

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

Christ Is The True Vine

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 15:1-8. (R1) Acts 9:26-31. (R2) 1 Jn. 3:18-24

Every circumstance, like a breeze that blows coat-hangerlike maple seeds far and wide, caused our Lord, the Truth, to scatter the seeds of truth. We do not know exactly what particular circumstance suggested to Jesus the beautiful allegory of the vine in Sunday's gospel.



Fr. Shamon

It could have been some gravevines growing on a terraced hillside as Jesus walked to the garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper. Or, more likely, the gigantic golden vine over the porch of the Temple sanctuary. We must remember that on the Passover there was a full moon. As our Lord walked toward Gethsemane, He no doubt cast one last, sad glance at

the Temple and in the light of the full moon saw the golden vine, heraldic symbol of Israel. Seeing it, He said to the apostles, "I am the true vine of God." Israel was a vine. What Jesus was explaining was that Israel was not the true vine of God. It was only a type, a shadow of the reality. He alone was the reality: the way through truth to life.

The one tool a vinegrower uses is a knife. One does not manure a vine, nor hoe it. Vines are pruned and trimmed. Dead branches are pruned, cut off the vine; and living ones are trimmed to increase their yield.

In the Church there are dead and living branches. At the Judgment the dead shall be cast into hell; whereas the living are trimmed in this life to produce more fruit. In all of us there is, for instance, something of God and something of man, the divine and the human. The human element, like a clinging vine, can smother or stifle the divine growth within us. The human must needs be trimmed: selfishness curbed, passions controlled. Sometimes the

Vinegrower Himself steps in to help by permitting crosses: sickness, suffering, adversity. Disappointment. His appointment, blessings in disguise.

Union with the vine, then, must be that of a living branch, not a dead one. Both are united to the vine. But only the living one shall have life eternal.

How do we know we are alive and well in the vine: nominal or practicing Catholics? Our lord said: a tree can be judged by its fruits. A living branch bears fruits.

What fruits?

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity 4 (Gal. 5:22-23). Take the fruits of the Spirit one by one. Examine your lifestyle in their light. Am I a loving person: one who reaches out to others? A joyful one, or a sad sack? Peaceful and patient? Kind and generous with time, talent and treasure? Mild, especially to one's spouse? Do I experience Jesus in my life? Am I chaste — chastising my looks, my appetites? By your fruits you shall know whether or not you are a dead or a live member of the true vine. The Church.

State Divorced, Separated To Convene in Rochester

Rochester will be the host for the second annual state Conference for Divorced and Separated Catholics at St. John Fisher College, from Friday, June 1, to Sunday, June 3.

Representatives from throughout the state met in Elmira in March to complete convention planning; last year's conference in Binghamton drew more than 200 participants.

The three days of events will include presentations by several persons who are known for their work with divorced and separated persons.

A liturgy, with Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, the Rochester diocese's apostolic administrator, as the principal concelebrant, is scheduled for Saturday evening.

Sister Kathleen Kircher, the Rochester diocese's coordinator of ministry to the divorced and separated, will welcome the participants Friday evening, and introduce the first speaker, Dr. Dennis Boike, director of Boike Marriage, Family and Individual Counseling, Inc. His topic will be "The Experience of Becoming Whole."

Saturday morning's address is titled "Earthen Vessels," the convention theme, and will be delivered by Sister Paul Ripple, FSPA, executive director of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics (NACSDC).

Virginia Clemente, a clinician dealing with marriage and family, will discuss "Insights into Remarriage" at the Saturday afternoon session.

On Sunday morning, Father Kenneth Metz, liaison to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of the Milwaukee diocese, will speak on "Healing Prayer and Christian Emotions."

The final presentation will be about state and NACSDC activities during the past year, and will be presented by Carolyn Larcy, the state representative to the

NACSDC; Sister Paula Ripple, and Father F. J. Maniscalco, the state organization's chaplain.

Also offered will be six workshops, dealing with such issues as single life adjustment, children of divorce, chaplaincy of divorced and separated groups, and a male perspective on divorce and separation.

Prayer sessions, liturgies, and the dinner invocations during the convention are being prepared by diocesan and local groups throughout the state.

The cost is \$45 per person, which includes all meals and two nights on the St. John Fisher campus. Registration materials or further information may be obtained by contacting the Office of Family Life, Pastoral Center, 1150 Buffalo Rd., Rochester, NY 14624, (716)436-5450.

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The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

Some Reflections

Some reflections from the perspective of a silver jubilee in the priesthood:



Fr. Greeley

1) The church has been a surprise, much more of a surprise than I could have imagined a quarter of a century ago. I suppose the biggest surprise was the Second Vatican Council and its astonishing changes it wrought (and the second biggest was the election of a Polish pope). But the more fundamental surprise is the one that makes these two and others of lesser moment possible: The secret of Catholicism is that it is catholic, it contains within itself a pluralism — one might almost say a hodgepodge — of traditions and dynamisms which given half a chance are going to surprise you time and time again. During the Counter-reformation era, for reasons which are still debatable, this variety was suppressed, though not eliminated. By the end of World War II, the mechanisms inhibiting the eruption of surprise were no longer very effective (they had almost been wiped out at the end of the last century). The Second Vatican Council was more the result of the unleashing of the pluralistic energies of the Catholic tradition than the cause.

James Joyce once said that Catholicism means here comes everybody. To be catholic (and I use the small "c" deliberately) means not only to be open to everyone but to find room for everyone's tradition and special contributions. The dynamic variety of the church is an affront to those who wish to re-impose order and discipline and thus budget the Holy Spirit's time for Him/Her.

But in its normal state Catholicism is a messy, turbulent, diverse institution. The garrison church of the Counter-Reformation, with its veneer of order, was a historical exception. That's over now, no matter how much the current vital passionate mess may disturb the faint of heart.

2) The priesthood is more important than it ever was... and that's one of the biggest surprises. I am baffled by those who leave the priesthood or withdraw from active involvement because they see no important contribution that a priest makes to human life or because, as they say, slipping into the jargon, the priesthood is irrelevant. We did not need Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple to remind us that most humans still desperately want religious truth by which to live and a religious leader who proclaims and practices such truth. The "identity crisis" of the priesthood — real enough for many, God knows — is based either on a failure to read the signs of the times or a failure of nerve (or faith).

3) My third comment is more somber. Most of the suffering I've had in my quarter-century in the priesthood has come not from bigots in the academy or the press, not from hierarchical leadership, not from pushy laity, but from other priests. Even though I have in this column and on many other platforms given bishops a hard time, many of them have become close and loyal personal friends — in part, I suspect, precisely because I give them a hard time. Yet most priests, I think, dislike me, not because of what I write or who I am. (They don't read what I write and they don't know who I am.) They are offended that I write and that I am.

If a priest has modest amounts of talent and/or

luck and gets some public attention, he ought not to be cast out into the exterior darkness by his priestly colleagues. I make that assertion not as an ethical or spiritual dictum, but as an organizational one. The church cannot afford to have such sanctions imposed on its trained professionals.

I know of many priests with much greater gifts than those given to me who do not use them because of the punishment clerical culture would impose upon them if they dared do anything different. Indeed, in violation of the gospel injunction, they bury their talents convinced in good faith that it is morally and spiritually the proper thing to do.

The old argument is that such a burial was a sacrifice for the good of the church. In truth, however, the good of the church requires more talent rather than less. One of the major tasks in the years ahead is to train a clergy supportive of those who have special talents (even modest ones) so that the surprises will continue and so that there may be adequate response to the demands of the laity for religious leadership.

Dobner Cited

Charles (Chuck) Dobner, an advertising sales representative of the Courier-Journal, will be honored as "Sportsman of the Year" at the Butterhole Sportsnite banquet May 17 at Logan's Party House. The sixth annual dinner will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Dobner, who starred with St. Michael's and Edison Tech baseball teams, and later played with St. Louis Cardinal farm clubs, will be cited for more than a quarter of a century of service to young people's baseball teams in the area. Jim Van Auker is chairman of the dinner committee. Tickets may be reserved through 454-4068.

May Devotions Each Tuesday

Ithaca — Immaculate Conception Parish is sponsoring May devotions on Tuesdays during May at 7:45 p.m. in the church. All are invited to the devotions, which were well attended last year. Those who need transportation can contact Mary Camobreco at 273-7325, or Sister Elizabeth Hughes, 273-6121.

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