

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

Only God Can Take Away Life

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 18:15-20. (R1) Ez. 33:7-9. (R2) Rom. 13:8-10.

I remember being at a first mass when I was a seminarian. An old priest spoke. I have never forgotten his words. He turned to the young ordained priest and repeated the words of next Sunday's first reading. He said that God had appointed priests to be watchmen. Then he quoted the fearful words of Ezechiel, "If I tell the wicked man that he shall surely die, and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he, the wicked man, shall die for his guilt." Then came the frightening words: "but I will hold you



Fr. Shamon words of next Sunday's first reading. He said that God had appointed priests to be watchmen. Then he quoted the fearful words of Ezechiel, "If I tell the wicked man that he shall surely die, and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he, the wicked man, shall die for his guilt." Then came the frightening words: "but I will hold you

responsible for his death." Dante put in deepest hell those who looked on evil in silence.

Recently, I have been meeting with an ad hoc committee regarding abortion in a hospital in my parish. We decided on an educative program first. So I drew up Conscience Guidelines for Abortion. In the preamble I used the words of Ezechiel to justify our "intrusion" in this area. So often the silly rebuttal is made, "Don't foist your morality on others"—as though morality were of our making! "I will hold you responsible for his death"—to sit by and do nothing is to become guilty. The man who said, "Am I my brother's keeper" was a murderer.

Space will not permit me to give Conscience Guidelines in this article. However, I shall outline three moral principles given in the Guidelines.

Why is abortion wrong?

It is wrong because life is not ours. Therefore, we cannot take it. If I rent a house, I cannot sell it, since I do not own it. God—and God only—is the author of life. The man who can discover so simple a thing as to make hair grow on a bald head will become a millionaire. We cannot even create hair, much less life. Therefore we have no right to take life. The mother of the Maccabean martyrs encouraged her sons to give up their lives for God, because he could give life back to them. "I do not know," she told them, "how you came into existence in my womb; it was not I who gave you the breath of life... it is the Creator of the universe who shapes each man's beginning... he... will give you back both breath and life." (2 Mac. 7:22-23) And the Psalmist confessed the same: "You (God) knit me in my mother's womb." (Ps. 139:13)

Principle I: Since only God can give life, only God has a right to take it away.

Principle II: All who knowingly and wilfully

become directly involved in an abortion incur excommunication (are cut off from the life of Christ and the Church). The effect is similar to a person renouncing his rights as a United States citizen knowingly and wilfully.

Principle III: The unborn child must be regarded as a person in the eyes of the moral law. Genetics supports this traditional idea that the fetus is an individual human being "whose prenatal development is but the first phase of a long and continuous process of human development that begins at conception and ends at death." A bird is a bird in the nest or out of it. Place (in the womb or out of the womb) is only an accident!

Who can conceive the potential that is being destroyed by the over one million abortions each year in the United States. What potential was in Him who was conceived by the Holy spirit and born of the Virgin Mary!

"For evil to triumph," said Edmund Burke, "it is enough that good men do nothing."

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All in the Family

By Sarah Child

'Non-Catholic' A Poor Term

Dear Sarah:

Your column "The Sign of Peace and Life" which appeared in the Aug. 23 issue is excellent. I like your summary of the reasons why passing the peace sign is a very important part of our religious service. However, it disturbs me to see the term "non-Catholic" appear in Catholic periodicals.

Couldn't they be referred to as Presbyterian, Jew, Protestant or Christian? It sounds as though we Catholics were the only ones who are right and all others are not—"non-believers" or non-something.

Let's take a positive approach to our neighbors' religions and stop labeling them in this fashion.

I have read many articles in Protestant publications and have never encountered the words, "non-Protestant"

when referring to us. Perhaps you could start a movement in this day of ecumenism to eliminate this phrase.

Sincerely,
HCS

Dear HCS:

I agree with you about the label "non-Catholic." It is negative in sound and appearance even when not in application or intention.

In the instance you referred to above I used the designation advisedly, although I happened to

know the Protestant denomination of my friend. BECAUSE she lashed out at our ritual of offering each other the sign of peace I chose not to identify her denomination. To have done so seemed to me to be pointing to all members of her church as detractors.

I can also see why Catholic periodicals continue to use the term. There is no other word which defines exactly or precisely connotes the concept of such a large, inexact group.

Obviously we need an all-inclusive, positive word to use when referring to those whose religious beliefs differ from ours.

Seminar

An Effective Living Seminar will be given Oct. 6-8 at the Cenacle by three staff members, Sisters Arline, Betty and Shirley. Instruction will deal with "special techniques for increasing one's effectiveness by raising the self-concept," the announcement says. Details or reservations may be obtained by contacting Sister Betty Rogers at the Cenacle, 693 East Ave., Rochester 14607; telephone (716) 271-8755.

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