



Photo by Susan McKinney

Farmers are this week discing the land, breaking up the soil for planting their crops. At this time of year Christians are begging God's blessing for a bountiful harvest.

Rogation Days Are Rooted In the Land and the Past

By John Dash

Today the Church observes its Major Rogation Day, an observance which even pre-dates Christianity.

There are four Rogation Days on the Church calendar: Today, April 25, and the three days preceding the celebration of the Ascension. The latter are called Minor Rogation Days, and were instituted in the sixth century.

Today's rites, however, are a good example of the Church "baptizing" a praiseworthy custom of pagans. On this day the ancient Italians participated in the "Robigalia," rites which included processions and prayers of supplication to the pagan gods.

The supplanting of the gods with God, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, "seems to be of very early

date." It was St. Gregory the Great, who died in 601, who formalized the already existing Christian custom.

Rogation Days are days of prayer, and, at one time also of fasting. Their purpose, the encyclopedia says, is "to appease God's anger at man's transgressions, to ask protection in calamities and obtain a good and bountiful harvest."

The last intercession is, perhaps, the key to understanding our present observance of the days.

Early in the 500s, St. Mamertus established the Minor Rogation Days in the Diocese of Vienne, where he was bishop. He established them following a great drought and an extensive earthquake in the area. His practice was confirmed by the Fifth Council of Orleans in 511, and three centuries later approved by Pope Leo

III as a universal practice.

In Catholic England they were observed with great solemnity. There they called them "Gang Days," and "Cross Week." Under the law of King Alfred, a theft committed on one of the days was treated as severely as a theft committed on a Sunday or greater Church feast.

Rogation Days in the U.S. are not only a Roman Catholic observance. Especially in the agrarian South, they are an ecumenical event.

Up to 1946, southern churches observed the fifth Sunday after Easter as Soil and Soul Sunday. The name changed in 1946 to Soil Stewardship Sunday; and in 1955 the National Association of Conservation Districts was promoting Soil Stewardship Week.

Soil Stewardship Week this year is slated for May 20-27. The advisory committee for the observance this year includes Father Gerald Foley, National Catholic Rural Life Conference; Rev. Osgood Magnuson, Lutheran Council in the USA; Rev. James Nelson, Southern Baptist Convention; Rev. Daniel O. Parker, United Church of Christ; Rev. H. Boone Porter, Jr., the Episcopal Church.

Promotional literature for the week states:

"While we are not faced with the immediate prospect of famine or hunger in the United States today, we still need to pause each year... for special consideration and prayerful thanks for God's blessings of a bountiful nature. It is a time to be reminded of our personal obligations to protect and care creatively for these transcendent gifts."

All in the Family

By Sarah Child

Writing Sometimes Makes Friends

One of the best things about writing this column for the last 10 years is that I have made a lot of friends — most of whom I'll never meet.



They introduce themselves with letters, warm and expansive, responding in kind with the same kind of information about their families that I frequently dispense about mine in this space.

I am grateful to these correspondents and treasure every letter that comes this way not simply because it is assurance that somebody is

reading the column but because they tend to write as if they lived next door, confiding humorous anecdotes and revealing bits of their private lives much as they might if we were coffee breaking together. Such expressions of good faith may be the supreme compliment for a writer such as this one — at any rate I take them as such.

One such letter, a six page effort which must have taken half a day to produce has been in my folder for a couple of months.

I hope Rita Wayne of Elmira will forgive me for not acknowledging her nutshell biography before but I have read and enjoyed several times the lines telling me about her, her husband Bill and their eight children wishing I had one-half the get up and go this lady must have to cope with packing lunches for nine to say nothing of dealing with all

those spilled Cheerios. (She confessed she hates them.)

In the same folder is another note from Doris Slocum from Groton whom I've mentioned here before and who has been responsible in part for my finally getting serious about a writing project that's been in the back of my head for at least 20 years.

A couple of lines from Mary Ann Ginnerty, the Courier Journal correspondent from Auburn brightened my day when she remarked she felt as if she'd "authored" the column on kids and clothes.

Not all overtures come in letters, of course. On a recent evening at a check out line, a voice right behind me noted cheerfully, "Not napping I see?" After doing a doubletake I realized she was referring to a recent column. I muttered something about already having one earlier and escaped. Somedays I wish I would be more careful about what I write.

Commencement May 5 At Colgate-Rochester

Commencement exercises at Colgate Rochester-Bexley Hall-Crozer Divinity School will take place at 8 p.m., Saturday, May 5.

Thirty-nine men and women are candidates for the Master of Divinity degree, the first professional degree in preparation for ordination to the parish ministry. There are two candidates for the Master of Arts degree and 17 men and women are candidates for the advanced professional degree, Doctor of Ministry.

Commencement speaker will be Dr. Gibson Winter,

Maxwell Upson Professor of Christianity and Society at Princeton Theological Seminary. He will speak on "The Churches in an Urbanizing World."

Members of the graduating class represent a cross-section of Christian traditions, including Baptist, Episcopal, United Methodist, United Presbyterian and the United Church of Christ. Colgate Rochester and Crozer are related to the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A. and are multidominational. Bexley Hall is an Episcopal seminary.

Rimore Ordination April 27

Rev. Mr. John Vito Rimore, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vito L. Rimore of Rochester, will be ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Alexander Carter of the Diocese of Saulte St. Marie, Ontario, April 27, 7:15 p.m., in the Pro-Cathedral of the Assumption, North Bay, Ont., Canada.

Rimore, a graduate of Holy Rosary School and Aquinas Institute, has received degrees from St. Michael's College at

the University of Toronto and St. Paul's University in Ottawa, Ont. He served his diaconate year at the Pro-Cathedral in North Bay and will be serving as assistant pastor at St. Andrew the Apostle Church, Sudbury, Ont., Canada.

He will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving on May 13, at Holy Rosary Church, Lexington Avenue, Rochester.

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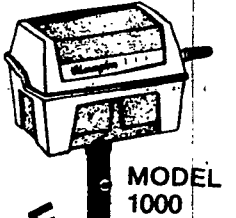
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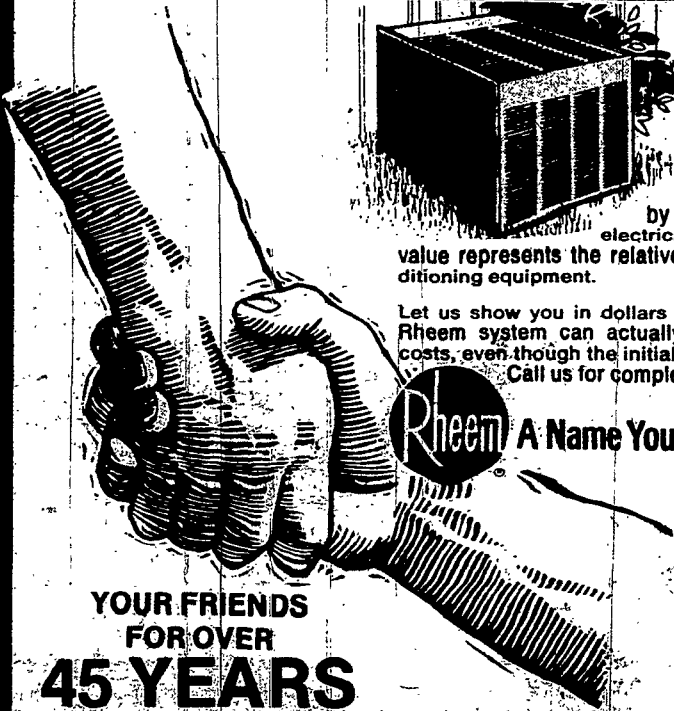
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