

Bishop Anoints 150 at St. Mary's Rites

Elmira — More than 150 people were anointed and 25 were commissioned as

Eucharistic Ministers in rites at St. Mary's Church recently. Presiding over the rites was

Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

According to Father James Boyle, pastor, the anointing ceremonies had not been celebrated in the area in several years, and the occasion marked the first time the bishop had visited the parish.

Fathers Boyle, Robert Beligotti, associate; and John Leary and Raymond Wuest, pastors emeriti, joined Bishop Clark and Father Charles

Latus at the altar.

St. Mary's Parish extends from Elmira's south side to the Pennsylvania border. A large percentage of the population, Father Boyle said, is elderly.

CENACLE ADVENT

The Cenacle Renewal Center is hosting an Advent Retreat Dec. 4-6. Reservations are made by calling 271-8755.



Christmas Sale

Mrs. Anna Teeter, Irene Schantz, George Zitzler and Mrs. Elsie Isaac display candy wreaths being made by residents of St. Ann's Home for the annual craft Christmas sale, 2-4:30 p.m., Friday, Nov. 27, in the Bishop Kearney Auditorium of the home.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

We Await The Life Beyond Death

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 25:1-13. (R1) Wis. 6:12-16. (R2) 1 Thes. 4:13-18.

November is the month set aside by the Church to remember our departed ones. Sunday's readings, however, say two things to us, the living: "be prepared," for we shall die; and "be consoled," regarding those who have already died.

Originally, biblical "wisdom" referred to a special gift of God conferred on master craftsmen and especially those skilled in using words. By the end of the Old Testament, wisdom had become personified. In Hebrew the word for wisdom is feminine, for it symbolizes God creating and sustaining the world, like a mother.

The key to life is to encounter God at a personal level. Yet grace is a gift! God has to take the initiative in any encounter; must first come to us, give himself to us. Happily, God is eager and desirous of doing just that. As a queen seated on a throne in dazzling robes is easily identifiable in a crowd of courtiers, so God (Wisdom) "is resplendent... readily perceived. She hastens to make herself known... sitting by the city gate."

But like any other truly interpersonal relationship, a certain initiative is also required on the part of the one receiving such a gift. God is to be encountered only by those who "love... seek... desire... watch... Everything is grace, everything is God's generous doing — but we must cooperate by wanting and accepting His love.

The gospel endorses this concept by urging us not so much to be watchful (everyone in the gospel parable fell asleep) as to be prepared. It issues at least two warnings: First, it warns us that there are certain things that cannot be gotten

at the last moment. It's too late to start studying for the exam the night before. When on trial for his life, Socrates refused to defend himself. He declared this to be unnecessary, because all his life long he had been preparing against this hour. Secondly, there are certain things that cannot be borrowed or begged — namely, virtue and goodness.

In the second reading Paul consoles the Thessalonians. The letter is the first piece of writing in the New Testament (around 51 A.D.). Christians at the time expected Christ's second coming to be imminent. "Within a short time you will lose sight of me," Jesus had told the apostles after the Last Supper, "but soon after that you shall see me again." Some interpreted this to mean His second coming.

When some Christians died before this happened, the living wondered whether or not their departed ones would be at a disadvantage at the second coming.

Paul plainly stated that those alive at the Parousia would have no advantage over those who had fallen asleep. Paul spoke of death as a sleep. From sleep one generally awakes. From death one is raised. Therefore, Paul wrote, we must not yield to grief as those who have no hope.

The pagans had no hope: they saw death as the end to life, a dead-end street. They responded to death, therefore, either stoically or cavalierly. The Stoics suppressed all feelings; the Epicureans gave expression to all feelings: eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die.

Christians, however, have hope, for Jesus who died rose from death. Therefore those believing in Him shall also rise after death. Unlike the Stoic, we may grieve for our departed loved ones; unlike the Epicureans, we may not debauch, for we look to a life to come — a far, far better life than we have ever known.

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