

# A Word for Sunday

With Father Albert Shamon



**Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:41-51; (R1) 1 Kings 19:4-8; (R2) Ephesians 4:30-5:2.**

The gospels of the first three Sundays of August are taken from Jesus' discourse on the bread of life given in the synagogue at Capernaum.

The synagogue of Capernaum, like the rest of the city, is a heap of ruins today. When I viewed it a few years ago, the guide remarked that all the seashore cities of Galilee that had rejected Jesus are today a heap of ruins.

When Jesus referred to Himself as the bread come down from Heaven, a grumble of protest rumbled through the crowd. "The Jews started to murmur in protest." Here, for the first time, John calls the Galileans "Jews." Normally, John reserved this term only for the Judeans who were hostile to Jesus. Jesus' words evoked hostility, because their truth often begets hate. So, John branded these Galileans "Jews." Their seething hate surfaced in their expression, "Is this not Jesus ...?" "This" was a term of disparagement, much like "this fellow" or "this upstart" or "Who does this one think he is?"

John also uses the word "murmur" — the same word used of the Hebrews Moses had led out of Egypt, who murmured because they had no bread. John lumps this crowd in with those runaway slaves who rebelled so often against God that the Book of Numbers is often titled "The Book of Murmurings." In the end, none of them, save Joshua and Caleb, entered the Promised Land, just as all these hearers of Jesus left Him and "would not remain in His company any longer."

Jesus, deeply concerned about them, told them "Stop your murmuring." He went on to say, "Open up your hearts and listen, for no one can come to me unless the Father draws him." Jesus used the word "draw," for God always leaves our free will intact. "To-draw" is not to

force. Candy may draw a child to you. If it does, the child is acting of his own free will.

But how does the Father draw to Jesus? Jesus explained with a quote from Isaiah: "They shall all be taught by God." Not by any human teacher, not by conscience, not by experience, but by God — the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of Truth will guide you to all truth." (John 16:13.) Human teachers can reach only the ears; God alone can reach the heart.

And what will He teach us? That we all are sinners — "He will convince you of sin." That we all are helpless. That we need a Savior. That that Savior is Jesus. That He is the bread of life — the one who gives life here and hereafter.

And since He teaches in a still, low voice, Jesus pleaded with the hostile crowd to stop their murmuring so that the Holy Spirit could be heard by them. "If you hear Him," Jesus said in effect, "you will learn; and learning, you will come to me. For you will learn that I am the bread of life, that I alone can satisfy the hunger of the mind and heart. For I am the bread of life in a twofold sense: I nourish the mind, for I am the Truth; and I nourish the heart, for I am the Life. Therefore, the Way — the way to life through truth. I am the way, without Me there is no going. I am the truth, without Me there is no knowing. I am the life, without Me there is no living.

God did not abandon Elijah in his aloneness. Nor does God abandon us. When Elijah was so down and out that he wanted to die, God fed him. On the natural level, a good cure for depression is eating. On the supernatural level, depression, discouragement, the "dumps" can be cured by the bread of life (the Liturgy of the Eucharist). At every Mass, we can truly say, "I will go to the altar of God, the God of my gladness and joy." (Psalms 43:4.)

# On the Right Side

With Father Paul J. Cuddy



**Final report to Father Kanka:**

Remember the story of St. Francis? He said to one of the brothers: "Let us go into the city and preach." They just walked about the city and returned to the friary. The puzzled brother said: "I thought you were going to preach." Francis replied "Oh, we did," meaning that the people recognized them and what they stood for. That was a good sermon. I suppose that is why I so blatantly stalk about in many places: streets, bars, restaurants, anywhere there are people; and frequently enter into cordial conversations. However, not all my witnessing turns out to be an edification. Wednesday noon, I said to your housekeeper, Rita Lawrence: "Rita, will you make up a couple of sandwiches, and we will go to the senior citizens' luncheon at the Presbyterian hall." In deference to my clerical state, I was seated next to the gracious acting president.

Smith's Berry Farm had donated a bushel of strawberries, and all the seniors were atwitter. "We're going to have strawberry short cake with real whipped cream for desert." We did. And when I had a fourth helping, madame president looked politely quizzical. I smiled and said: "Do you know the Seven Capital Sins." She chuckled: "Well, one of them is gluttony!" But she did not seem overscandalized. People often regard us more kindly because of our weaknesses if they are no too bad or too gross.

Another night, I stopped at Juniper Manor where some 36 senior citizens who live there were having their monthly Juniper supper. They insisted on my having coffee and desert — several deserts in fact, skating close to that sixth Capital Sin. One noon, I stopped for a cup of coffee at that restaurant John Gormley used to run, and sat with a man about 35 and his seven-year-old daughter. His name was Irish, so I asked: "Are you a Catholic?" "No," said he. "But weren't ypu baptized a Catholic?" I persisted: "Yes, but I left the Church during Vietnam." "What was that all about?"

"Too long a story." I liked him very much: honest, macho, direct, and he has a darling little daughter who should be making her First Penance and First Holy Communion this year. I will send you the name and address for you to follow up.

The second last night, Rita, Grandmother Kenney, IHM Sisters George and James, and I went to Bill and Terry Kenney's for dinner. To meet a large family — what are there, five or seven children? — so personable, so ambitious, so intelligent, so ardently Catholic, people of utter integrity, gives courage and hope for the Church's future. It was the first time in 65 years I had unpasteurized milk, rich, cold, delicious. A highlight of the evening was a discussion on "What makes a good sermon." The Kenneys want one that stimulates the mind as well as the emotions, and leaves the listeners pondering. I suspect they like a bit of bombast, because they cited a sermon of indignation given by Father Ed Zimmer at Immaculate Conception Church, Ithaca, over a dozen years ago, in which Father Zimmer concluded his talk: "Even the bishop can go to hell!" Homilies with some fire and imagination and concrete illustrations are more effective than the dull recapitulation of the scripture of the day. Reminds me of the joke about a staid English parson who said: "Jesus has said, and I quite agree with him."

The finale of my five-day charge at St. James was a duo: the 10 a.m. Mass of the summer school children was celebrated especially as a Mass of thanksgiving for Dr. Ralph Lowe. He has served the Trumansburg area, civic and Church, for 50, golden years. The children sang hymns, and after the homily, they presented him with a bouquet of flowers, then with a spiritual bouquet, and finally a bouquet for his smiling wife, Ronnie. It was a cheerful, tearful and happy affair, and ended with a nice reception in the hall beneath the church.

Thank you for inviting me to care for your parish. It was a special joy.



## Villa Students Visit Albany

Four students at St. Joseph's Villa School traveled to Albany to enter prints they designed in the New York State Very Special Arts Festival hosted by Governor and Mrs. Mario Cuomo. From left to right, they are Juanita R., Mike D., Lee S. and Robert J.

## Arts Center Fall Schedule

The Arts Center of Nazareth College announces its 19th season of variety in entertainment for adult and youth audiences. Beginning in September, all shows are at 8 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Comedy greets adult audiences when the Second City National Touring Company from Chicago returns for its third season opener on Friday, September 20.

In a rollicking revival of the '50s, eight singers and dancers will take the stage for a tuneful and lavish production of "How Sweet It Was" on Saturday, Oct. 12.

On Friday, Nov. 1, actor Pat Hingle recreates his role of Thomas Edison (originally from the General Electric commercials) in a two-hour presentation of "Thomas Edison: Reflections of a Genius."

The six "Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord" by Johann Sebastian Bach will be performed by internationally acclaimed artists Sonya Monosoff (baroque violin) and Nazareth faculty member Barbara Harbach

(harpsichord). The first three will be played on Sunday, Oct. 27, with the others on Sunday, Nov. 3. Both performances are at 3 p.m.

American Ballroom Theater raises pair dancing to an art form as the company performs number ranging from the fox trot and waltz to the rumba and jitterbug on Saturday, Nov. 23.

Scheduled for 1986 are: the Copesetics on New Year's Eve at 7 and 10 p.m.; the National Black Touring Circuit presenting "I Have A Dream" and "An Evening With Paul Robeson" on Friday, April 4; Opera Theatre of Rochester presenting "Threepenny Opera" on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 24 and 25; National Dance Company of Senegal on Friday, Feb. 14; Marcel Marceau on Friday, Feb. 28; Tommy Makem and Liam Clancy on Friday, March 14; the Peking Acrobats on Sunday April 20 at 7 p.m.; and Jim Sheridan in "Waiting for Beckett" on Friday, April 25.

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