

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Suffering Can Pave The Way

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 23:35-43. (R1) 2Sam. 5:1-3. (R2) Col. 1:12-20.

Perhaps one of the mightiest movies of all times was Cecil B. De Mille's "King of Kings," produced more than 50 years ago.

It dramatized the inspiring story of Jesus of Nazareth. More than a billion people saw it. Will Rogers explained its popularity to De Mille this way: "You will never make a greater picture, because you'll never find a greater subject than Jesus."

Merton to Be Subject Of Lecture

Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk who became one of the leading Catholic writers and social critics of the 20th Century, will be the focus of a lecture at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 12 (tonight) at Nazareth College.

Dr. Chalmers MacCormick, professor of history and philosophy at Wells College, will discuss "Merton on Woman (Human and Holy)" at the meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Rochester. The lecture will be in the Forum of the Otto A. Shults Community Center and will be open to the public.

MacCormick has written articles on Merton and is working on a "Merton Reader on Mysticism."

Msgr. William Shannon, chairman of Nazareth's religious studies department, is director of the Thomas Merton Society which was established at Nazareth College in 1976.

Retreat Scheduled

Elmira — The Elmira Divorced, Separated and Widowed Catholics Group is sponsoring a "mini-retreat" Saturday, Nov. 15, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Mount Saviour Monastery. Father Martin Boler, prior, will be the spiritual leader. Participants should bring a lunch; beverages will be provided.

Card Party Planned

Elmira — St. Mary's Rosary and Altar Society will have a dessert-card party Thursday, Nov. 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the Marian Center. There will be a \$1 donation, with tickets available at the door. Chairing the event is Isabelle Larrabee.

Of all the tributes De Mille received for producing this movie, the one he treasured most was a letter from a woman who only had a few days to live. Her nurses had wheeled her to a hall to see the movie. She wrote: "Thank you, thank you for 'The King of Kings.' It has changed what is about to happen to me from a terror to a glorious anticipation."

Perhaps the best way to look at Sunday's gospel is through the eyes of a TV camera. First the camera scans the milling crowd: silent witnesses, shouting no insults, just callous cruelty in which a sufferer becomes a diversion. Next, the camera moves in for a close-up: the leaders. Their consciences so bother them they must make sure they are right — that Jesus is an imposter! Like the bulls of Bashan, they keep bellowing: "Save yourself if you are the Messiah." Closer still, the camera focuses on the soldiers: Jew-baiting ruffraff, displaying a rare example of Roman humor with their placard, "This is the King of the Jews." Now

the camera zooms in close: first on the one criminal siding with the bullies to avoid being bullied; then on the other, like a Veronica or Simon, giving understanding.

Lastly it spotlights the King! Surrounded by hatred, He dispenses love. Giving His own life. He gives life. Victim of force, He wields power. He changes terror into glorious anticipation for another dying person as He looks to a thief and promises, "This day you will be with me in paradise."

The woman who wrote to De Mille, the thief who hung on the cross, were both suffering. Both expected

death soon. Both received new hope from Jesus.

Power is awesome, breathtaking. Sufferers detected kingly power in Jesus — power to save.

The last judgment was figured on Calvary: The Judge was in the center, and humanity on either side — divided into the saved and the lost, the sheep and the goats. When our Lord comes in glory to judge all men, He will have the cross with Him, but as a badge of honor, not shame.

The cross will be there, for judgment will be based on one's reaction to the cross. Suffering does not

necessarily make one better. Suffering can make unspiritual persons worse. The thief on the left of Jesus was certainly no better because of pain. He asked to be taken down from the cross. The thief on the right — moved by our Lord's prayer, "Father, forgive them" — asked to be taken up. Reprimanding his brother thief, he threw himself at the feet of divine mercy and asked forgiveness. He asked a man with thorns for a crown and a cross for a throne for a kingdom. It was the thief's last prayer — perhaps his first. It was answered! Not a saint, but a thief who knew how to suffer escorted the King of Kings into paradise.

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