



A Word for Sunday

Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 12:28-34; (R1) Deuteronomy 6:2-6; (R2) Hebrews 7:23-28

It is strange, isn't it, that we have to be commanded to love God? And yet it is not so strange as our having to be commanded to love our parents. Everything turns to the source of its life. The roots of a tree grow toward the water, for it is the source of its life; the sunflower turns to the sun, for it is the source of its life; the animal goes to its begetter, for it turns to the source of its life. Only man can, and often does, turn away from the sources of his life: God and parents. So God has to command us to love Him and our neighbor.

The love of God is first, for love of neighbor flows from it. The love of God is like an upper pool that feeds a lower pool, the love of neighbor. If we cut off the upper pool, the lower one soon dries up. Of Vincent de Paul it was said that the poor did not bring him to the love of God, but that the love of God brought him to the poor. That is why only here and in St. Luke (11:42), and very sparingly in the rest of the New Testament is there word of man's love of God. Usually the emphasis is on God's love for man. And that is the way it should be, for it is God's love for us that evokes our love for God and neighbor.

And how does God love us? First, He loves us, but not because of what we are, but because of who He is. God is love. As the sun cannot not give out light and heat, so God cannot not love. As it is the property of fire to burn, so it is the property of God to love. We love what is good; God loves — and makes good. His love is universal: He loves all creatures both great and small, good and bad, sinner and saint. For His love is unconditional. We love if; God loves, period! His love was incarnated in Jesus Christ, who told us of His Father's love for all and how all ought to love His Father. Then Jesus sacramentalized that love in His Church — the mother of us all.

All love desires to be loved in return. And how does God want us to love Him? Without measure: with all our hearts (heartily and sincerely) with all our souls (wholly and not fanatically), and with all our strength (devotedly and intensely). And the concrete test of that love of God is love of one's neighbor. Do I love universally — all without exception? Do I love unconditionally — no ifs, ands or buts? Recall what Jesus said about love of neighbor: "Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove you are sons of your heavenly Father, for His sun rises on the bad and the good, He rains on the just and the unjust. If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that?" (Matthew 5:45-46). As the Father does not discriminate in doling out his elemental blessings — sun and rain — neither ought we. Boy, that is tough!

So two things. First, remember this: if we don't love God, then what or whom will we love? We must love! If we do not love the uncreated God, we shall create our own gods to love. If we don't look up, we shall look down. If we don't look within, we shall look without. In other words, if we do not turn to God, we shall turn to the world and become worldly minded, sensual and materialistic. If one loves God, one becomes like the angels; but if one does not love God, one becomes like an animal: me-centered, living only for oneself, one's appetites, one's wants and desires.

Secondly we must remember that love does not come from within us. We cannot drill down within ourselves, as one does for oil, and expect love to gush out of our hearts. No, love has to be put into us as one puts gasoline into the tank of one's car. Love comes from outside of ourselves. From whom, then, can we draw love from outside ourselves? From God. For God is love! And that love is poured out in our hearts at every Mass through the Holy Spirit and through Holy Communion.

'The Changed Life'

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minimal, as what you must do if you're going to avoid being disbarred, if you're going to be respected as a member of the legal profession. For me, there's a considerable gap between that minimal code and my own personal ethics, ethics that have become a part of me during my development as a person and as a religious. I might be given something to do that may be perfectly appropriate and legal, within the code of professional responsibility, but it might be something I can't bring myself to do.

Defending someone who is admittedly guilty of wrongdoing, of giving false information or of participation in shady financial dealings, she says, might qualify as being justifiably outside the pale of what Sister Jamesine finds ethically palatable. Her guidelines, she affirms, are simple: truth, honesty, and the greater interest that justice be done, in God's eyes as well as man's. As always, she entrusts her future to faith, prayer and the counsel of trusted colleagues and advisers. The

fruits of experience, as she readily acknowledges, lie a few miles further up a road not taken by many before her.

"I don't think people ordinarily go to law school for a renewal — but it's been a revitalizing experience for me," laughs Sister Jamesine. "I went from a very pressured, demanding type of job to something that's very focused."

That focus should serve to channel the singular talents of one inspired individual into inspiration for all of us. The bar exam, at any rate, looms rather large on the horizon this coming July, and the "rate of passage" is an intimidating 50 percent.

Still, for this studious member of a law class of which one-quarter is over 25 and one-third is composed of women, hope springs eternal. "I work hard, and just pray and have faith that, if I'm supposed to do this, I will," she concludes.

Whether by "divine law," angelic intercession, diligent preparation or the luck of the draw, Sister Jamesine Riley has her future law career cut out for her.

Faith and Laughter

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floodwaters, in a metaphorical sense, have perhaps never entirely subsided. Lay witness is an uphill battle, Jurusik finds, and never a matter of complacency and stagnant self-gratification.

"There are some days when there is no faith," she admits. "There are some days when I feel I've been deserted for awhile, maybe because I'm not listening. I really

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



News from Home

Editor's note: The following is a letter to Navy chaplain Father Lewis Brown, formerly associate pastor at Immaculate Conception in Ithaca.

"Thank you for your letter. 'Out of sight, out of mind' can well apply. Your departure for the Navy was duly noted, but I suspect that you will be largely forgotten unless you keep alive the lines of communication. As much as Father Dick Mattie was admired when he was still in the diocese, I wonder how many realize that he has been in the Navy for 10 years, is a naval commander at Norfolk, Va., and is doing great apostolic work. I talked yesterday with his sisters, Mary Louise and Pat at St. Ann's Rectory, Hornell, and we recalled the happy days when you were there with Father MacNamara.

"Father Schmidt, the pastor, is showing the new convent for the Mercy sisters, down the street. Everyone seemed pleased about it, especially since the old convent wall pulled the big crack and endangered the sisters. St. Ann's is not greatly changed: still the deep faith and a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It always edifies me when I visit there to note the number of people who drop into the beautiful church to pray for the Blessed Sacrament.

"From 1942 to 1946, the WW II days, Father Larry Casey was secretary to Bishop Kearney. He realized the importance of keeping the chaplains in the service united, and used to send out a monthly bulletin entitled 'APO 50,' the chancery address of 50 Chestnut St. There were 54 chaplains at the peak, and the news of the diocese was a great boon. So I am sending you a few jottings about my diocesan meanderings during the months since you left.

"In mid-July, I spent a few days at St. Mark's, Greece, for Father Tom Erdle, who succeeded Father Joe Donovan as St. Mark's pastor. Father Donovan is now in 'active retirement' at St. Ambrose, where Father Marvin is the pastor with Father Willis, the associate pastor, and Carmella, the glorious cook. Recently I phoned Father Joe, and asked him to come for supper. 'Thanks, but I can't,' he replied. 'The fish are biting.'

"If we priests took our apostolate as earnestly as he does fishing, there would

come to pass the will of God: 'One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One Father for us all.' May you stir up the faith and devotion among the Navy men and women entrusted to your care. The military services are a fertile field for evangelization, when the chaplains are zealous about the faith.

"Recently I was at 40 Hours at St. Vincent's, Corning. So often people ask me, 'Father, why don't we have 40 Hours any more? We miss that devotion.' It has been dropped in most parishes, except for those in the Southern Tier. The fact is that there has been a subtle downgrading of devotions to the Blessed Sacrament since Vatican II. Did you know that even the term 'Blessed Sacrament' has been eliminated from most CCD and religion textbooks? The concept of Our Lord in the tabernacle has become so blurred that our children often have only a vague idea of that Divine Presence. I had two sixth-grade altar boys serve me one day, and neither knew what was in the tabernacle!

"Basilian Father Charlie Lavery is in intensive care at St. Mary's Hospital, very sick. Father Joe Dorsey and Father Lou Hohman have been like guardian angels to him. Our bishop stays well, and is busy with the multiple meetings related to the Thanks Giving Appeal. Fathers Bart O'Brien and Al Shamon, as you might expect, are busy as bees since their June retirement, giving conferences and talks, and supplying help where needed.

"Well, I suppose this is a kind of Peter Taub-ish letter, but it is the kind I liked to get when I was out of the diocese. You know you are remembered and regarded. I know you can do great work for Our Lord and your people. Let me end with a quote from the 'Imitation of Christ': 'Be familiar with no woman, but commend all good women to God.' May I suggest that applies especially to military nurses, who are very attractive, and many of them very holy women. But certain safeguards on the home front are missing in the freedom of the service. At least, such seems to be history.

"May the Lord bless you, and Our Lady watch over you as she cared for Jesus and Joseph in Nazareth."

Appalachian bishops

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first step," the letter states. "It must not be the last step. Hopefully, this letter, itself a product of dialogue, will start a process wherein the Catholic community can join together with all people of good will ... to reflect on and act for a more just society."

"This Land is Home to Me" closes with a vision of what Church can mean in the struggle for justice: "a center of the Spirit, a place where poetry dares to speak, where the song reigns unchallenged, where art flourishes, where nature is welcome, where little people and little needs come first, where justice speaks loudly, where in a wilderness of idolatrous destruction, the great voice of God still cries out for Life."

Since the pastoral's publication, not much has changed in the economic plight of the people of Appalachia, according to Michele Farabaugh, executive coordinator of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia.

"At best there's been no economic resurgence," she said, despite industry's re-

newed interest in coal as fuel. Although coal production is up, technological advances have meant a decline in the number of people employed in the mines. "As long as we continue as a one-industry area, our problems will continue," she added.

But Farabaugh believes that "This Land is Home to Me" has had a consistent impact on people's awareness in its 10-year history. "People are always calling and asking for it," she said.

This year, the Catholic committee has organized a series of national events to mark the pastoral's anniversary, including regional gatherings and the re-signing of the document by new bishops who have replaced the original signers. One of those new signers is Bishop Matthew H. Clark of Rochester.

Locally, organizers of the dramatization are willing to repeat their performance for interested groups. For more information, contact Sister Christine Wagner at (716)546-4894.

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think that we've had some trying experiences that I don't see how we could have survived without faith," she concludes. "So without faith in God, I don't survive, even though He doesn't talk to me every day."

Laughter helps, and occasional validation from those Jurusik's quiet example has touched in some appreciable way. "I met a young man in the grocery store, several years

after we taught our CCD classes, a former junior high student. He said, 'I'll never forget what we learned in those religion classes.'"

Mary Jurusik smiles, and the upturned crinkles around her eyes resume their familiar prominence in a face made increasingly more beautiful by years of high spirits and eternal optimism. "I didn't think they were even listening!" she marvels.