



Holiday Event

Members of the Nazareth College Alumni-Association will assemble on campus Sunday, Dec. 10, for a 3 p.m. performance of Handel's Messiah by the college choir and orchestra, a cocktail party at 4:30 and a candlelight buffet. The concert, in the Arts Center, is open to the public, free. Arranging the other festivities are, seated left to right, Yvonne Limbeck, Joan Tierney and Virginia O'Connor, chairman; standing, Eileen Morton and Margaret Gallagher. Nancy Albert also is on the committee.

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

God Prepared His People For Salvation

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 1:1-8. (R1) Is. 40:1-5, 9-11. (R2) 2 Pt. 3:8-14.

It's so beautiful to see the order and design in Scripture, written as it was by so many different authors over so many centuries; or better to see the pattern of God's actions in history.



Fr. Shamon

Ever since the Fall, God planned to save man. But man is a slow learner. So to teach him not only what redemption is, but how he must prepare for it, God came to His people in historical events. He came to them in Egypt through the prophet Moses; and He prepared them to be receptive to Moses by permitting the cruel enslavement of His people by Egypt. Later on, He came again to them in Babylon through His prophet the Second-Isaiah (R1); and He prepared them to be receptive to the prophet in permitting them to experience the bitterness of Exile and Captivity. A third time, God came to His people through the greatest of all prophets, His own divine Son, Jesus Christ; and again He prepared His people through another Empire, Rome. But the cruel tyranny of Rome caused His people to yearn for the wrong kind of Messiah — a political one.

The redemption from Egypt was violent. There were plagues, the spilling of blood, the drowning of an army. But the exodus from Babylon was non-violent — smooth, as when a king travels over valleys that have been filled and

mountains levelled and wastelands straightened. Thus in a single night Babylon fell to Cyrus the Great almost without a drop of blood. No sooner had the mild Cyrus taken the crown from Babylon than he permitted the Jews to go home without any turmoil or trouble or further ado.

Maybe that is why St. Mark in the beginning of his gospel harkened back to this exodus instead of to the Egyptian one (R3). Mark saw Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming not to destroy, but to save; not to threaten, but to proclaim glad tidings, the good news. He saw Christ coming, not as a political Messiah, but as a spiritual one. Therefore, John the Baptizer had to come to prepare the way for this Prophet, by proclaiming a preparation that is spiritual — "a repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins" (R3).

God knows what is best for us. Sometimes He uses the rod, the rod of slavery, of exile, captivity, to bring His people to their senses. When they have learned, He uses tenderness; the bruised reed He does not crush, the smoking flax He does not put out.

Sin takes so much out of us. Its bitterness, the disillusionment of giving in to our passions, is meant by God to drive us to repentance, to the confessional. There, in the confessional, is the time for comfort, for speaking tenderly. The remorse, the guilt, the anguish of sin is servitude enough; is double payment for sin. Thank God if homilies are vigorous and strong, like the words of Jeremiah or Ezekiel before the fall of Jerusalem. Also thank God because, upon repentance, all is comfort and tenderness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as on the eve of Israel's return to Jerusalem (R1).

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