

Turning Homeward

Deacon Joseph Holleran



I noticed it in the young girl on the first day she came to school. She was from Hillside Children's Center and, at age 14, was still waiting for adoption.

I heard it in the words of a troubled mother of four, who needed someone to listen to her for five minutes.

It was easy to see in the eyes of the older man who made his way down the aisle to his seat. It was there, too, in the expression of the 20-year-old man who sat behind him.

What I sensed was a disease — without a doubt one of the most widespread of our time.

It's the disease called loneliness. Loneliness that transcends all age groups and is found in every profession and business, every walk of life. No home or apartment is insusceptible, no school or neighborhood is immune.

It's that sense of separation that can paralyze us as we begin to feel that we are no longer involved in the struggle, the actions of living, and are becoming passive bystanders.

It's as if our lives were dying out behind us.

It causes us to cry out: "Doesn't anybody care? Is there anyone with whom I can feel at home?" If left unchecked, these feelings might even cause us to wonder if people wouldn't be better off without us around.

I'm sure after traveling 40 years in the desert, the Israelites were having those same feelings. "Where is God in all of this? What's He doing and when is He

going to get things straightened out and bring us to the Promised Land?" Yet God never forgot His covenant with them. He did not abandon them or destroy them. How often the Psalms remind us that God is our refuge, our shield and protection (Psalms 61, 64, 86, 91 and 103).

I forget that when I get too busy — and when the work becomes more important than the living. Or when I get down, really down, and my self-worth becomes near zero.

It feels as if I'm sitting on the floor in a cold, dark room inside my heart, and there is no one else around who can touch me. Or perhaps you've felt it like being in a deep, dark well with slippery sides and there seems no way to get out. How could anyone reach you there?

We forget that God is already in the room, in the well, and that His name is Emmanuel — "God with us."

At the end of the longest road, when it seems that hope has been crushed by every step — that nothing you do is right — and loneliness is beginning to gather like a long summer storm, there is Jesus, our God who has known and lived such a journey.

At the end of His journey, at the time of His final parting from the Apostles, Jesus left all of us a message. These are His last recorded words in the gospel of Matthew:

"And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world."

Remember these words and believe them. You will never be alone again.

A Word for Sunday

Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 10:2-16; (R1) Genesis 2:18-24; (R2) Hebrews 2:9-11.

The discussion about divorce in Sunday's gospel comes up while Jesus is journeying toward Jerusalem. This might seem an odd place for such a discussion; yet it is not so odd if we remember that our Lord's remarks about self-denial were still fresh in the minds of His disciples. Within this context, our Lord could have been implying that conjugal love must be sacrificial, a total self-giving. In his exhortation "On the Family" (*Familiaris Consortio*), John Paul II stated that "sacrifice cannot be removed from family life" (#34). That is why marriage vows are made at the altar. The altar is the place of sacrifice.

The question of the Pharisees on divorce was a malicious one: they asked Him "as a test." No Jew questioned the legitimacy of divorce — only the sufficient grounds for it. Mark, unlike Matthew, does not bring up the question of grounds because this dispute was Jewish, whereas Mark was writing for Gentile Christians. So Mark states the bald question: "Was it permissible for a husband to divorce his wife?" Jewish law did not allow a wife to divorce her husband; Roman law did. That was why Mark, when Jesus speaks privately to the disciples, offers His guideline regarding a woman who divorces her husband. He teaches that in this matter the sexes are on equal terms.

Jesus explains the permissive legislation of Moses in regard to divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as due to Jewish stubbornness — unteachableness, failure to acknowledge God's moral demands and obey the higher law contained in Genesis. They did what some modern theologians are doing regarding the moral law today in what our Holy Father condemned as the "gradualness of the law" — which gradually erodes the moral law by treating it as an ideal not binding on all men or all societies (idem, #34).

Jesus in one stroke sweeps away the permissive legislation of Moses and forbids divorce absolutely. Unlike Moses, He allows for no "stubbornness" of heart — the Kingdom must be

accepted "like a little child."

Jesus based His prohibition on God's creation "at the beginning." God made man to His image, but not a pure spirit, for He made them "male and female" — sexual beings, different precisely because they had bodies. But their differences are not antagonistic, but complementary, for they differ as the glass does from the wine that fills it or the violin from the bow that draws music from it. So the two are to become one, a totality, a completed whole. Therefore, they are drawn together by a force stronger than the closest blood ties — that of parents. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one." The ensuing bond is unbreakable because God Himself is the author of the marriage union: "What God has joined, let no man separate."

Actually, Sunday's gospel is not so much on divorce as on what marriage should be ideally — on what a real marriage should be.

In "On the Family," the Holy Father says that just as the Incarnation was a union of two natures, the divine with the human, so the first effect of marriage is the union of two persons. As the hypostatic union was the wedding of the two natures in one divine Person, so the marriage union aims at a deep, personal unity, a oneness of mind and heart. As Christ's love for us was unto death, so conjugal love must be faithful till death; as from the side of the dying Christ came the new Eve, the Church, so conjugal love must be open to fertility. In other words, the marriage union works toward a unity that is exclusive, indissoluble and open to fertility (idem, #13).

In other words, the question of divorce seems to call not only for great realism regarding human frailty, but also an awareness of a greater realism the real love of Jesus has for us and His Church. In Him rests the ultimate union of "two in one flesh." In Ephesians chapter five, St. Paul taught what perfect spousal love is — a wife's love must be like that of the Church for Christ, and a husband's love like that of Christ for His Church. In both instances, sacrificial love!

Waverly Parish Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to the shrine of St. John Neumann in Sugar Ridge, Pa., is planned by parishioners at St. James Church, Waverly, Sunday, Oct. 6. Travelers are asked to meet in the church parking lot at 1 p.m. sharp for the 45-minute trip.

In 1854, John Neumann, then bishop of Philadelphia, helped the people of Sugar Ridge choose a location for their church. Earlier, Neumann was assigned to Buffalo and spent several periods of time working with German Catholics in Rochester.

Father Karle, who cares for the shrine, will offer a special Mass for the group at 2 p.m. with cider and doughnuts served afterward. Organizers expect to return to Waverly by 4:30 p.m. and ask that participants dress warmly since the shrine is not heated. A collection will be taken for the shrine restoration fund. For more information, call (607)565-2014.

Benefit Documentary

"Seventeen," a film that deals with the nuances of racism, will be shown at the Little Theater on Thurs., Oct. 10, Tuesday, Oct. 15, and Tuesday, Oct. 22 at 9:30 p.m. Proceeds will benefit the Disarmament and Peace Task Force.

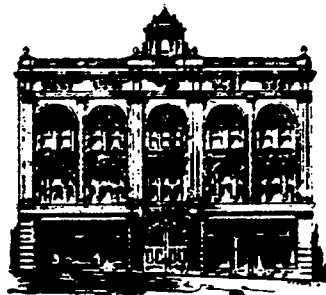
"Seventeen" is a drama about a white girl who dates a black boy and becomes the center of neighborhood-wide tension.

Tickets, at \$5-10 each, are available at the Peace and Justice Education Center Office, 713 Monroe Avenue.

Rosary March

The 19th International Rosary March is planned Sunday, Oct. 6 in downtown Rochester. Participants will assemble by the Liberty Pole at 2:30 p.m. and proceed via Main Street to Broad Street. The march ends at St. Mary's Church with Holy Hour. The theme of the march will be "For the Divine Gift of Wisdom for the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome." All are welcome.

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Jubilarians

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director. A Rochester native, she is from St. Cecilia's Parish.

Sister Roberta Rodenhouse (Sister Mary Bellarmine) is a pastoral assistant at St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Rochester. She served as principal of St. Thomas the Apostle School for six years and as religious education coordinator at St. Lawrence Parish, Greece, for six years. Prior to those ministries, she was an elementary school teacher for 11 years at St. Patrick's, Elmira; St. Thomas the Apostle, Rochester; St. Michael's, Newark; and Annunciation, Rochester. She also worked in the Mercy

High School office. She was born in Rochester and is from St. Andrew's Parish.

Sister Jane Schur (Sister Mary Stephen) has been on the staff of Rochester's Melita House for pregnant women since 1982. Before that, she taught for 19 years at Our Lady of Mercy High School, Cardinal Mooney High School and St. Rita's Grammar School, West Webster. She is a Rochester native and from St. Charles Parish. Her sister, Sister Alicia, SSJ, also celebrated her 25th jubilee this year.

Sister Sheila Sentiff (Sister Marie Cecile) teaches catechesis at the Trinity Montessori School of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Rochester. She taught for a year in a Montessori school in Washington, D.C. and later established Montessori programs in the primary grades of Good Shepherd School, Henrietta; the Catechetical School of the Good Shepherd in Rochester, which she founded and directed for three years; and in a pre-school program at St. Monica's, Rochester. She studied Montessori methods in Rome for a year, completed a book recently for catechists and Montessori teachers, and is on a national summer staff that offers courses for Montessori teachers. Previously, she taught at St. Michael's, Newark, and St. Patrick's, Elmira. She was born in Rochester, and her home parish is St. James.

Sister Marlene Vigna (Sister Mary Lourdes) is the pastoral assistant at St. Helen's Parish, Gates. She was also the pastoral assistant at St. John the Evangelist Parish, Rochester, for 10 years. She founded the Social Justice Committee of the Diocesan Sisters' Council. She was on the founding faculty of St. John of Rochester School, Perinton, and also taught in the following diocesan schools between 1960 and 1974: Holy Family in Auburn and St. Cecilia's, St. James and St. John the Evangelist, all of Rochester. She was born in Rochester, and her home parish is St. Margaret Mary's.

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