

# COURIER-JOURNAL

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## The Seven Last Words

Known as the "Seven Last Words," the final utterances of Christ as He hung on the cross provide fit and interesting Lenten meditation. Each week during Lent, a different diocesan priest will discuss each of these "last words" in the Courier-Journal. The second writer of this special Lenten series is Father Elmer J. Schmidt, pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Apalachin.

By Father Elmer J. Schmidt

As the snow was falling upon Apalachin this morning, one of our refugee families proudly entered church and showed off their infant daughter. The whole community seemed pleased and happy.



Fr. Schmidt

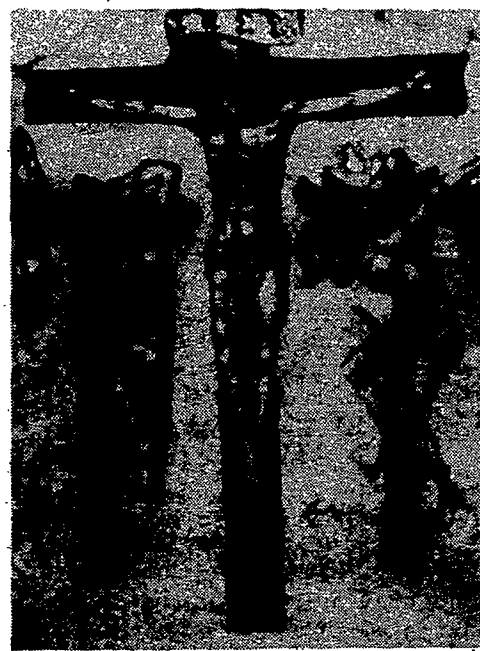
The scene made me think of parents' true love for their children. Right from birth, a baby can be very demanding and irritable; but a mother and father seem to understand, so they freely give and forgive, unconditionally. Children need only glance towards their parents and accept their goodness.

family helps me better understand the Words of Jesus to the good thief on the cross. "I assure you this day you will be with me in Paradise." At one time I wondered about God's justice. How can a thief merit heaven so quickly?

Now I think of the newborn. He or she doesn't merit a warm, comfortable home. The infant may even have caused pain in labor, sleepless nights and added bills; but once a child looks towards the parents, their love opens the doors and shares the treasures.

This is why Jesus promised instant paradise, showing God's genuine love for man. We need only look towards God and accept His kingdom. We do not work for it or deserve it. Heaven is a free gift.

At times some of us become disturbed about the gifts and blessings of others, especially when they succeed without



66  
*I assure you this day you will be with me in Paradise.*

”

Seeing this unconditional love in a

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## Barn Setting For First Mass

In a series of occasional articles as warranted by events, the Courier-Journal will provide running coverage of the growth of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish from its smallest beginnings to its eventual emergence as a full-fledged diocesan community.

By John Dash

"Christianity began in a humble way," the pastor said, therefore it was fitting that the very first gathering of a community of Christians should also reflect that humble birth.

And so it did. Father William Amann, pastor of the newly established parish of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, gathered about 100 of his flock the night of Ash Wednesday in a barn to celebrate the first parish Mass.

Braving sub-freezing temperatures, Hamlin-area Catholics assembled in the straw-strewn barn of Stanley Pogroszewski on Route 19, making way for the cattle and the chickens and the cats, to share with each other the sense that in the beginning, "only in the Lord can we have hope," as Father Amann put it.

But not all was solemn. The creatures displaced by the crowd of worshipers made occasional forays into the assembly. At one point a chicken decided to perch on the shoulder of a startled parishioner and was only dislodged after some ado.

And in general there was a great sense of camaraderie evident.

Greeting the crowd before Mass was Robert Solan, soon to be ordained a permanent deacon. He told the people that he had been assigned by Bishop Matthew H. Clark to serve them. Solan is among the first class of regular permanent deacons to be ordained for the diocese.

And had they not met him before the Mass, Father Amann introduced himself as "silver-haired but golden-hearted — at least I hope I am."

Throughout his first sermon, Father Amann made constant allusion to the imagery of the farm setting: sowing seed, digging for roots, planting and harvesting.

On the last, he encouraged each worshiper to take some of the



Beneath the bare lightbulbs in the Pogroszewski barn, Father Amann reads the words of St. Elizabeth Seton to his new parishioners. At the lower left, a chicken strikes an attentive pose. To the right, a calf gazes serenely from its stall as Mass proceeds.



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Photos by Terrance J. Brennan