

St. Mary Our Mother Church Sets 'Come Home' Program

Horseheads — The parishioners of the Church of St. Mary Our Mother have inaugurated an evangelization program entitled "Come Home for Easter," for the inactive Catholics of the parish.

"Come Home for Easter" is based on a program developed by Father Alvin A. Illig, CSP, director of the Paulist National Center for Evangelization in Washington, D.C.

To date, the parish has

mailed more than 11,000 letters to people in the towns of Big Flats, Catlin, Horseheads and Veteran in order to reach out to and invite these people.

The six-week program began Feb. 6 and will culminate in an invitation to inactive Catholics to a Week of Hospitality, March 13-18.

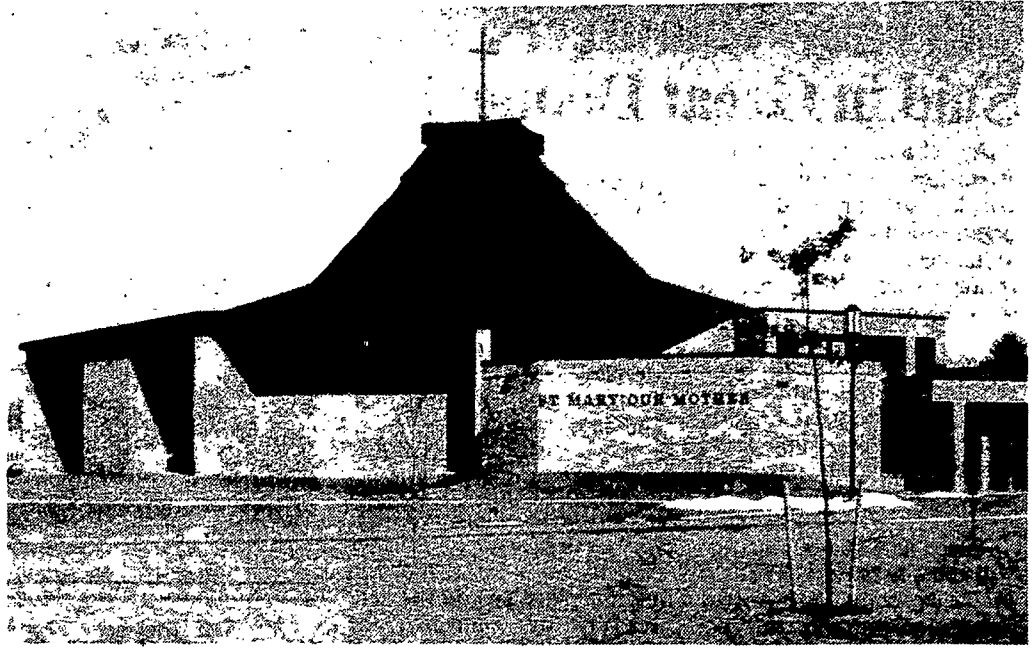
During that time, "they can get a second look at the church, have their questions answered and resolve any possible difficulties," a parish

release from Father Francis Blighton, associate, said.

During the week, talks will be presented with different topics each day. The parish has slated this program at 7:30 p.m. for those who can only attend in the evening, and at 9:30 a.m., for those who can only attend in the morning.

"Thus far the response has been most gratifying," the release stated.

Further information on the program is available by calling the parish rectory at (607) 739-3817.



Church of St. Mary Our Mother.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Sharing Reconciliation

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 15/1-3, 11-32. (R1) Jos. 5/9-12. (R2) 2 Cor. 5/17-21.

Alexander the Great in his conquest of Persia told his officers that when he conquered Persia, he would destroy all his enemies. To celebrate that conquest, Alexander had a lavish banquet for his officers. When they entered the banquet hall, they were amazed and dismayed to see Alexander with the enemy officers all around him. His own officers said to Alexander, "We thought you were going to destroy your enemies?"

Alexander answered, "I have. I have made them my friends."

Sunday's readings are all about reconciliation. The first reading celebrates Israel's liberation from Egypt and so their reconciliation to God. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians uses the word "reconciliation" five times in five sentences. And the parable of the Prodigal Son is simply a story of reconciliation.

Now the basic Greek word for reconciliation is *allasso*, which means "to change." It signifies a change especially in relationships: to change enemies into friends, rebels into loyal subjects, and the estranged into sons again. In music we call such reconciling "harmonization." Reconciliation is a bringing into harmony opposites: sinners (all of us) and the sinless One (God); enemies into friends.

The first point to note about reconciliation is that we are reconciled to God rather than He is reconciled to us. Remember God is love and God never changes. So His love for us, like that of the father of the prodigal, never changes. He waits for us. He invites us to come home. In fact He sent His Son looking for us and the Son died for us to bring us back home.

Reconciliation, therefore, is a one-sided affair. God reconciles; man is reconciled. "God has reconciled himself to us through Christ... not counting men's sins against them." That is why the name for the sacrament

of the forgiveness of sins is better called "Sacrament of Reconciliation" than "Sacrament of Penance." Penance connotes our doing, whereas reconciliation connotes God's doing. And it is what God does — forgives — that is the important aspect of the sacrament. He forgives; He reconciles.

Of course the corresponding element to God's reconciliation is that we accept it. "Coming to his senses," the prodigal decided, "I will break away and return to my father." God's forgiveness, His offer of reconciliation, has to be appropriated, to be accepted by all us prodigals.

Once God has made reconciliation possible and once we have appropriated this possibility by returning to the Father through the Sacrament of Reconciliation — well then, we must share our experience with others. As St. Paul said, "He has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to us."

There are others who do not realize the love of God for themselves. The elder son in the parable lived right in the midst of his father's kingdom. He experienced all the blessings and benefits of living under his father's care — yet he didn't recognize the great love his father had for him. Because he didn't know this love, he was unable to see it extended to his younger brother.

Loved by God, we must love others — "be ambassadors for Christ."

Paul McCartney of Beatles fame wrote a hit rock record titled "Ebony and Ivory." Using the metaphor of ebony and ivory keys on the piano keyboard, he asked why we could not live in harmony with each other. His words speak specifically to racial harmony, but they carry a message for reconciliation in all of life. Sung by McCartney, a white, and Stevie Wonder, a black, the words go like this:

*"We all know
People are the same
wherever you go.
There is good and bad in
everyone.
We learn to live when we
learn to give
Each other what we need
to survive
Together alive.
Ebony and ivory
Live together in perfect
harmony.
Side by side on my piano
keyboard,
O Lord, why don't we?"*

EASTER SPECIALS

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