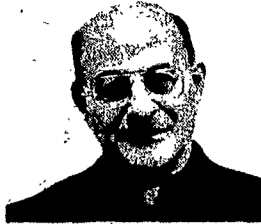


A Word for Sunday

With Father Albert Shamon



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 6:1-6; (R1)Ezekiel 2:2-5; (R3) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Thursday we celebrate the Fourth of July.

When Jews celebrate their Passover, the youngest child asks: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" So, we may ask, "Why a Fourth of July?"

Many years ago, the Fathers of our country signed a piece of paper called the Declaration of Independence. They did this on the Fourth of July, 1776. "Independence" means "growing up and being on one's own."

Our Founding Fathers wanted America to be the best, so they made some rules and wrote them down. Because they remembered to pray, the Spirit of God was with them. They called the paper with rules "The Constitution."

The Constitution tells us that "all men are created equal." It says "all men" — that is, everybody, each and every one, you and me.

"Are created" — that is, specially made, custom-built by God's own hand, unique.

"Equal" — that is, everyone is important, whether born or unborn; whether big or little; rich or poor; black, white, yellow, brown or red. Everyone is special, somebody, special! That is the way God planned it. That was how the Constitution spelled it out over 200 years ago.

A Fourth of July celebration ought to focus on three things: the past, our heritage; the present, celebration; and the future, horizons.

For our heritage, we owe God adoration. A man is never so tall as when he kneels before God. Never more dependable than when he depends on God. Never so strong as when he draws upon God's strength. Doubters, men of science, materialists will not save liberty; only men of faith, of deep religious convictions, for only men who rely on God are reliable men.

For our heritage, we must also ask

God's forgiveness. For every gift there is a corresponding duty. Lincoln said: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God! ... Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us." Lord have mercy.

For our present, we owe God thanksgiving. "What have we that we have not received? And if we have received it, why should we glory as if we had not received it?" The Eucharist is thanksgiving. Is the decline in Sunday Mass attendance a proof Lincoln was right?

Lastly, for the future — what? The dim unknown lies in the hands of God. Therefore, it behooves us to invoke in prayer the Lord of history, guardian and guide of the destinies of nations. So on the Fourth, wouldn't it be a true celebration if we cut out the following prayer and pray it after supper that day as families? Here's the prayer:

Father, a handful of courageous men in a moment of danger pledged their lives, fortunes and honor to proclaim a nation whose citizens' rights were based not upon the nod of king or ruler, but upon creation at Your hands.

Grant to the executive branch a ministry of service to all, not to the few.

To the Congress, the upholding of public interest over competing private claims.

To the judiciary, a wisdom in interpreting the law grounded in principle, not in expediency.

Pour Your Spirit out upon us, the citizenry, so that we may become active in the affairs of our government.

May our nation use its mighty power for the healing of differences among nations and work for justice and peace and liberty for all.

Amen.

On the Right Side

With Father Paul J. Cuddy



On the Value of Witnessing

A few weeks ago, this column addressed the subject of "witnessing." It recounted my going to Tom's Diner in Webster and sitting at the counter on a stool next to a talkative five-year-old boy. It narrated that when I was getting ready to leave, a young man took my check, saying: "I'd like to pay for your lunch," and my thanking him, enquiring what parish he belonged to. The column noted my exasperation to learn this nice young man was a baptized Catholic who had left the Church to become a Bible Christian, and my explosion: "What's the matter with you people? You know the Catholic Church was founded by Christ and has been with us for 2,000 years. 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.'" This article brought a number of interesting reactions. Here is one of special interest:

From a Disappointed Reader:

"I was very much touched by your letter a few weeks ago in the Catholic Courier. You said you were going to lunch in order to witness. The young man who paid for your meal was your witness from God. He took the first step toward you (back to the Catholic Church). If you would have given him a chance to be heard, maybe he would be back in our community.

"The reason many people have left the Catholic Church is that they were not fed! Nobody took the time to lessen their problems. They did not have community. They didn't have that special person to sit next to, like that small child whom you wrote about at Tom's Diner. That man was reaching out for your good ear. People are not leaving the Church for the excuses you put in the paper. That's a cop-out. Movies ... nuns ... media are not the reasons. If we as people keep passing the buck, there won't be any Catholic Church to bring new members to some Easter!

"Father Henri Nouen whom you mentioned is quite right. Please read his first of three parts: 'The selfless way of Christ' in Rama paper for April. More articles like this instead of your blaming everybody but yourself would be better in the Catholic Courier. I am going to pray for you. God bless ..."

Reply to Disappointed:

You may be right. And I do know how many faults and sins I have better than anyone else, and daily pray: "O Lord, I am not worthy. Do speak the word that my soul may be healed." That is why I do appreciate and thank you for your promise of prayers.

I am presently reading "Lamy of Sante Fe." It is a fascinating book by historian Paul Horgan, who specializes in the Southwest of the States. If we think things are tough in the Church today, it is good to read how tough it was over a century ago, trying to establish the Church in the Southwest.

You are probably rather young, but if you are 50 or more, you might remember that wonderful book "Death Comes to the Archbishop" by Willa Cather. She was not a Catholic, but she certainly understood the spirit of the Church and the frailty of her members, including the clergy. Yet she also admired the nobility of those like Archbishop Lamy and others, especially the Sisters of Loretto who helped establish the Church in Sante Fe. You should be able to get these in the public library. Two of our fine parishioners, Andrew and Marianne Gutacker, were thrilled with the book. Marianne said: "We know all those places and pueblos written about in the book. And we visited that miraculous staircase in the chapel of the Sisters of Loretto which is said to have been built by St. Joseph." Years ago, I stopped for two days in Sante Fe and wish I knew the history then, as I do now.

Seemingly, you are involved in the charismatic movement. Only today I received a long, thoughtful, intelligent letter on the movement from a Christ-filled Catholic in Owego. He wrote: "I have just finished reading Ralph Martin's 'A Crisis of Faith' which you recommended in one of your columns. I would like to say that I found virtually nothing to disagree with; much of what he said I have either observed directly or have close friends who have experienced the situations and conditions described." Our Holy Trinity Prayer Group sold over 60 copies. Perhaps you would like to read it.

THE COURIER-JOURNAL CLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad call 454-7050 between 8:30 and 4:30 Monday through Friday. You may enclose payment with your ad or include a billing address.

General

Card of Thanks 2
THANK YOU St. Jude, St. Theresa ("the little flower"), for favors received.MHA
THANK YOU St. Jude for favor received.NDM
THANK YOU St. Jude, Sacred Heart of Jesus for favors gratefully received. DCA
THANK YOU St. Anne, Holy Spirit, St. Anthony, St. Jude, Our Lady, St. Theresa for prayers answered. A.H.
THANK YOU Holy Spirit, Saint Jude, Saint Anthony, Sacred Heart for favors received. M.A.
THANKS to St. Jude for prayers answered.EMC
THANKS to Sacred Heart and St. Jude for all favors received.PV
THANKS to Sacred Heart, St. Jude, Blessed Mother, St. Theresa, St. Ann for favors received. FAM&FTM

Announcements 7
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Furniture 38
SOFA Lawson-style, Persian-blue striped slipcover, clean. High chair, chrome, perfect condition 473-7387

Property

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FAN 23-foot Travel Trailer. Large awning, storm windows. Excellent condition. Must sell cheap. (315)253-8429

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