

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

Private Confession Is Required

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 1:40-45. (R1) Lv. 13:1-2, 45-46. (R2) 1 Cor. 1:31, 11:1.

One thing that really gets to me is pictures of lepers. The sickening sights distress and sadden me. I find it hard to eat or be happy in the face of such suffering.



Leprosy Fr. Shamon has always been a dreaded disease. It does two things: ruptures human relationships and ravishes the human body. As far back as the days of Moses, the leper was banished from the fellowship of men — "he shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp." It is a tribute to the approachableness of Jesus that the leper in Sunday's gospel felt he could break the Law and go to Him.

Dr. Kato, in The Leprosy Relief, describes how difficult it was for him to get to the leper colony of

Babadinka in Senegal, Africa, in 1976. Then he noted the frightful ravishes of the disease. Nodular leprosy, for instance, so defaces a man that he looks like a lion or satyr. "A blind man approached us," he wrote. "In place of his eyes some cloudy spots showed, the results of leprosy or trachoma ... When I shook hands, I grasped mutilated hands without fingers ... Nearly all the men and women there were limping, and a look at their legs showed that most feet were bandaged in leaves or some kind of dirty cloth. All these people were suffering from plantar ulcers so characteristic for leprosy and incapacitating to walk ... There was just Hell!"

The Response in Sunday's liturgy teaches us to see leprosy as the symbol of sin, and confession of sin as cure.

The sight of the leper is loathsome; so is sin to God. The leper himself is tormented with scab, sore, pustule. Sin torments the heart of man. "Many sorrows has the wicked." (Ps. 32)

Lepers are banished from society. Sin alienates man from other men and from God.

In the Gospel, there was one cure for leprosy — Jesus! "A leper approached Jesus and addressed Him: 'If you will do so, you can cure me.'"

Jesus not only touched him, but revealed His feelings about men's diseases. "I do will it — I do not will disease and death. Be cured." He was instantly.

This same power of the touch and words of Jesus is present in the words and actions of every sacrament.

When we contract the leprosy of sin, we can turn to Jesus and tell Him we are sorry and He will forgive us. But normally, that is not enough; in addition we must avail ourselves of the sacrament of reconciliation. Jesus told the leper to go and present himself to the priest.

For the forgiveness of sin, go to God — yes. But it is commanded also by Jesus that we go to confession — auricular, private confession to a priest! "Go off and present yourself to the priest."

Why? Because love is blind; and the blindest of all loves is self-love. And just as one cannot see his own face without a mirror, so we cannot really see ourselves as we are unless we look in the mirror of confession. Who is judged by himself has a fool for a judge.

Bishops of 3 Faiths Hit Death Penalty

Charleston, W. Va. (RNS) - Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Methodist bishops in West Virginia have issued a joint statement opposing the reinstatement of the death penalty.

A man-in-the-street poll conducted by the Charleston Daily Mail, however, indicated that 75 per cent of West Virginians strongly favor restoration of capital

punishment, believing it to be a deterrent to crime.

West Virginia abolished capital punishment in 1965 and legislative attempts to restore it have been unsuccessful, but new bills to restore the death penalty are now before the legislature.

"Violence begets violence," the bishops said in their joint statement. "In a country where violence walks the

streets and races through television, the movies and the print media, the state needs to stand as a beacon of non-violence."

The statement was signed by Episcopal Bishop Robert P. Atkinson, Catholic Bishop Joseph H. Hodges of Wheeling-Charleston, and United Methodist Bishop D. Frederick Wertz of the West Virginia Conference.

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... At Your Parish

St. John's, Greece

St. John the Evangelist (Greece) has scheduled its first annual dinner dance on Friday, Feb. 23. The "Greek Gala" begins with a 7 p.m. cocktail hour followed by a Greek dinner and live music for dancing.

The time and talent of Stewardship at St. John's will be utilized for this parish social with co-chairpersons Nancy Oberholzer and Dolores DeConinck heading up the volunteers, according to a parish release. Father Joseph D'Aurizio, pastor, was named honorary chairman.

Tickets are \$6, and reservations for parties of ten, may be made. For further information interested persons may call 225-8980.

Most Precious Blood

The Church of the Most Precious Blood opened their Catholic School Week "Next to the Family, The Catholic School" on Feb. 2 with a special Mass that included a dedication ceremony, by teachers at Precious Blood School. They pledged their continued support of Catholic education.

During the rest of the week a variety of functions are planned. Some of these include essay, poster and poetry contests by students, a "walk thru" of classes and the regular meeting of the Parents Club. Closing ceremonies are set for Feb. 16.

At Holy Rosary

Holy Rosary Parish, 414 Lexington Ave., has scheduled a special program for married couples on Wednesday, Feb. 14. The event, beginning at 8 p.m., will feature a special liturgy and the renewal of wedding vows by the participants. A wedding anniversary reception will follow in the school hall. Those attending are asked to bring any pictures or memorabilia of their wedding to share with the other couples. For further information interested persons may call Norm and Sandy Pawlak, 234-7516.

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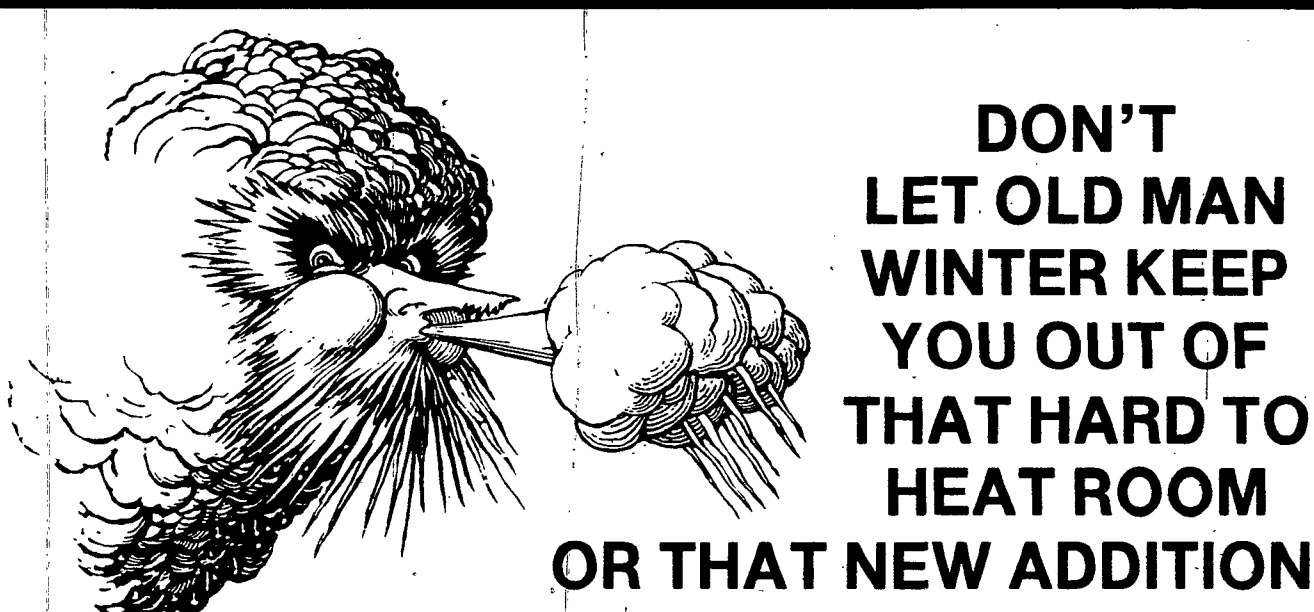
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