurance of Christian doctrine that Christ is received whole and entire in either one of the Sacred Elements.

We grant, indeed, that the faithful are not deprived of the fullness of Christ when they receive Communion in one Element alone. We do hold firmly to this teaching of the Council of Trent. And yet there is a real kind of deprivation. When the faithful receive only the Host, they are deprived of the complete Sign given by Christ: they do not share from the Cup. The sacramental Sign is thereby impoverished. The symbolism of sharing in Christ's Passion is thereby muted. Surely this cannot be honestly called the ideal for Communion with Christ.

So today's Church is restoring the use of the Cup to the people. Before a priest does this, he needs to explain to his people why and how. He must take due care to prevent the dangers of irreverence or profanation. Further, the transition from the old way should be voluntary. Where some persons find it distasteful to drink from the same Cup, they may receive the Host after it has been dipped into the Blood by the priest or the deacon. This can hardly be called "drinking." Still, until a better way is worked out, it is better than no sharing in the Cup at all.

Communion Twice in One Day

There are special circumstances now in which the faithful are permitted to receive Holy Communion a second time on the same day. Even in the older days, there was a case when this was not only allowed, but was required to be done: in danger of death, a person was expected to receive Communion as Viaticum, though earlier in the day he/she had already received Communion, i.e. before becoming seriously ill. But now, in these latter days, the privilege is quite widely extended. The following are the more ordinary instances:

* On the evening of Saturday or of the day preceding a holy day of obligation, when the person intends to fulfill the Sunday Mass precept even though he/she has already received Communion earlier that day.

* On Christmas morning, after having received at the Midnight Mass, and on Easter morning, after having received at the Vigil Mass.

* At a wedding or funeral Mass, an ordination Mass or a Ritual Mass at which Baptism, Confirmation or the Anointing of the Sick are administered.

* At the principal Mass of a Eucharistic or Marian Congress, whether international, national, regional, or diocesan.

* At the principal Mass of any Congress, sacred pilgrimage, or preaching mission for the people.

Although not specified in these grants, it seems to be within their spirit to be allowed Communion at a second Mass which is attended for a special reason—e.g. a home Mass, a jubilee or testimonial Mass, a community celebration.

The Church is concerned not to encourage going to Communion more than once a day simply for a devotional reason. The mere numerical addition of Communion is not what counts. In its true meaning the Eucharist is not to be a numbers routine.

In the document which authorizes the "discreet" recourse to a second Communion in one

day, we are assured by the Church: "From the liturgical celebration the faithful should go out to works of charity, piety and apostolic action so that they may hold fast by their conduct and life to what they have received by faith and the Sacrament."—Instruction on the Eucharistic Mystery, May 25, 1967.

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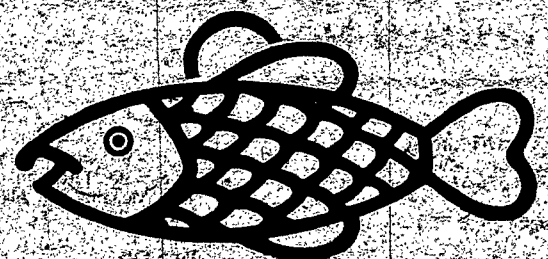
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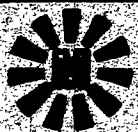


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