

Part One: The Word of God

The Liturgy of the Word

By DAVID E. NOWAK

It is important to realize that the main object of the Liturgy of the Word is not a preparation of the ministers and faithful for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Traditionally, and in the new Order of the Mass, the

Liturgy of the Word is an end in itself.

The Liturgy of the Word does precede the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and in practice may prepare some for the eucharistic prayer and communion, but this is only an incidental ad-

vantage. It is not the essential reason for its existence. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are independent both in origin and purpose.

The Liturgy of the Word is, first of all, a proclamation of the Word of God. In the past, common reading (and common listening) to the Word proclaimed occurred not because many of the faithful could not read or did not have books. Common reading of the Word of God is a special task of the Church. It is sacramental.

It is difficult for us to think about the Word of God as a sacrament just as the eucharistic bread and wine is a sacrament of the presence of the Risen Lord. We tend to approach the Word of God as a voice out of the past, a word of timeless wisdom or advice, or as conveying information about God. But the real power and significance of the Word of God is as a word of address.

The Word of God is not another language translated into our words. It is not a different mode of speech or a system of symbols that we have to decipher, but an expression of faith. The Word of God does not exist in the world except as an answer of faith.

It is not something which comes down to earth in any physical way, except as it is mediated through a person, nor is it "contained" in Scripture. The Word of God is a human word in which God invites us to faith.

The Word of God is a human word, not in some way by which a divine meaning can be expressed in human words, but simply that God speaks to us in human words. "He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me; and he who rejects me, rejects the One who sent me" (Lk 10:16). God turns to us in addressing and claiming us in our word of faith.

The word of God is a human word having the characteristics of human speech. It is a communication expressing itself in a trusting surrender to other people. It is not a private word, but a word which binds us together.

Like the human word, it is also a self-revealing Word. The Word of God reveals our deepest needs to ourselves and others, and our hope, God's promise, for fulfillment. Finally, the Word of God is a word of presence. Human speech makes us present to one another not simply to transmit information, but somehow to change our situation. Similarly, the Word of God is an invitation to respond, a call which demands a decision.

Essentially, the Word of God is a human word in the communication of faith. Then our human word is inseparably joined to God as a word of promise. As a word of faith the human word becomes a true and saving word. In this relationship God's Word is grace and address, and the human word is faith and response.

The unique task of the Church to proclaim the Word of God, our word of faith, in the worshipping community is an end in itself. God's Word is a witness and accomplishment of His saving deed. The Word of God addresses the worshipping community not as a preparatory gesture, but to create faith. God's Word meets us in the midst of our conflict transforming our lives in the image of the divine Logos. "When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to His people and it is Christ, present in his Word, who proclaims the gospel." (G19)

In the proclamation of the Word of God we do not search for God, but it is God who searches us. In the Word of God, arising out of our silence before Him, it is God who asks, "Where are you?"

Montessori School To Open September 20

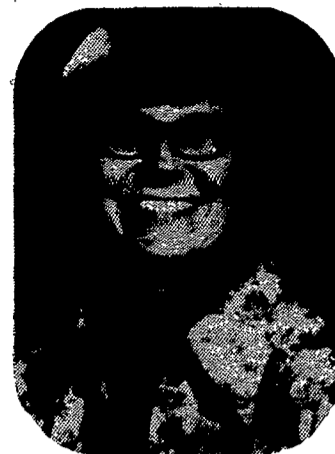
A new Montessori School for children 3-5 years old will open September 20 at St. Augustine's Church, 370 Chili Avenue. The school, called the Good Shepherd Religious Center for pre-school children, is designed primarily for the Christian education of children.

Sister Sheila Sentiff, RSM, director of the program, explained that it is "designed to create a spiritual experience, based on the Parables or Bible stories of Jesus, for the young child, with an over-all goal of leading to prayer. The Center will, we hope, be ecumenical, since the experience of baptism is a common Christian belief and is the basis of the child's experience at the Center."

Registration for the Center is scheduled for the week of August 21 at St. Augustine's. For further information interested

MERCY ALUMNAE

The annual banquet for Mercy High School alumnae has been scheduled for Friday, Oct. 21, at school. In charge is Mrs. Bernice Renaud Gottry of the class of 1932. The anniversary classes begin with that year and proceed at five-year intervals through 1972. All alumnae are invited.



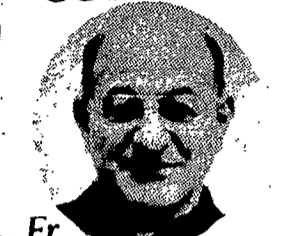
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WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

The Assumption: (R3) Lk. 1: 39-56. (R1) Rv. 11:19; 12:1-6. (R2) 1 Cor. 15:20-26.

One day a young artist brought a picture to Gustave Dore, the French artist and engraver. It was a painting of Christ, and the artist wanted Dore's criticism. At first Dore declined to say anything, but when pressed he said, "You don't love Christ, or you would have painted him better."

We can well imagine how accurately Mary's life must have reflected her Son's, for no one loved Jesus as she did. We call her "mirror of justice." He rose from the dead body and soul; why should she not?

The doctrine of the Assumption rests on two sound philosophical pillars: the power of love and the unity of life.

One of the effects of love, according to St. Thomas, is ecstasy. Ecstasy lifts one out of the body. It is not unlike the experience of a poet or orator when "carried away with his subject."

Another effect of love is levitation. For love, like fire, burns upwards, since it is basically desire: a vehement desire to become more and more united with the beloved. Some saints, like Catherine of Siena, burned with such intense love of God that they were literally lifted off the ground.

We are all familiar with the law of gravity. The earth draws bodies heavier than air to itself; and the closer a body is to the earth, the stronger is the pull of gravity. There is likewise a law of spiritual gravitation; that is, God constantly pulls the heart of man to Himself. "Our hearts are restless 'til they rest in Thee." The closer to God, the stronger His attraction. Only our own perverse wills or sin can weaken this attraction and keep us earthbound. St. Paul's love for God was so great, he asked to be delivered from this body.

Imagine, if you can, the intense love of God for

Mary and Mary for God. The doctors of the Church tell us that Mary died, not from any disease or sickness, but out of sheer love to be with her Son. As harp strings burst asunder with the music they throbb to express, so Mary died of love. Add to this intense love her immunity from all sin. That meant her love suffered no division. Ought not such a love end in an ecstasy that lifted her bodily out of this world?

Secondly, the dogma of Assumption affirms that life is stronger than death.

Life is unitive; death is divisive. It was sin that brought division into the world. Sin divided man from God (Adam hid from God); man from man (Adam turned on Eve; Cain, on Abel); man and the world (in sweat would he earn bread). But sin caused a deeper division—a psychological division within man himself: he ate the fruit to become like God. As though in revenge for his turning on God, man's flesh turned on himself. The flesh lusts against the spirit (thus Adam experienced shame and clothed himself).

But a house divided against itself cannot stand. That is why the climax of sin is death: the division of body and soul. And climax of death is decomposition: the division of the body into its component parts: "You are dust and to dust you shall return."

But in Mary there was no sin. No sin, no division. No division, by rights no death. No death, no decomposition. Yet Mary did die—for the same reason her son did: to share in the redemption of the world. But He who would not let His own body decay would not let His mother's. No man would destroy the house in which he was born if he could prevent it. Christ could—and He did!

As St. Paul speaks of Christ's Ascension as the prelude to his intercession for us, so we speak of Mary's Assumption as the prelude to her intercession for us! She is called "the neck of the Mystical Body" because all graces flow to us through her. Incessantly, she prays for us. And her prayer is that we fulfill her last recorded words: "Do whatever he tells you."

EVERYONE IS WELCOME to OUR LADY OF FATIMA SHRINE... THE CORONATION FEAST on SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 1977... 2:30 P.M. - Religious Pageant on island... 4:00 P.M. - Solemn Rosary Procession, Crowning 13-foot statue on top of dome, Sermon and Benediction... 5:00 P.M. - Mass for pilgrims... 8:30 P.M. - Candlelight Rosary Procession



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