



WORD FOR SUNDAY

Fr. **Albert Shamon**

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 13:1-9. (R1) Ex. 3:1-8, 13-15. (R2) 1 Cor. 10: 1-6, 10-12.

People are always asking for signs. Moses did, for instance. God sends no man on a mission without preparing him well. For forty years, God endowed Moses with all the skills of the greatest civilized nation in the ancient world: Egypt. Yet his first experiment in leadership failed miserably. He had to flee for killing one of Pharaoh's agents. He fled to Midian. There he married and dwelt long enough to learn how to survive as a nomad. From the Midianites he no doubt learned about the God of his ancestors and the rite of circumcision.

Then came a highly crucial experience. While tending the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, a storm drove him to seek shelter in a sanctuary near Mt. Horeb. In the enclosure a sacred tree is suddenly blasted by lightning — it burns and is not consumed. God speaks to the heart of Moses. He understands that the God of Midian is also the God of the promise. He begins to understand the misery of his people and realizes that if he does not go down to Egypt he will make a liar of God. With neon clarity he sees God is about to intervene to help His people and to fulfill His promise to give them a country and countless progeny.

But Moses knows no mission can succeed if one does not know the name of Him who commissions. He asks for a sign — a name! It is given: Yahweh! The word has the same root as the Hebrew verb "to be." Moses was not defining the nature of God as the self-existing Being. Probably, the name meant two things. First, that God is beyond all naming; "I am who I am — no one word can contain me." Secondly, that "I'll show you who I am; you'll see who I am by what I shall do for you. History will reveal Me."

Moses, then, went down to Egypt and worked many signs. But the one that was effective was death — the death of the firstborn. Death still is one of the most efficacious signs for leading to conversion. It is the universal sign for those who have no faith. Conversion is a slow process, because

St. Charles Borromeo
DEWEY AVE.
PHARMACY
 Prescription Specialists
 COSMETICS — TOILETRIES,
 PHOTO FINISHING
 2318 Dewey Avenue 885-2210

Hicks
Home Heating Inc.
 271-7414 271-4650

man's liberty is involved. But God is patient and gives people time — but not unlimited time!

In the gospel our Lord gave two signs of death: both were premature and sudden. One was a punishment for rebellion; the other was an accident. All died unexpectedly. Death came like a thief — so shall God's judgment.

Our Lord's parable is simply meant to tell us of the love of Christ for us, who constantly pleads to His Father to give us more time — time to repent. The Father yields — but only for a time!

St. Paul saw Christians as direct line spiritual descendents of Israel. They had signs, and so do we. Besides the universal sign of death, we have the sacred signs of the sacraments. They failed, so can we.

The Red Sea and the cloud are, for Paul, types of the water and the Holy Spirit of baptism. The manna and the water from the rock symbolized the bread and the wine given by the Rock, Christ, in the Eucharist. As the "majority" of the Israelites were chastized because of their greed, so all Christians who have the sacraments stand in like danger.

Sacraments are not magical rites. Without our free cooperation, they do not assure salvation. Their effects are not automatic. Sacraments are the encounter of two free agents. To isolate the sacraments from the faith or performance of the recipient would be to make the same mistake as those in the desert and to suffer a similar setback.

God's initiative in the salvation process should not be misconstrued as automatic reassurance. The sacraments are more beginnings than ends. They demand a response of faith — a lasting conversion that aligns us with Christ.

If Christians have failed, it is because many receive the sacraments and fail to make them resonate in their lives.

AQ PARENTS

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan will address the Aquinas Parents Association at 8 p.m. Monday, March 14, in the school auditorium. He will talk about the future of Catholic education in this diocese, and the Call to Action. A question period will follow.

Insights into Liturgy

Sign of Reconciliation

By **FATHER ROBERT J. KENNEDY**

The purpose of the revision of the Rite of Penance is to make the celebration of the sacrament more fruitful for the Christian people. Any changes that have occurred have been with this pastoral goal in mind. It is why there are three forms of the sacrament, why communal celebrations are encouraged, why scripture has been included. Today we want to look at the sign of the sacrament: the laying on of hands.

For at least the first thousand years of the Church's life, the sign that God's merciful forgiveness took place was not the formula spoken by the priest ("I absolve you..."), but the imposition or laying on of hands. In a ritualized way, this gesture was meant to be the "welcome home" embrace of the Christian community in the name of Christ, like the loving father running to welcome his prodigal son.

The gesture of the imposition of hands originally comes to us from the scriptures and is rich with many meanings. It signifies blessing, the communication of the Spirit, unity and solidarity between those sharing the gesture, healing, conferring God's life, setting apart or consecrating, absolving and ordaining.

Obviously, many of these meanings could be applied to the celebration of Penance, and so, although the gesture had gone out of use in recent centuries, the new Rite of Penance reinstates it as the sign of reconciliation. And what better sign could there be than to be welcomed back into the arms of the Father, to be "hugged" with reassurance after having experienced the brokenness of our own miserable failure!

In the individual form of the sacrament, the priest, as part of the form of absolution, extends his hands over the person's head or lays them upon the head. This, of course, would be in a face-to-face situation. If a person chooses to remain behind a screen, the priest would simply extend his hands toward the penitent,

and the sign may not be as strong.

The laying on of hands, if done and received with faith, deepens our sense of contact with God's Spirit, and signifies the many blessings he gives us in absolution and in reconciliation with God and his people. Words accompany this loving sign, too, beautiful, rich and powerful words:

"God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Notice the many beautiful and important emphases of these new words! **God is the source and initiator of our forgiveness and reconciliation.** These two gifts of his mercy are ours through the willing and loving sacrifice of Christ and his rising to new life; the way home to the Father is forever again open to us through this most central saving act. In addition, the Good Shepherd has sent his Holy Spirit among us to seek us out, to rescue us, to call us home. Finally, there is the prayer that we might find the gift of Christ's own peace in the midst of the family of the Church.

Those who worked on the reformulation of these words of absolution were concerned about one thing: should the words be a

prayer asking God's pardon or should they be a proclamation of the great mystery which we share in this sacrament? They chose the latter so that the good news of our reconciliation might be clearly heard by the returning penitent and be a cause for joy and praise of God.

Thus, when the priest extends his hands to the penitent and announces the words of hope, God in Christ

seals the forgiveness of the sinner. The gesture and words of absolution are the sign proclaiming that God has renewed the broken covenant with his repentant son or daughter in the body of the Church. It's no wonder we are now speaking of the "joyful celebration" of Penance, and people are leaving reconciliation rooms with smiles on their faces. They have felt the Father's touch of forgiveness.

The Shire at Culverton Adult Home & Village Apartments
 for Senior Security and Leisurely Living

The Shire at Culverton Adult Home offers the kind of security, independence and convenience that your loved one deserves, with complete personal care including:

- Trained Personnel, 24 hrs. daily
- Intercom Call System
- Security Guards
- Delicious Meals
- Waitress Service
- Beauty, Barber & Gift Shops
- Social Activities Program
- Quiet Park-Like Grounds
- Health Club & Green House
- Arts & Crafts
- Weekly Shopping & Field Trips
- Religious Services

Life at THE SHIRE AT CULVERTON ADULT HOME is geared to our residents, their comfort their needs, their interests.

Tours Monday thru Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or by appointment.

Also available, spacious one & two bedroom garden apartments designed for total senior security and leisurely living.

The door is always open at The Shire at Culverton Adult Home & Village Apartments.

Please call **467-4544**
Sharon Ferguson

2515 Culver Road, Rochester, New York 14609

This free booklet tells why every father should make a will . . . even if he's young and healthy!

Sixteen pages, clearly written and colorfully illustrated, tell why you should make your will and how to go about it. Charts on page 3 show what your heirs can lose if you die without a will. Page 5 discusses why you need a lawyer's help in drawing up your will. Page 6 goes into detail about how to start and what to include. No father, young or old, should neglect his will. Maryknoll's booklet will convince you!

Mail the coupon for your free copy today!



Free Booklet on Wills

The Maryknoll Fathers
 71 Jewett Parkway
 Buffalo, New York 14214
 (716) 834-6065

Dear Fathers:
 Please send me your booklet on making a will. I understand there is no obligation.

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____
 STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

New! From the leather cleaning people, Seneca Dyers
A Great New Store

SENECA'S LEATHER 'N' LACE

Seneca Dyers has almost 40 years experience in dry cleaning, suede and leather refinishing. Our plant at Maple-Mt. Road services dry cleaning in 7 states. Our new store Seneca's "Leather 'N' Lace" is introducing our own selection of fine leather and leather-trimmed garments in all the latest styles. Bring your suede and leather cleaning to either location for expert care.

FREE CLEANING LIMITED TIME OFFER A \$10 to \$25 VALUE With Leather Purchase

Seneca Dyers
 Prompt & Courteous Service

SENECA DYERS: 1227 MAPLE ST. HOURS 8-5:30 DAILY SATURDAY 9-11 PM

LEATHER 'N' LACE: PERINTON SQ MALL HOURS 10-9 DAILY MON THRU SAT