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Insights in Liturgy

The Listening (Obedient) Church

By MSGR. **WILLIAM H. SHANNON**

Much controversy has been generated in the Roman Catholic Church in recent years over the topic of obedience. There are some in the Church who would divide its members into two churches: the Obedient Church, by which they mean those who obey teachings of the

WORD FOR

SUNDAY

Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt.

11:2-11 (R1) Is. 35:1-6, 10

When John the Baptist

first preached, he expected

the Messiah to be an

avenging judge- an axe-

swinger, striking down the

proud trees of wickedness, a

winnowing fan, separating

the good from the bad as

Then John baptized our

Lord At that meeting John

saw something of the

mildness and meekness of

Jesus On the next day, he

pointed him out - not as a

judge, but as "the Lamb of

Later, Herod clapped

John into prison. In prison,

the old thoughts of a

judging Messiah came back.

When we are down, our

ideas of God tend to get

blurred Perhaps it was like

this with John. "Why is Jesus

so silent?" he may have

wondered "Why doesn't He

judge evil men, like Herod?

When is he going to start

consuming the wicked with

fervent fire?" Then the

doubt: "Are you He who is

to come?" Don't we often

look for a God of anger and

destruction, especially when

misfortune strikes the in-

Jesus' answer to John's

doubt was, "Go back to

John and tell him, not what

I'm saying, but what I'm

doing. Tell him, not what I'm claiming, but what is

to ponder not so much the

words of Jesus as His deeds.

Jesus Christ today, the same

test is valid. Does it do His

works? Does it preach the

gospel to the poor? Does it

inspire a Mother Teresa of

Calcutta, a St. John Bosco, a

St Elizabeth Seton, a St.

Maximilian Kolbe, a

Frederic Ozanam? Does it

open the eyes of the in-

To discover the Church of

' lohn was told

happening '

wheat from chaff.

(R2) Jas. 5:7-10

magisterium (the teaching is an understanding of authority) of the Church and the Disobedient Church, by which they mean those who claim the right in certain circumstances to exercise a loyal dissent from the teachings o f magisterium.

This article makes no attempt to resolve this controversy. It is rather an effort to suggest that there

tellectually blind? Help moral cripples to walk straight? Cleanse people from the leprosy of sin? Unstop deaf ears to hear once again the voice of conscience? Give to the dead new life, new hope?

These aren't the works of judgment, these are the works of mercy. Service, love, kindness, forgiveness must never scandalize us. For now is the time of mercy, not judgment. So Jesus warned John and us, "Don't be scandalized if I don't seem to be what you expected. Religion is not what people make it; it is what God makes it: a service of worship, of mercy and of

John's doubts undoubtedly had raised doubts in the people's mind about himself. Perhaps those clothed in soft garments, sitting comfortably before Jesus, had already judged John. "Why, the prophet is as vacillating as the reeds swaying on the Jordan banks. The man doesn't seem to know his own mind "So they thought

Consequently, after, John's disciples had left, Jesus scanned the motley crowd, and pointed out the : sharp contrast between them (seated in soft garments, self-indulgent, passing judgment) and the Baptist (austere, severe, desert-bréd, preaching judgment)— no shivering reed, but an oak, refusing to bend to curry a king's favor "What did you go out to see in the desert?" Jesus asked. That was their trouble: **they** went out to see, not to hear, to be entertained, not to be

changed And that so often can be the trouble with us in regard to religion Like men luxuriously clad, we too can look for religion to amuse us, to comfort and to console— and exclude discipline, self-denial and the cross. Often we would bend it, reedlike, to cater to our whims and fancies.

Christ pointed to His works and to John's (imprisonment for the truth). Do we herald Christ in our works? In a play by Paul Claudel, a blind girl says, "You people who see, what do you do with your light?" Yes, what do we do with the light of our Faith?

obedience which lies deeper than any such controversy. There is an obedience which equally obliges all the members of the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or to the rest of the faithful: it is obedience to the Word of God. The word "obedience" takes its origin from the Latin word "ob-audire" which mean's to listen to. Every member of the Church (whatever may be his or her status in the structure of the Church) is obliged to "obey", that is, to "listen to" the Word of God. Jesus said: "Blessed are they who listen to the Word of God and keep it." This is Christian obedience at its deepest level. It is only the 'listening Church'' that is truly the "Obedient

How do we listen to the Word of God? First and foremost, we listen to the Word of God when it is proclaimed in the Liturgy. In its liturgical life the Church puts us in touch with the Word of God, places us under the Word and challenges us to obedience.

But we also listen to the Word of God, when in prayer and reflective meditation we spend time outside the Liturgy in reading the Holy Scriptures. Prayerful personal reading of the Scriptures is an invaluable help to true Christian obedience, especially when it involves "that warm and living love of Scripture" of which the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy speaks (art. 24).

How shall we read the Scriptures privately and truly to listen to and obey the Word of God? There are many ways. An 11th century Carthusian monk, Guigo II, suggests a helpful method He offers four steps to be followed in a prayerful reading of the Scriptures. (1) lectio (reading), (2) meditatio (meditation), (3) oratio (prayer), and (4) contemplatio templation)

Lectio seeks; meditatio finds, oratio intercedes; Contemplatio rests in the Presence which the Word brings Lectio or reading is passive receptivity to what the Word of Scripture says, in which we let the Word Meditatio or meditation is an active reflection on and an analysis of what the Word means to us. Meditatio leads naturally to oratio or prayer, which is a spontaneous outpouring of our hearts as the Word of God penetrates our being and moves us to respond. Finally, contemplatio or contemplation is a quietness, a stillness, a resting in

the Presence of God that is

evoked by the Word. A good daily approach to Scripture might be to follow Guigo's four steps: (1) Read the Scriptures in a listening mood (10 minutes); (2) Meditate reflectively on the meaning of what we have read (10 minutes); (3) Pray, speaking out of the depths of our hearts, the feelings, thoughts and emotions that come spontaneously (5 minutes); (4) contemplate, silently rest without thoughts or words in the Divine Presence (5 minutes).

These 30 minutes of regular contact with the Sacred Scriptures could help us to be the "Obedient Church" at its deepest level.

MS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are being recruited by the Multiple Sclerosis Society to provide refreshments and entertainment for MS patients in hospitals. Information on

this project is available from Joan Hoeffel at the area chapter office in the Al Sigl Center, 442-4100, extension 288.

HOW FAR IS IT TO BETHLEHEM?

An Advent Cantata

 A Prayerful Pilgrimage to Meet the Messiah in Prophetic Scripture & Gregorian Chant.

The Gregorian Chorale Rev. Benedict Ehmann, Director

Sun., Dec. 11, 1:30 p.m. Holy Name of Jesus **Holy Apostles' Church** Lyell Ave. & Ausstin St. Bonesteel St. off W.

Sunday, Dec. 18, 7 p.m. Church 1

Ridge Rd.

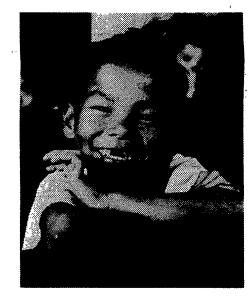
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Joy To The World, The Lord Is Come!

Dear Friends of the Missions,

As the Lord's first coming is what makes Christmas, then EVERY DAY IS CHRISTMAS IN THE MISSIONS, For it is every day that the love of Christ becomes known to people throughout the

As His wonderful message of peace and love is brought to the poor of India ... Africa ... Asia and Oceania, with it comes joy and hope; with it comes Christmas.



Christmas can come with education. This is one of several million children who learn of Christ through the Mission Church. Through the loving service of their teachers, through the brightening young spirits, through the spark of a knowledge and understanding. Some 44,000 schools in the Mission world depend on help to carry out their wonderful work.

Christmas can come with security. As age takes its toll on Mission people who have labored long and hard for decades, living becomes increasingly difficult. Too tired to work, too poor to "retire", thousands of the elderly find comfort and peace in Mission Homes for the Elderly. The need for affection never grows old, and much love is found here where it is so greatly needed.

Christmas also comes through the love of special people. It was a host of angels that brought tidings of great joy to the world 2000 years ago. Today more than 138,000 Missionaries, and countless native born priests, Sisters, Brothers and catechists are working in the Missions, speaking far and wide of Christ and His message of love.

But mostly, Christmas comes with Christ Himself. On the first Christmas, Christ came to earth received by Mary and Joseph in a poor manger. Today Christ comes to earth, received by all who call Him Lord. It is the reason for Mission: to tell the world that a Saviour has been born, that He is Christ the Lord, and that He loves us and offers Himself to us each day in the Eucharist. Your prayers, your sacrifices will help bring this greatest of joys to the Mission world.

And so I beg of you, dear friends make the Missions a part of your Christmas. You will truly bring joy to the world — and to yourself!

Devotedly in Christ,

dream behind merry eyes, Christ comes to fill the minds of His little ones with Rev. Journ J. Reinhark

Don't Fuss — The Prepartion's ON US.



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 Onion Rings

Dear Father: By prayer and sacrifice I'll help bring "joy to the world" this Christmas. I enclose: ☐ \$100 to help outfit a mobile medical clinic \$1,500 to help a Missionary maintain \square \$50 to help in the training of a native priest a home for orphans ☐ \$500 to help a Missionary provide ☐ \$25 to help support a Missionary for a month ☐ \$10 to help a mission orphanage sulphone for a leprosarium ☐ \$250 to help support a mission school \square \$5 to help support a village catechist (other) because I have been specially blessed ☐ I would like to share with the Missions all year round. Please send me monthly envelopes. STATE TAX DEDUCTIBLE Make checks payable to: THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH Rev. Joseph Reinhart Send contributions to: **Diocesan Missions** 123 East Avenue Rochester, N.Y. 14604

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