



A Word for Sunday

Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 10:35-45; (R1) Isaiah 53:10-11; (R2) Hebrews 4:14.

After the apostles had discovered the identity of Jesus as Messiah, He began to teach them what kind of Messiah He was to be — a suffering one (Sept. 15).

The Jews expected the Messiah to be a son of David, and, of course, to be, like David, a warrior king! David had crushed the enemies of Israel, the Philistines. Most of the Jews expected the Son of David to do the same to the new enemies of Israel, the hated Romans.

So right after Peter had revealed Jesus to be the Messiah, Jesus proceeded to correct their messianic misconceptions. He left Caesarea-Philippi and headed south for Jerusalem, the place of His subsequent sufferings and death. On the way, three times, like the tolling of a funeral bell, our Lord tried to prepare his disciples by predicting His passion. Three times they misunderstood. Three times, Jesus sought to correct their misunderstanding by pointing out that not only He, but they, if they were to be His disciples, would have to walk the same way of the cross and of service.

Thus after His first prediction of passion, He said, "If any man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross and follow in my steps" (Sept. 15). After making His second prediction, He said, "If anyone wishes to rank first ... he must be the servant of all" (Sept. 22). Jesus was laying down the two conditions of discipleship: the cross and service.

Then our Lord, good teacher that He was, let that shocking revelation simmer and germinate in their minds. As they continued the Jerusalem journey, He talked about other things, including tolerance (Sept. 29), marriage (Oct. 6) and riches (Oct. 13). As they drew near Jerusalem, He hit them for a third and final time with a prediction of the Passion, this one much more detailed than the previous two (Oct. 20), for He identified Himself with the suffering servant of Isaiah (R1).

On this occasion, Jesus walked ahead of His disciples, so anxious was He to

drink the cup of suffering for love of us. They tailed along in fear, wondering, perplexed. They still did not understand.

All this misunderstanding, if you will remember, had begun with Peter; now it climaxed with James and John. They all wanted the glory, but none wanted the cross. So Jesus spoke once again of His "cup," "baptism," "bath" — all Marcan terms for the cross. The cup pointed to Gethsemane, where the three would fall asleep. Baptism pointed to Calvary, where the three would be conspicuous by their absence. They had asked to sit at His right and left in glory; the only ones with Jesus on His right and left were to be the two thieves. The places of honor are on Calvary, not at some banquet table or on a throne.

When the other 10 heard this, they became indignant. I suppose we, too, recoil at the insensitivity of James and John. (Their request for seats of glory was so inappropriate that Matthew tried to save face for James and John by putting the request in the mouth of their mother.) Yet Jesus calls all of us and says that we must reject such un-Christian values as wanting to lord it over others. "Fling away ambition," Wolsey counseled Cromwell. "By it fell the angels." So Jesus repeated, "Who aspires to greatness must serve the rest." To be a Christian means to be concerned about one's fellow man.

Because this scene involves the intimates of Jesus — present at the Transfiguration and the agony — Mark's message is especially relevant to the leaders of the Church. Theirs must be a "servant leadership." They, too, must drink the cup (the cross) and respond to the needs of others (service). If these seem hard tasks, Mark says, "Take heart!" — for, right after this incident, he tells the story of the cure of the blind Bartimaeus (Oct. 27).

Blindness seems hopeless, yet Jesus restored sight to Bartimaeus. So can He open our eyes also to see and to help us follow the way to discipleship. After Bartimaeus was cured, he followed Jesus "up the road" — the way of the cross and service — to the end of the road.

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



Ecclesiastical Mistakes?

At a Legion of Mary meeting, a member told this funny story:

"A friend of mine belonged to a very strict Evangelical church. No smoking, no drinking, no dancing, no joy of any kind. She was a wonderful person: devout, prayerful, and one of the kindest persons I have ever known. But she did like an occasional nip. She never over-indulged. Just took a highball and relaxed with friends.

"One day she asked me in all seriousness, 'Do you think I'll go to hell for taking a highball once in awhile? We had a sermon last Sunday on drink, and we were told we'd go to hell for that.'

"Good heavens, no!" I replied. 'A drink that relaxes can be a divine gift.'

"My friend sighed, 'Oh, dear. You Catholics have such a comfortable religion.'"

Recently I was pondering this story, and recalling the decade after Vatican II, when "activism" became the eighth sacrament. By activism, I mean:

1) A concern for the poor, with a concomitant contempt for the comfortable middle class. I recall a diatribe against the wicked comfort of the middle class, made by a sacerdotal zealot who flew to Switzerland the following month for a skiing vacation.

2) An enthusiasm for bizarre paraliturgies, with a concomitant contempt for traditional devotions: the rosary, personal confession, Forty Hours, novenas, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, devotion to the saints, veneration of holy pictures and statues.

3) An energetic intrusion of fourth-rate music, with a concomitant burial of the great musical inheritance of the Church. So "hymns" became "songs," in the same generic category as "The Beer Barrel Polka." And "Kumbaya" and "Joy, Joy, Joy" replaced Montani's devout "Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All" and the glorious Gregorian "Salve, Regina, Mater Misericordiae."

4) An irrational and heretical pre-

sentation of ecumenism, in flat contradiction to the document on ecumenism in Vatican II, with a concomitant blurring of the reality of the historic Catholic Church, which the council describes as one, holy, catholic, apostolic — and unique.

5) A self-centered concept of freedom, liberty and irresponsibility, with a hostility toward the Holy Father and the Church. A recent example was the ad in the New York Times that insisted on free choice in the abortion of babies, and was signed by progressive sisters and laity, as well as a few priests. Most of them have retracted, but there is still a core holding out against the Pope and the Church.

Bishop Norbert F. Gaughan of Gary, Indiana, wrote an article entitled "Have We Made Mistakes in the Wake of Vatican II?" — published in the Sept. 1 issue of "Our Sunday Visitor." He began: "The recent fuss about Coca Cola's mistake with its introduction of a 'new' version has spawned many new stories. In TIME magazine, there was a previous discussion about major past goofs made by corporations. Examples cited were the two cars, the Edsel and the Henry J. That suggested a possible question: what mistakes did the Church make in the wake of Vatican II which turned out with unhappy results?"

Bishop Gaughan lists a few, among them rosary, personal confession, fast and abstinence, liturgical inferiorities, and ecumenism. He makes concise observations about these, and concludes: "These are observations from people in the pews. After hard soul-searching, they are saying, 'Someone in the Church should see about restoring perspective.'"

For a copy of Bishop Gaughan's article, please send a self-addressed envelope to Father Cuddy at Holy Trinity Church, 1460 Ridge Road E., Webster, N.Y. 14580.

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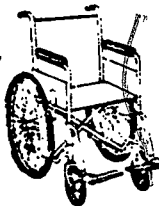
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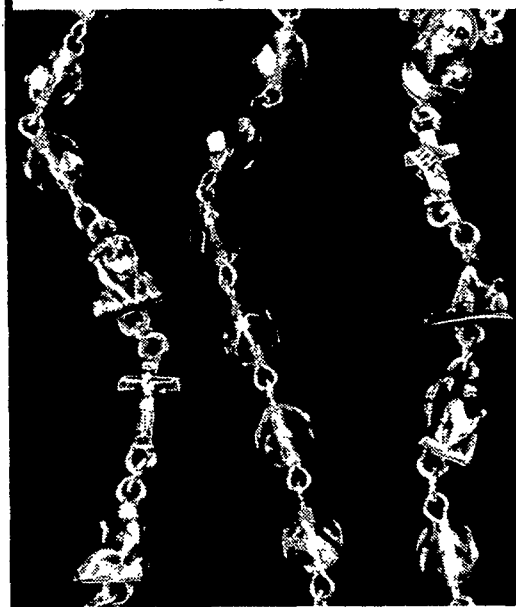
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