

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Now Is The Time Of Mercy

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 11:2-11. (R1) Is. 35:1-6, 10. (R2) Jas. 5:7-10.

When John the Baptist first preached, he expected the Messiah to be an avenging judge -- an axe-swinging, striking down the proud trees of wickedness; a winnowing fan, separating the good from the bad as wheat from chaff.

Then John baptized our Lord. At that meeting John saw something of the mildness and meekness of Jesus. On the next day, he pointed Him out, not as a judge, but as "the Lamb of God."

Later, Herod clapped John into prison. In prison, the old thoughts of a judging Messiah came back. When we are down, our ideas of God tend to get blurred. Perhaps it was like this with John. "Why is Jesus so silent?" he may have wondered. "Why doesn't He judge evil men, like Herod? When is He going to start consuming the wicked with fervent fire?" Then the doubt: "Are you He who is to come?" Don't we often look for a God of anger and destruction, especially when misfortune strikes the innocent?

Jesus' answer to John's doubt was, "Go back to John and tell him, not what I'm saying, but what I'm doing. Tell him, not what I'm claiming, but what is happening." John was told to ponder, not so much the words of Jesus as His deeds.

To discover the Church of Jesus Christ today, the same test is valid. Does it do His works? Does it preach the gospel to the poor? Does it inspire a Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a St. John Bosco, a St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Frederic Ozanam? Does it open the eyes of the intellectually blind? Help moral cripples to walk straight? Cleanse people from the

leprosy of sin? Unstop deaf ears to hear once again the voice of conscience? Give to the dead new life, new hope?

These aren't the works of judgment, these are the works of mercy. Service, love, kindness, forgiveness must never scandalize us. For now is the time of mercy, not judgment. So Jesus warned John and us, "Don't be scandalized if I don't seem to be what you expected. Religion is not what people make it; it is what God makes it: a service of worship, of mercy and of love."

John's doubts undoubtedly had raised doubts in the people's mind about himself. Perhaps those clothed in soft garments, sitting comfortably before Jesus, had already judged John. "Why, the prophet is as vacillating as the reeds swaying on the Jordan banks. The man doesn't seem to know his own mind." So they thought.

Consequently, after John's disciples had left, Jesus scanned the motley crowd, and pointed out the sharp contrast between them (seated in soft garments, self-indulgent, passing judgment) and the Baptist (austere, severe, desert-bred, preaching judgment) -- no shivering reed, but an oak, refusing to bend to curry a king's favor. "What did you go out to see in the desert?" Jesus asked. That was their trouble: they went out to see, not to hear; to be entertained, not to be changed.

And that so often can be the trouble with us in regard to religion. Like men luxuriously clad, we too can look for religion to amuse us, to comfort and to console -- and exclude discipline, self-denial, and the cross. Often we would bend it, reed-like, to cater to our whims and fancies.

Christ pointed to His works and to John's (imprisonment for the truth). Do we herald Christ in our works? In a play by Paul Claudel, a blind girl says, "You people who see, what do you do with your light?" Yes, what do we do with the light of our Faith?

AT YOUR PARISH

St. Christopher

North Chili -- THE DI-OCESAN "Tree of Light" Christmas Project will touch the members of St. Christopher's parish once again this year.

For a donation of \$2-5, one light will be illuminated on the tree in front of the church to commemorate a deceased loved one or in honor of someone living.

Last year over 145 lights were sponsored and the proceeds purchased a wheelchair for a child with Spina Bifida. This year proceeds will help to shelter the homeless.

The tree was lighted this past Saturday, Dec. 3, and will remain illuminated until after Christmas.

Old St. Mary's

HOLIDAY carol service, following the English tradition of Lessons and Carols, performed by the church choir and brass and handbell players, at 3:30 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 11, at Old St. Mary's.

A MINISTRY to divorced and separated people in the downtown area is being planned by the St. Mary's Church staff to begin in the near future. An informational meeting is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 12, at St. Mary's Rectory, 15 South Street. The public is invited and all input and ideas will be appreciated. Anyone needing further information should call Joan Young at 232-7140.

Holy Family

ROSARY Society Christmas Party, at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 14 in the Pine Room. Chairperson is Ms. Phyllis Mandara. A living rosary will be celebrated. Donation is \$2, and reservations may be made by calling Mrs. Dorothy Spahn, 235-3136. Deadline for reservations is Dec. 9. In lieu of a grabbag, the women are asked to bring canned goods or non-perishable foods for SWEM.

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St. Mary of the Lake

Ontario -- HUMAN Development Committee will sponsor an evening of Prayer for Peace at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 15. Service will include scripture readings, public prayers for peace, song, the rosary and litanies, as well as time for silent reflection on peace.

The service is open to the public and a fellowship hour will follow in the parish center.

Cathedral

CHRISTMAS party, sponsored by the Rosary Guild of Sacred Heart Cathedral, will open with devotions 7:30 p.m., Monday, Dec. 12. The RG&E

Women's Choir will entertain. This year the guild is collecting unwrapped gifts for the children at Industry. In addition, members are asked to bring a dozen Christmas cookies.

Holy Apostles

ADVENT Dinner, sponsored by Rosary Society of Holy Apostles Church, starts with mass, 5:30 p.m., Dec. 14 in the school hall.

Reservations are made by calling Mrs. Lucille Hollis, 254-5178; Theresa Mariotte, 254-7703. Canned goods for the poor will be collected.

St. Agnes

Avon -- COOKIE swap and meeting for the St. Agnes Rosary Society will follow benediction, 7:30 p.m., Dec. 14 at St. Agnes Church.

Members are asked to bring three dozen Christmas cookies and recipes for the swap. Dolores Meath and her band are in charge of arrangements.

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



EDWIN SULEWSKI FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Why is there such an emphasis on death and grief today?

There have been great advances in medical science which have removed death from the daily lives of most Americans. Because of this we are generally unfamiliar with death and grief. We are fortunate that our experience. We are fortunate that our experience with death has lessened, but nevertheless it's important to learn about the things we can do to help ourselves and friends. Making wills and understanding how to help our grieving friends will help us cope better when the stress of a death comes into our lives. Avoiding death by ignoring it, by not making wills or by not going to funerals or visitations is a denial of reality!

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New Group Offers Aid To Bereaved

Family Service of Rochester is offering a new ongoing support group called "Coping with Grief" to anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one through death. The group will meet weekly, 7 to 8:30 p.m., Thursday beginning Dec. 15, at the agency's central office, 30 N. Clinton Avenue. A fee, based on a sliding scale, will be charged.

Facilitator for the group will be Martha Howden, MSW. Howden is a staff member of the Aging Service/Legal Services to the elderly team at Family Services and has conducted many groups. Anyone interested in more information or joining the group should call Lillian Merry or Martha Howden at 232-1840.

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