



A Word for Sunday

Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 21/25-28, 34-36. (R1) Jeremiah 33/14-16. (R2) 1 Thessalonians 3/12-4/2.

Next Sunday, the First of Advent, starts the Church year and Cycle C. As you know, the Church uses a three-year cycle for the Sunday readings (Cycle A, Cycle B, and Cycle C). In Cycle A, the gospel readings are taken predominantly from St. Matthew's gospel; in Cycle B, from Mark's; and in Cycle C, from St. Luke's. Any year divisible by three (1986, for example) is Cycle C, so the gospels this coming year will be mainly from St. Luke.

Bible study groups ought to focus on St. Luke this year. A good book to read on St. Luke would be the historical novel "Dear and Glorious Physician" by Taylor Caldwell.

When one is going on a vacation, the first thought is where, yet it's the last place arrived at. So at the beginning of the Church year, the first thing thought of is the last thing: the coming of Christ in power and glory.

It is terribly important to begin at the end, for only when we know where we are going can we make the plans that will get us there. So the Lucan gospel tells us we are heading toward an end of this world. That Christ will come again is absolutely certain; how He will come is up for grabs, but when He will come is absolutely uncertain. It is like that with death: we know it will come, but we do not know how or when it will come.

It is significant that the Church asks us to reflect not on our coming death, but on Christ's coming. The apostles — in Acts, as well as the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude and Revelations — all exhort us to focus on the great event of the Lord's coming and to be ready for it. As the whole includes its part, the final coming includes death. If one is ready for the Lord's coming, one shall be ready for death.

Death at its best is a gloomy thing that happens to each alone. Christ's coming, which will be amid a vast throng, is the beginning of a life of glory for His own. Death bears some trace of the curse and is generally accompanied by pain and sorrows. The Lord's coming, on the contrary, is a thought full of joy — "Stand up straight and raise your heads, for your ransom is near at hand."

That the Lord's coming may be that for us, Jesus admonished two things: be on guard and pray constantly.

"Be on guard" is a military term that evokes the picture of a sentry marching back and forth at his post. He is aware of his awesome responsibility. He looks about with bold and anxious scrutiny; the slightest sound arouses him. He is not just awake; he is alert — on guard!

Suppose, however, that a sentry mistook the direction of the danger and was surprised from behind. It has been known to happen. Be on guard, yes. But focus on where the true danger lies. Don't be surprised!

Let one be surprised, Jesus pointed out for us where the true danger to eternal salvation lies: "Be on guard." He said, "lest your spirits become bloated with indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares." There you have it — the awful trinity of destruction.

The member of this grouping that most affected me was "worldly cares." I can understand how a pampered body can beget a slack soul. I can understand how excessive drink can animalize a person. But worldly cares! Caring seems so innocuous, almost a duty. Herein lies the danger. Jesus put worldly cares in very bad company. Excessive cares for things here and now can crowd out concern for the things hereafter. Like Martha, we can be busy about many things and neglect the one important thing. And we can get this way when we depend totally on our own human resources and efforts. Worldly cares spring from an evil root: lack of trust in God.

To be on guard, we must first train ourselves never to undertake anything without first turning to God in prayer. Then we must commit all our cares to Him. "Cast all your cares on him because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5/7).

Lastly, we must pray constantly. When a sentinel spots an enemy party advancing, he does not attempt to confront them himself. Rather, he informs his commander about the enemy's approach and leaves the rest up to a higher authority. By the same token, being on guard means spotting the danger and then telling God of it in prayer.

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



A Sister of Mercy, Father Ritter

Most readers of the Courier are familiar with the work of Father Bruce Ritter, the Franciscan who established an apostolate to runaway boys and girls who, scarred often by mixed-up families or by drugs and alcohol, become prostitutes. "When you are hungry, homeless, without a job or a skill or money, what else can you do?" they would say. They are the victims of pimps, panders, and often of "respectable people" who use these youngsters for their passing pleasure.

While Sister Patricia Flynn is greatly involved in St. Michael's Workshop in Rochester, training disadvantaged youth in woodworking, she is also a frequent advocate for many inner city people who get in trouble with the law, and have no advocate. I asked her to write an article on her work, in order to acquaint people with the difficulties of many disenfranchised. With reluctance, she did. Part of her article was published last week. Here is the rest. May it inspire you as it does me.

"Let me talk about one of my favorites. I came across him (when he was) at the age of nine. He had an incredible sense of humor and bubbled over with ambition. He was also limited intellectually. Because of him I first got involved in Family Court. As I followed him along, I graduated to Criminal Court II, to Monroe County Court and even on to Federal Court. I still keep in touch with him at Attica, and I occasionally send him a 'care package' or go to visit him. He certainly advanced in life."

COMMENT: Most Courier readers are "nice people" who have stable homes, dependable friends, and relatives and roots. So often we church people spend our time "saving the saved." While we read with admiration of the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, we tend to romanticize. But there is nothing romantic about being physically and socially involved with people who are dirty, stinking, helpless, unreliable, unattractive. It's easier to visit the sick, the old, the infirm in a tidy hospital room or home, than in the gutterish habitat of the less-chance poor. Sister Pat's apostolate often

brings her superlatively unattractive boys and girls, men and women. And yet, these are Christ in His utter helplessness. Of course there are the attractive ones who help compensate.

"I love to remember a phone call I got one New Year's Day five years ago. I had worked closely with this family for about two years. The father sold drugs and used them. They had two beautiful children. I used to sit with the mother for hours as I listened to her tell me how much she loved her husband but was so angry about his dealings in drugs and what it did to their family, she contemplated murdering him and then she would plead mental insanity. There wasn't much I could do. Just sit and listen and be there when she needed me. Eventually the whole family moved to California and I never heard from them again, until five years ago. The phone rang on New Year's Eve and it was Pat. She said she and her husband were talking about the past and counting their blessings when Sister Concepta and I came into their thoughts. They called an operator in California and asked her to call the operator in Rochester to see if they could track us down. They just wanted to say thanks for all we had done for them, and to tell us how well the kids were doing in college."

COMMENT: I wonder how many women would like to murder their husbands. Remember the TV movie: "The Burning Bed" where the wife, distraught after years of maltreatment from an abusive husband, puts gasoline on his bed, and burned him to death? The court exonerated her. And let us praise efficient telephone operators.

"And there was a mother whose son lost part of a finger in a saw at St. Michael's Woodshop. The Sisters of Mercy wanted to hire a good lawyer for the mother to sue me, because I was well covered, but the mother refused because she didn't want me badgered in court after all I had done for the kids in the neighborhood."

COMMENT: Anyone wishing to help Sister Pat Flynn in her apostolate might send a check to her at St. Andrew's Convent, 81 Barberry Terrace, Rochester NY 14621.

Nazareth College Awards

Two local foundations have presented grants to Nazareth College totaling \$4,500. The Ebsary Charitable Foundation of Rochester has awarded \$2,500 for scholarship aid and short-term loans for students. Funds from the foundation assisted more than 20 Nazareth students last year.

The John F. Wegman Foundation gave \$2,000 which is also designated for scholarship support, according to Robert H. McCambridge, vice president for planning and development at the college. Four students are receiving scholarships from the Wegman foundation this year. Awards are based on financial need and preference is given to

disadvantaged or minority students. Only Monroe County residents attending Nazareth are eligible.

'Great Pumpkin'

Pennies were dropped into boxes as tokens for voting at a recent pumpkin-decorating contest at Good Shepherd School, 3288 E. Henrietta Road, Henrietta.

The fourth-grade classes that sponsored the event collected \$230 for the Adam Walsh Child Resource Center, to be used to educate the public about missing children.

The eighth-grade class' pumpkin won first prize.

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