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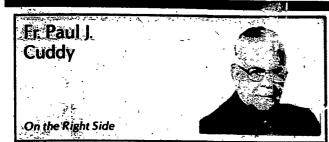
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'Cultic' Priesthood Paramount

In a Feb. 10 article on the essence of the priesthood, I expressed my delight at the response of Matthew Hill, who served my Mass at Good Counsel. This 10-yearold nephew of Father James Schwartz replied to my inquiry, "What does your uncle do?" with a succinct: "He doesn't do nothing (sic). He's just a priest."

think that is I uproariously funny and atthe same time illustrative of 'an implied theological fact: the priesthood is concerned essentially with celebrating the Sacrifice of the Mass, and that all the accidentals which devolve from the priesthood, viz. visitation of the sick, counseling, etc., do not supercede the cultic charge of the priest. Ordination to the priesthood is ordination to celebrate the supreme cultic work of praise and adoration of our Crcator, which we have called "The Mass" since the

Fr. Albert Shamon

Word for Sunday

Covenant: A Special Contract

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 1:12-15. (R1) Gn. 9:8-15. (R2) 1 Pt. 3:18-22.

The first readings for the Sundays of Lent revolve around one theme: covenant! The covenant with Noah (First Sunday); the covenant with Abraham (Second Sunday); the covenant with Moses (Third Sunday); breaking the covenant (Fourth Sunday); and the new covenant (Fifth Sunday).

Beçause covenant theology plays so large a part in salvation history, it is well that we understand what covenant is.

Paradise was lost by a lack of faith.

It can be regained only by acts of faith.

Faith means believing in somebody (the Hebrew verb "to believe" is aman - our Amen).

To be able to believe in somebody presupposes that somebody is making promises to us.

That is why covenant has to be part of the warp and woof of salvation history: to give man the opportunity to make acts of faith. For build me a swimming pool. I give him the specs: kidneyshaped, 18' by 40'. He gives me the price — \$15,000. I determine the kind of pool I want; he determines the kind of price he wants. If either fails to deliver, the contract is cancelled. Covenant is not that kind of contract.

The contract of adherence is unilateral: one party makes the terms, the other party is free to accept or reject them - but once accepted, the other party must adhere to the terms or suffer the consequences. For instance, an alien comes to the United States. After a while the alien decides to become a citizen. Uncle Sam says, "O.K., but you must do this and this, and live up to the laws of the land." The alien studies the stipulations and accepts them. As long as he adheres to them, he can enjoy the blessings of American citizenship. Should he renege, he's deported.

Covenant is a contract of adherence. It is a one-sided contract: God makes all the terms and promises. The Pentateuch describes three covenants: with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel through Moses.

The Covenant with Noah was man's second, chance after the era of creation; a new beginning. The sign of this covenant was a rainbow. After the Flood, there had to be a rainbow in the sky. The Hebrew word we translate "rainbow" usually meant "bow of war." The beauty of the ancient conception is clear! God shows the world He has put aside his bow; is no longer at war with the world. When a Choctaw Indian made peace, he handed over his bow with the arrow pointing to himself. God's bow in the clouds, is pointed toward heaven, not earth - a sign, Therefore of neace.

time of St. Ambrose. This 1,500-year-old term 'was found offensive to the antitraditionalists who replaced the term "Mass" with "Eucharistic Celebration," a term correct enough. But such clamor for change, so much of which has been abrupt, has disturbed many.

Probably I feel so strongly about this because of a heroic letter to the editor of the Courier-Journal, written four or five years ago, and signed by 17 students at St. Bernard's Seminary. The letter was one of those protesting things - I don't recall just what they were protesting - but I do remember vividly a slur at the idea of a "cultic priesthood." The general import of the letter was that the priesthood was not cultic; i.e., pertaining to divine worship, but a kind of ecclesial Human Development Service. I doubt that 16 of the 17 seminarians adverted to the theological implications of the slur; i.e., that the priesthood is a non-cultic calling, which is both a weird bit of heresy and a remarkable violation of rhetoric. But it did betray a

naivete in signing a paper without studying what they were signing. Wise men read the fine print even in contracts.

> A Rochester friend said to me: "That was a terrible thing you said about Father Schwartz!" "Oh. What was that?" "You said his job was kind of nebulous." I was astonished at her reading. Father Schwartz I have admired for many years. He is a perennial student and received a doctorate from the Colgate Divinity Schools after his dissertation on hospital care. He was an effective chaplain at Rochester General Hospital, succeeding Father Dan Tormey and preceding Father Don Schwab. I know his accomplishments better than most since he often engaged me to supply for him when he was away.

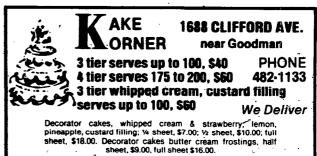
To say he has a kind of nebulous job is not a pejorative criticism but a valid observation. He organizes groups of priests to give fraternal support to one another. He is concerned with priests who may have problems with health or even vocation.



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covenant is simply somebody making promises to us to do something for us. And faith, the correlative of covenant, is simply saying, "I believe in you; that is, I trust you will keep your promises to do what you say Faith consequently expresses itself in obedience. Obedience is the child of faith; and faith is the response demanded by covenant.

Covenant is a special kind of contract or compact with God. In law there are two kinds of contracts: the simple contract and the contract of adherence.

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The simple contract is bilateral both parties make the terms; if either one defaults the contract is null and void. For instance: I go to Joe Doaks and ask him to loving

The waters of the Flood are a type of baptism: our covenant with God. He promises life eternal, but on the condition we renounce Satan and his works. What are the works of Satan? Anything that, is divisive, that smacks of hate, discord, dissension; anything, in a word, that is the opposite of - °

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