COURIER-JOURNAL

Fr. Albert Shamon

Word for Sunday

Prayer . . . **More Precious** Than Money

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 16:1-13. (R1) Am.8:4-7. (R2) 1 Tm. 2:1-8

Most of us do not have excessive money like the rich merchants addressed by the prophet Amos. Maybe we ought to thank God that we don't, for it is so easy for found, be enlightened, be money to possess us. Money is like poison in a bottle; it is all right in the bottle, but don't let it get into the blood stream, as the merchants denounced by Amos did. Even the greedy steward in the gospel made crooks out of his friends to save his own skin. What crimes today are, committed for money! Behind the drug traffic, alcoholism, por-nography is the lust for money.

The test of whether or not money has a hold on our hearts is how well do we give it away to God or to the poor.

However, very few of us have a problem with giving away money; rather the problem is getting enough of money to be able to give away. Be that as it may, St. Paul says there is something. far more valuable than money. that is within the power of each of us to give away. This precious gift is prayer. When Tcelin the Tawney, the father of St. Bernard, protested to his son that he could do nothing by following him in religious life, St. Bernard said, "Father, you can pray."

Prayer for whom? 1 think the major difference between prayer before Vatican II and prayer after the Council is this: before Vatican II, our prayer, our devotions, were pretty much personal, private, individualistic, self-centered. Now I think our prayer is more communal, catholic, universal, evangelistic, reaching out to others. Such a thrust to prayer is very biblical. Our Lord taught us



to pray thus in the "Our All of us are in it Father." precisely because "you" and I" are not in the prayer. So Paul tells us to pray primarily for others: for all men, ex-pecially those in authority. His reason is that God wills the salvation of all men!

Men may be lost but they can be found. Men may be ignorant, but they can be enlightened. Men may be sinners, but they can be saved. God's will is that man be saved. Therefore Paul admonishes us all to pray for all. men. At Fatima, our Lady reechoed the same plea: "Pray, for sinners," she asked.

St. Paul in the second reading gives three reasons why prayers may sometimes not be answered. First, we do not pray "with blameless hands;" that is, we say one thing and do another. We are not unlike the merchants in Amos, who kept the Sabbath only as hollow mockery or the steward in the gospel who was a Jew, and so "religious," but





a crook!

Sometimes we are not "free-from anger." We hold grudges against another. Did not Jesus command reconciliation before offering gifts at the discord quarrels fights.

Finally, our prayers fall on deaf ears because we are not "free from dissension." We talk about others. We create

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Each Sunday we have the opportunity to be generous with both our money and our prayers. How thankful we should be for this opportunity! On our Sunday envelopes I

have the words: "Give not because of the Church's need, but because you need to give. For it is in giving of our possessions that we do not. become possessed; and of our prayers that we shall receive.



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