

Insights in Liturgy

By Father Benedict Ehmann

The Gospel: Then And Now

Jesus Christ our Lord is the same TODAY, as He was YESTERDAY, as He will be TOMORROW. He lives among us now. He speaks to us now. He works for us now. This time of ours is still the *Annus Domini*, the Year of the Lord 1979. The years before Him we call B.C. But we do not call our years A.C., after Christ. For He is still with us, never having left us "orphans", but remaining with us "all days even to the consummation of the world".

And more than this: His presence with us is not static, but dynamic. He is among us in that same compassionate power as was His among the multitudes of Judea and Galilee. He does now for us what He did then for them. He says now to us what He said then to them.

The Holy Eucharist, the Mass, is eminently the time each day when we come to Him and He comes to us, to speak to us and to touch us with His healing and strength. There His Gospel is proclaimed. We stand to greet His word, we sign the

cross on our foreheads, lips and hearts. When the reading ends we praise Him and say: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ", for we have just heard Him speaking to us through His minister.

It is exactly like that remarkable day in the synagogue of Nazareth when Jesus read the Scripture to the people whose eyes were all intent on Him. After He finished, He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and then looked at the crowd as intently as they were looking at Him. And He said: "This day this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Cf. St. Luke, chapter 4).

This is exactly the way it is when we hear the Gospel at Mass. What we hear Jesus saying in the Gospel to the people of old, He says to us today. What we hear of Him doing among those people of the Holy Land long ago, He does for us today. "This day the Gospel is fulfilled in your hearing." No wonder we are invited to respond: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ." We of today are the Gospel people of 1979; and we come to Jesus, again and again, each time at Mass, to hear what He will be saying to us, and to see what He will be doing for us.

Shall we look at an example or two? When the Gospel gives us Jesus' words, there is no great problem in putting this to the test. All we need do is to recall that the words we are hearing are directed as much to us as they were to His listeners. But when it comes to the matter of Jesus' works as the Gospel proclaims them, we may need some help to discover how they are contemporary with us of today.

Take the healing of the paralytic recorded by St. Mark, chapter 2, verses 1-12. We see great crowds coming to Jesus, filling the rooms and the doorway of the house. Some men bring a paralytic to Him on a stretcher, but they can't get in. So they make a hole in the roof, to let the stretcher down in front of Jesus. Struck by their faith, He says: "My son, your sins are forgiven." Some of the wisecracks there are thinking He is blaspheming, because only God can forgive sins. Then Jesus manifests His divine power and heals the paralytic. The people are awestruck and they praise God, saying: "We have never seen anything like this."

This is as contemporary to us of 1979 as it was to those who first witnessed it in Capernaum. Today too, great crowds come to Jesus, all over the world. Today too, there were paralyzed people, immobilized by sin, by

ignorance, by addiction to alcohol, drugs and lust, by hatred, prejudice and fierce antagonisms, even among our kinsfolk and in our neighborhoods. On their own they do not, perhaps they even cannot, come to Jesus. So we bring them to Him, in our thought of them, in our concern and caring for them. We present them to the Lord; we beg that He may heal them and make them walk freely again in the way of grace. Jesus is struck by our faith, even as He was by that of the stretcher bearers in the Gospel, and we are sure He will respond now as He did then. And like those long-ago people, we are awestruck at Jesus' power and we exclaim: "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."

We are those blind, deaf and dumb, lame and paralytic ones; those lepers, whom Jesus heals, today as then. We are the Samaritan woman at the well, Martha and Mary serving and listening to Jesus, Zaccheus climbing the tree to see Him, and all those others in their various ways reflecting our lives. Our city is another Jerusalem over which Jesus weeps. The afflicted of all the centuries still carry His cross.

Such is the Gospel, then and now. When we stand to hear it, we sign the cross on our foreheads to understand it, on our lips to proclaim it, on our hearts to love it and live it. "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."

Surprise Party!

Canandaigua-The Knights of Columbus Council 1445 hosted a surprise "Sister Appreciation Night" in honor of Sister Mary Benedicta Redmond, SSJ, here recently.

that the K of C will sponsor an annual Religious Achievement Award at graduation in Sister Benedicta's name.

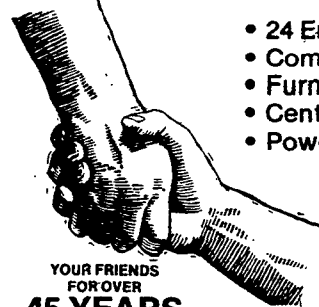
A teacher in diocesan elementary schools for more than 40 years, Sister Benedicta has been at St. Mary's, Canandaigua, for a total of 36 years.

Sister Deanna Gears, SSJ, school principal, announced

Thursday Deadline

In order to handle copy and photographs properly, all news releases must be received by the Courier-Journal by noon Thursday for the following week's edition.

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

"Children -- and Death"
By Ed Sulewski

Some adults believe that allowing a child to view a dead human body will terrify him. However, in most cases, it is much better for the child who has experienced the death of someone close to him to view the body, rather than fantasize death in his own vivid imagination. By seeing the body, he is able to accept the real meaning of death -- and may be better able to express his emotions. Certainly a child should not be forced to view the body, but even with very young children, the truth is usually less harmful than allowing them to cope with death in their own way. Allowing the child to attend the funeral service gives him a sense of belonging and support at a time when, all too often, he may be overlooked. If we may answer any questions for you concerning children and death, please call us at any time, or come in and make use of our extensive Library of books on death, dying and related subjects.

SCHAUMAN FUNERAL HOME, INC. 2100 St. Paul St. 342-3400

WILL YOU SHARE A CATHOLIC EDUCATION WITH A WORTHY CHILD?

For over 80 years, a strong Catholic school system served children in Rochester's central city neighborhoods. But there aren't very many Catholic schools left in central Rochester these days. Saint Monica's Catholic Elementary School, located on Rochester's southwest side, serves children living in neighborhoods ranging from the city's 19th and 3rd Wards all the way to downtown Rochester. Many children are from genuinely poor families. Families which are plagued by sickness or suffer the death of a parent, for example. These worthy children and their families find themselves in real poverty through no fault of their own. These parents desperately want their children to be educated in a Catholic school, to be exposed to high academic standards, a healthy sense of discipline, the values of patriotism and good citizenship, and most of all, to Christian teachings. Saint Monica's has established a CATHOLIC EDUCATION FUND to help pay the costs of educating children who are needy and worthy. So many good people have helped bring Catholic education to Rochester's poor over the past few years.

Would you be willing to help? Your contribution, large or small, will help make it possible for Saint Monica's to serve more deserving children next year. You can share a Catholic education with a worthy child.

Sister Clare Francis Mogenhan
Saint Monica's School
841 Genesee Street
Rochester, N. Y. 14611

Dear Sister:
I'd like to help. Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____ to Saint Monica's CATHOLIC EDUCATION FUND.

(Your Name)

(Address)

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Clip and mail to the address above. All gifts are tax deductible.

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

Jesus Spoke On His Own Authority

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 1:21-28. (R1) (R1) Dt. 18:15-20. (2) 1 Cor. 7:32-35.

In this Sunday's liturgy the Church again pleads with us to respond to God's call.

To Moses God spoke directly. When He did, Mt. Sinai blazed, smoked and thundered. God's people were so terrified they begged Moses to ask God never to speak directly to them again, "lest we die." Graciously, God acceded to their prayer and promised from then on to speak to them indirectly through men called prophets.



Fr. Shamon

When our Lord was taking leave of the apostles after the Last Supper, He sought to console them by promising to send the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Moses in his farewell address sought to console the chosen people by promising that God would send another prophet like himself. It was to this promise people were alluding when they asked John the Baptizer, "Are you the prophet?"

From long experience, Moses knew how loath people are to listen to God's call. With the fire and thunder and smoke gone, the danger of deafness to His call doubled. So Moses delivered to them God's warning: "If any man will not listen to my words . . . I myself will make him answer for it."

The Response after the first reading is an allusion to how the people did respond to God's call

through Moses. Though God had always proved a Rock to them—Someone to whom they could always turn, Someone on whom they could always rely, Someone whose love did not change, Someone whom man's fickleness could not penetrate—though He was a Rock of salvation, still they did not listen to Him. When they were trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea, He saved them. When they were hungry in the desert, He gave them manna. When they were parched with thirst, He caused water to flow from a rock. And yet at the slightest provocation, they turned on God. Turned on Him—not once or twice or three times, but so many times that, as the constant tramp of feet hardens the ground, the Scripture speaks of their hearts as hardened.

The Gospel of Mark makes it clear that Jesus is the prophet Moses spoke about. "The people were spellbound by His teaching because He taught with authority, and not like the

Scribes." Every time a scribe taught, he would back up his words by quoting some famous scribe as his authority. It was as if a child should say to another, "There is a santa Claus—my mother says so!" But when Jesus taught, it was on His own say-so. "You've heard it said (by God through Moses) 'Thou shalt not kill'—but I say to you . . ." Jesus would then, on His own authority, dare to modify the Law of Moses (Mt. 5:21ff). The people never saw authority like that.

Graciously again, Jesus made it easy for people to accept His authority by exemplifying it by a miracle all could see. He turned on an unclean spirit and with a word drove him out of a man. The people got the point. "A completely new teaching in a spirit of authority!" they exclaimed. "He gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey!"

How ironical! Unclean spirits obey His words. So often we do not!

Religious Ed. Workshop Set

Religious Education personnel, and others interested in the field, are invited to take part in a workshop Jan. 29-31 at Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua. It will be the ninth annual January workshop sponsored by the

Association of Religious Educators and the Diocesan Office of Religious Education. There will be a dinner and special session Tuesday evening for all parish RE staffs. Further information is available from the diocesan office, through 328-3210.

Mardi Gras

St. James Parish, 130 Brett Rd., will hold its annual Fun Night on Saturday, Feb. 3 from 7-12 p.m. This year's theme will be the Mardi Gras. Costumes and masks may be worn and a prize will be given

for best costume. Fun night will include a spaghetti dinner, dancing and entertainment. General chairmen of the Fun Night are Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Coughlin.

SSND Will Hold Chapter Sessions

The School Sisters of Notre Dame will hold a Chapter session on Feb. 3 and 4 at their provincial motherhouse in Wilton, Conn.

Rochester-based Sisters Bernice Staub, Janice Nadeau and Mary Louis are the area's delegates.

This will be the last session of the Fifth Provincial Chapter. At present the sisters are electing members for the

Sixth Chapter. Each Chapter runs two years.

On the agenda for the February meeting are continued work on the Provincial Directory, a report on the First International Education Conference which the sisters will host in August, and the implementation of certain Apostolic Directions for the province.

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