

Fr. Albert Shamón



Word for Sunday

Cathedral

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 5:23-24; (R1) 1Kgs. 8:22-23, 27-30; (R2) Eph. 2:19-22.

Sunday is the feast of the Dedication of St. John Lateran. St. John Lateran, not St. Peter, is the cathedral church of Pope John Paul, Bishop of Rome. Every diocese has only one cathedral — for each diocese has only one bishop. "Cathedral" comes from the Latin word "cathedra"

which means "chair." The cathedral is the place where the bishop's chair is from which he presides during the liturgy. In St. John Lateran, John Paul's chair is in the right transept.

Constantine the Great built his church — his statue is in the vestibule — near the Lateran palace. The palace was given by Constantine to Pope Sylvester I as his residence. It was originally property that belonged to the noble family of the Laterani — and their name

was given to the church. The popes lived in the Lateran Palace until the Holy See was transferred to Avignon in 1307.

When the popes returned, they took up residence in St. Peter's. Perhaps most of us remember the Lateran Palace as the place where the Lateran Treaty was signed July 11, 1929, between the Holy See and Mussolini, creating the independent Vatican State.

A few tidbits about St. John Lateran Church. The facade, simple and monumental, is topped by 16 colossal statues of Christ and the apostles and saints. Like the Victor Emmanuel Monument, these statues can be seen from many parts of Rome. On the feast of St. John the Baptist, the piazza is packed with thousands of

people in carnival mood. They fire skyrockets and roman candles at the defenseless statues — a solid hit is supposed to bring good luck.

Why do we celebrate the dedication of John Lateran or of any other church? There are many reasons. John Lateran is the "Mother Church and head of all churches" — for it is Peter's Church, and Christ founded His Church on Peter.

The church building is the visible symbol of God's Kingdom on earth. Since it is founded on the apostles, twelve places on the walls of a church were anointed at the time of its dedication. These twelve spots are memorialized by 12 crosses with a candle lit before each cross, lit on the anniversary day of dedication.

God's church is also a house of prayer and the place of sacrifice for the people of God. The sun is everywhere along the Atlantic seaboard, but in winter it is more present in the South than in the North. So God is everywhere, but He is more present in the church than out of it. Here God listens to the cries of His people. Here too, during the Mass, Christ personally comes to bring grace and blessings through his visitation. To receive these abundant blessings, we need only to come with hearts full of love for all.

Conference on Aging Progressing Locally

The White House Conference on the Aging has been conducting mini-forums nationwide, including three at St. Ann's Home, to determine the concerns of the elderly on matters which affect them.

The national conference will explore ways in which the public and private sectors can assure a high quality of life for older Americans. It also will chart direction for full integration of older Americans in society.

Each forum is designed so that all the concerns voiced will be relayed through delegates to a county forum, a state forum and finally to the White House conference itself from Nov. 30 to Dec. 4, 1981.

Delegates from the three forums will attend the county forum from where concerns will be relayed to the state forum in Albany May 10-12, 1981.

Rockville Centre Diocese: Sign of Things to Come?

Rockville Centre — There are dioceses in the country already facing priest shortages more severe than currently existing in Rochester.

One that may offer some lessons for what could be Rochester's future is the Rockville Centre diocese, which vies for the dubious distinction of being the most priest-poor diocese in the country.

Rockville Centre, which covers the Long Island counties of Suffolk and Nassau, has about 500 priests, including the religious priests in the diocese, Msgr. John Dunn, diocesan priests personnel director, noted. That is more than Rochester, which, including religious priests, has a few more than 400 active priests.

But Rockville Centre has more than three times as many Catholics, with its 1.3

million, compared to the Rochester diocese's 350,000.

Even with that number of Catholics, Long Island is served by only 128 parishes (compared to Rochester's 162 parishes and 25 missions), which have memberships as high as 6,000 families, double the largest Rochester parishes.

New dioceses sometimes face several years of a priest shortage, and that is especially severe on Long Island, as the 22 years of the diocese's existence also have been years of rapid population growth.

Msgr. Dunn noted that they haven't had to close parishes yet, but are dropping those parishes with four priests to three, and those with three to two. Factors involved in the decision include effective non-ordained staff at the parish, as well as permanent deacons.

The impact of the deacons

varies, he noted. In the Rockville Centre diocese they are sponsored by their parish, and return to parish work. About 50 parishes have permanent deacons, he said.

While a parish having four priests sounds like a luxury, in a parish of 6,000 families, that would be a priest for every 1,500 families. A parish with 1,500 families in the Rochester diocese would most likely have two priests.

The vast difference in geography — Rockville Centre, with more than three times as many Catholics as Rochester, is roughly the size of Steuben County alone — limits the applicability of the Rockville Centre experience to our own diocese. But its use of large parishes to deal with twice as many parishioners per priest could foretell future changes.

—Toombs

Shortage

Continued from Page 1

While many efforts will be needed to lessen impact of the shortage of priests, Bishop Hickey notes that the only lasting solution is an increase in vocations.

To that end, the diocese has established a full-time vocations director, Father Thomas Valenti, to educate young people about the priesthood and religious life.

And while such efforts, and the continuing requests for prayers for vocations, are worthwhile, even if there is a large influx of vocations to the priesthood, it would take nine years before any additional priests were available.

The diocesan response to the situation was suggested by two related calls made by Bishop Hickey and Bishop Clark at the convocation of the Diocesan Pastoral Council in September.

Bishop Clark noted the need to examine underutilized buildings in the diocese, citing the need for proper stewardship of the real estate and the fuel used to heat them. He called for the development of a planning process so money won't be wasted on unnecessary buildings.

Bishop Hickey, noting the excessive demands placed on

some priests and the worsening priest shortage, expressed the impending need to "amalgamate parishes" to get the most efficient use of the personnel available.

Both called for a planning process which will directly affect the future of the diocese's parishes, as will the study currently being done on the role of the permanent deacons.



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