

A Word for Sunday

With Father Albert Shamon



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 9:30-37. (R1) Wisdom 2:17-20. (R2) James 3:16-4:3.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of the cost of discipleship. St. Mark, in the second half of his gospel, speaks of the conditions for discipleship. He lists two.

The first condition, as we saw last week, was the acceptance of the cross. To St. Rose of Lima, our blessed Lord said: "Let all men know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of affliction it is impossible to reach the height of grace... without the cross they can find no road to climb to heaven." This statement simply echoed His previous words: "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross (Luke adds 'daily'), and follow in my steps."

This condition was so difficult to grasp that our Lord had to speak of His cross three times on the way to Jerusalem. And three times He was misunderstood. In Sunday's gospel, he predicted His passion a second time. His disciples did not understand. In fact, "they were afraid to question Him," lest what they thought they were hearing be confirmed. They preferred to dwell in doubt rather than in certainty. So they quashed their rising suspicions and began squabbling about who was going to enjoy top rank in the kingdom.

It was at this juncture that Jesus laid down the second condition for discipleship — service (*diakonia*). Playing on the Aramaic word *talya*, which means "servant" or "child," Jesus taught them that greatness in the Church is to be found in service. In service to whom? To the members of the community most in need, to those who, like little children, are most helpless, most needy, most insignificant (little children are to be seen and not heard, are they not?). Then Jesus added that to receive such a one "for my sake" welcomes Him and His Father. This is the dignity of Christian service.

When St. Vincent de Paul asked St. Louise de Marillac to make shirts for needy neighbors, St. Louise answered,

"If the members of Jesus need them, and you wish me to provide them, I shall gladly do so." "Members of Jesus" was an expression frequently used by St. Louise. She always saw God in the poor. Of St. Vincent, it was said, "It is not the poor who led him to God but rather God who led him to the poor." One of the greatest apostles of charity in the Church was first of all a mystic. His love for God spilled over into love for "the little ones" of the kingdom.

Today one of the greatest services in the Church is often to children. First, we must let them have life, let them be born. How sad is abortion — not welcoming a child, thus rejecting Jesus and His Father. How we must pray for poor girls frightened into this frightful crime. It is not ours to judge, but to help them; not ours to criticize, but to pray and heal. Denounce the crime of abortion, by all means, for it is a horrendous crime. But as for the poor girl submitting to it — by no means! Love her; aid her, pray for her, bring her back to God.

Once a child is born, let it be reborn, give it divine life. Then nurture and nourish that life in Catholic homes and Catholic schools. In Catholic homes, that is, homes where there are holy pictures, where grace is prayed before and after meals, where the family rosary is said, where parents go to monthly confession and read the scriptures and build an environment of security and love. And Catholic schools. Oh, the terrible tragedy of closing a Catholic school! There is never, never the need to do so; where there is a will, there is a way. I know from personal experience. Anyway, Catholic schools are now staffed mostly by lay persons. Let them learn to love the Church deeply, frequent the sacraments, read about and teach the lives of the saints, develop a deep prayer life. In a word, Catholic schools must become truly "catholic," and this can be achieved only by teachers. A spirit is caught quicker than taught.

"Whoever welcomes a child... for my sake welcomes me."

On the Right Side

With Father Paul J. Cuddy



Q. Now we have had two decades of love preached at us, do you think there is more sincere love among our Catholic people?

A. That's a loaded question. Does it have a bit of vinegar? There was always been genuine charity, motivated by Christ and His Church. Poor Mother Teresa must be sick and tired of being Exemplar No. 1. I read an article recently in which she was musing whether she should go the universities to receive degrees. She said substantially: "I don't know just why they want to give me these degrees. They mean nothing to me, and I wonder if I should leave my care of the poor to go. I suppose the reason I do go is that I know that my presence at these affairs reminds people of the poorest of the poor." Parenthetically, I had a birthday greeting recently from a very bright woman in another diocese who wrote: "I'm afraid our pastor is getting ready to retire. He will leave us in the hands of a dear little Irish priest who preaches rabid socialism and doesn't think much of Mother Teresa. I may have to find another parish." Isn't it curious the hostility toward Mother Teresa that comes from some who think she should not be giving personal care but should be working to "destroy the structures." Last May, the National Catholic Reporter had a biting article by a religious criticizing Mother Teresa and her work.

Q. But Mother Teresa began her work before all this palaver about love since Vatican II.

A. True. But this "palaver" has always been palavered in the Church. Christ gives us the details in the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, and in His life and death. Does anyone surpass St. Paul's description of charity in 1 Corinthians XIII? "Charity is patient, is kind," etc. Father William Bergan, a fellow Auburnian and one-time chancellor of the diocese and rector of St. Monica's Church, Rochester, had us for English nearly 60 years ago at St. Andrew's Seminary. He made us memorize 1 Corinthians XIII and we all will be

grateful to him for that, though we hated memorizing.

Q. But St. Paul was 2,000 years ago. I have seen cruel things done since Vatican II in the name of love.

A. What else is new? When Karen Franz became editor of the Courier-Journal, I suggested to her: "Do bone up on Church history. Anyone who works intimately with Catholic institutions, whether big bureaucracies or smaller works, should be prepared for the shocks of un-Christian things which sometimes pop out. The consequences of original sin: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth are not destroyed by orthodox faith." The history of the Church from the Acts of the Apostles to this very day is full of regrettable even scandalous things. But on the other side, we should know the wonderful things in the Church: raising the condition of women from the terrible state at the time of Christ; the dogged fidelity to marriage expectations; the holiness of saints, canonized and non-canonized (Vincent de Paul, Damien the Leper, our Sisters in the missions, Bishop John Carroll, Padre Pio, Father Welch in the Philippines); the staggering good works done at Corpus Christi parish in Rochester and by many others in spiritual and social ministries in the diocese.

In his autobiography "Now I See," Sir Arnold Lunn described his gradual evolution into belief: of his debates with non-believers and with Catholics. Yet he did not become a Catholic. One day he read Father C.C. Martindale's "What Are Saints?" and when he finished the few pages on the life of St. Peter Claver S.J., apostle to Negro slaves in Cartagena, Columbia, he said: "What am I waiting for?" And he went to the Jesuit Church on Farm Street, London, was received into the Church and spent the rest of his life evangelizing with writings and lectures.

The important thing for you to do is to practice 1 Corinthians XIII, rather than worry whether we are better or worse since Vatican II.

Irondequoit Zoning Board denies approval for St. Joseph's Villa group home

Administrators at St. Joseph's Villa were described as "disappointed" last week when the Town of Irondequoit zoning board denied their request for a special use permit. With its 6-0 vote, the board placed on hold the villa's planned group home for teenagers trying to readjust to everyday life after treatment for drug and alcohol problems.

"We hoped the strength of our program would dispel any other concerns," said Marianne Virgilio, spokeswoman for the villa. Although the board voted unanimously, she described opinions expressed at three

earlier public hearings on the subject as almost evenly split between pro and con. "We were pleased with the support we found at the public hearings," Virgilio said.

She attributed the zoning board's vote to its focus on one point of the zoning law — that to gain approval for a special use permit, the buyers and seller, Stanley Schwartzberg, had to prove that denial of the request would cause financial hardship to the seller. Zoning board members pointed to other offers made for the property and the relatively short amount of time it had been on the market as

indications that no financial hardship was present.

St. Joseph's already operates five group homes, but this proposal would have been the first in New York state to provide a residential setting for youths in the recovery phase of treatment for drug and alcohol abuse. Admission to the six-to-nine-month program would have been voluntary, and applicants would have been required to complete previous treatment and be chemically free.

The St. Paul Boulevard site was chosen

because it not only was large enough to accommodate up to 15 youths, but was also convenient to public transportation and schools. The neighborhood setting was important to the program's aim of helping residents reintegrate into everyday life.

"We haven't decided what our next step will be," Virgilio said Monday, noting that an appeal is possible if a letter of intention is filed within 30 days.

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