

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

It Is God Who Takes First Step

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 1:12-15. (R1) Gn. 9:8-15. (R2) 1 Pt. 3:18-22.

The theme of the first readings of the Lenten Sunday masses this year is that of **Covenant**. Covenant is a pact between God and man — something like the marriage vows two persons make to love each other until death. In a covenant, of course, the parties are not equal — God is God! In making a covenant, it is God who always takes the first step, like a man proposing to a girl. His choice is determined not by the goodness of the covenant-spouse, but by His own goodness. He takes people as they are; and, by offering His love, He invites them to become His chosen people, loved and blessed beyond all other people.

In the Old Testament God made four covenants: one with man before sin (with our first parents); and three with man after sin (with Noah, Abraham, and Moses). These covenants were a preparation for the last covenant — the New Covenant (made through Jesus).

The first covenant after man's sin was with Noah (March 4). God called Noah, saved him, and demanded nothing except

that Noah tell men murder and immorality are wrong.

When this covenant ended in Babel, God called Abraham and made a second covenant with him (March 11). This time He demanded a bit more; He demanded faith!

Because Abraham was faithful, God made a third covenant with Abraham's descendants, through Moses at Mt. Sinai. This time He demanded still more — that their faith express itself in a way of life patterned on the Ten Commandments (March 18).

Now each covenant had a sign, like wedding rings.

That with Noah was a bow (rainbow) in the clouds. The bow was the ancient weapon of war. By no longer aiming the bow toward earth, God demonstrated that His anger against sinful man was appeased.

The sign of the covenant with Abraham was Isaac: the sign God would give Abraham was posterity. But lest man make a fetish out of signs, God ordered Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

The sign of the covenant with Moses was circumcision: the consecration to God of the wellsprings of life.

But Israel broke her covenant with God. "She added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations" (March 25).

Yet God remained faithful: He sent the prophet Jeremiah. From his own personal ex-

perience, Jeremiah understood that the heart of religion is the heart. Israel, like an adulteress, had set her heart on other gods: things and pleasures! She had need not of a new love, but of a new heart. Only God can give a new heart. Jeremiah foresaw a time when God would do this, would make a new covenant with man — His last. This covenant would touch man not from the outside, like Law, but from within, like love. "I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts" (April 1).

The sign of this new covenant is Jesus. The response demanded is a faith in Jesus that works through love. Baptism is the sacrament of faith, and the Eucharist is the sacrament that makes it possible for faith to work through love.

Thus the 2nd and 3rd readings of the First Sunday of Lent speak of baptism and its call to fidelity in times of temptation. Those of the Second Sunday speak of the transfiguration that baptism effects in the soul through grace. The third Sunday reminds us that baptism makes us temples of God. The Fourth Sunday, that baptism cleanses us from sin. Thus purified and sanctified, baptism demands an obedience that is sacrificial (5th Sunday) and unwavering even in the face of the cross (Passion Sunday). And the reward? Resurrection. "He was obedient... therefore God raised him up" (Easter).

(We suggest you cut out this overview of the Lenten Sunday readings to guide you in grasping more fully the meaning of the New Testament or Covenant.)

The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

Who Are The "Real" Catholics?

I am always fascinated by the proclivity of journals like *The Wanderer* to go into heresy or near-heresy in protection of their own narrow right-wing ideology. Pretending to be defenders of the faith, *The Wanderer* gang cares far more for its own rigid ideology that it does for traditional Catholic teaching.



Fr. Greeley

Recently they've gone after my boss, Professor William McCready, and denounced the U.S. Catholic Conference Family Life Commission because McCready is a member. Now I personally think that like everything else the USCC does, the Family Life Commission is a charade, and my principal regret about *The Wanderer* attack is that now Dr. McCready is under severe pressure to stay on the commission lest it be said that *The Wanderer* drove him off. Anyhow, he is a consenting adult and can take care of himself. (He has had to. Can you imagine what it must be like to be my boss?)

But *The Wanderer's* attack is intriguing. The journal apparently thinks that McCready and I are more or less the owners of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and we have been fooling people about Catholicism by including in our research respondents who are not really Catholic — that is to say, respondents who don't really accept Catholic doctrine.

The Wanderer apparently shares with Pittsburgh's Monsignor Charles Owens Rice and a number of other ignoramuses the notion that NORC is a creature of mine. In fact, it is an independent, not-for-profit corporation "with a board of trustees and a director of its own. Neither Professor McCready nor I is director of NORC and we are not members of its board of trustees. Indeed, Kenneth Prewitt, the long-suffering and genial political scientist who is the real director of NORC has facetiously suggested that the reason for sending me to my Arizona exile is so that he can be director in name as well as in fact.

But quite apart from *The Wanderer* gang's ignorance, one has to be amused by its bad doctrine. It obviously wants us to set up some criteria of Catholic orthodoxy by which respondents can be measured before they are legitimately described as Catholics. It is not altogether clear about what the criteria should be but let us imagine some. Suppose we define as Catholic only those who go to church on Sunday. What proportion of American Catholics, then, go to church? One hundred percent. No problems for Catholicism; no problems for *The Wanderer!*

Of course, you exclude more than half of those who claim to be Catholics. But that wouldn't trouble *The Wanderer* at all.

Or you establish as a criterion the acceptance of the church's teaching regarding birth control. Sure enough, your finding then will be that 100 percent of those who are Catholic accept the church's birth control teaching. Marvelous.

Again there are not problems. You lose 85 percent of those who claim to be Catholic but then, according to *The Wanderer*, they're not Catholics in the first place.

Indeed, you also eliminate the need to do research. If only those who accept all the details of official Catholic belief and practice are Catholic, then no research is necessary because everything is fine with "real" Catholics. You may write off 90 percent of those who were baptized and who still claim to be Catholics. With *The Wanderer* gang, that is no problem at all.

So the question then is — who is a Catholic? If you believe *The Wanderer*, not very many people. But if you believe canon law and traditional Catholic teaching, neither doctrinal acceptance nor moral behavior is a criterion for Catholic definition. A person is a Catholic if he or she has been baptized, has not been excommunicated from the church and is not formally apostatized from it either by explicit decision or by joining another religion. You may be guilty of "sin" against morality or against faith (we will leave aside, for the purposes of this column, the issues of how sinful birth control and missing mass are), but that does not mean that you cease to be a member of the church.

I doubt that any responsible canonist or theologian could question this traditional teaching. There are all kinds of "bad" Catholics around; there always have been. That doesn't mean they stop being Catholic. One is appalled at the ignorance and the near-heresy of *The Wanderer* crowd in its suggestion that such people are no longer Catholics.

To put the matter in Gospel terms, *The Wanderer* only wants you to survey the sheep that are in the fold.



ZAHN

Zahn Set To Speak At Fisher

Gordon C. Zahn, internationally known pacifist, will address the issue of "Pacifism and the Right-to-Life," in a public lecture at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 6, at St. John Fisher College.

Zahn, professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts, is the author of several books, among them, *War, Conscience and Dissent*. He was a conscientious objector during World War II and now serves on the National Council of the Catholic Peace Fellowship and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In addition, he has recently been appointed to the Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Boston.



March 1 Drive

March 1 is the official beginning of the 1979 Aquinas Alumni Appeal. Coordinating the drive are Don Foley, fund chairman and Jack Coleman, vice chairman (seated); Standing are Fathers Thomas Miller, alumni coordinator and John Menner, principal. Last year 3,000 alumni members contributed \$70,000 and according to Father Menner, "This is the lifeline of the school."

Deaths

Hugh C. Murphy

Hugh C. Murphy Jr. of Holy Name of Jesus parish in Greece died Feb. 17, 1979. The Mass of Christian Burial was concelebrated Feb. 20 at Holy Name.

Father Kevin Murphy of St. Patrick's, Elmira, is one of Mr. Murphy's five children. The others are Hugh C. Murphy III and James; Karen and Maureen. Their mother, Dorothy Johnson Murphy, also survives. There is one grandson, Marc Murphy; a sister-in-law, Miss Ruth

McNamara, and a number of cousins.

Mr. Murphy was a member of the Men's Club in his parish and of the Pioneer Club of Eastman Kodak Company.

St. Agnes Parents Set March 10 Dance

The St. Agnes Parents Club will hold its annual St. Patrick's dance on March 10 in the school gym.

Music will be provided by the Ramblers with dancing between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. An

Retorno Set March 16-18

Retorno, a spiritual exercise developed for married couples, will be held at St. Michael's Mission the weekend of March 16-18. The program will be led by Father William Graf and Sister Mary Lynch.

According to James Dombeck, organizer of the program, Retorno was developed by Father Gabriel Clavo and "addresses the subjects of listening, reconciliation, prayer, and spirituality in the marriage relationship."

Registration is limited, Dombeck said, and reservations may be made by contacting him or his wife, Mary, at (716) 464-8375.



Reviewing plans for the forthcoming mission at St. John's in Greece are, from left, Father Joseph D'Aurizio, pastor; Father Blanchette and Father John Gagnier, associate pastor.

Parish Mission Planned in Greece

St. John the Evangelist in Greece will conduct a Parish Mission during the first week of Lent on the theme of "evangelization."

Father Oliver Blanchette, Assumptionist, will conduct the sessions. The worship and moral teachings of the Church

since Vatican II will be addressed during services the week of March 3 to 11.

All parishioners, including those who have been away from the Church, are invited. Morning services will be repeated in the evening to allow more people to attend.