



A Word for Sunday

Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 1:39-45; (R1) Micah 5:1-4; (R2) Hebrews 10:5-10.

Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth was in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Mary stayed three-months and left just before John was born. Why she did this, we can only guess. Maybe she wished to avoid the crowds that would gather for so extraordinary a birth. More likely, her reason was that it was important to separate John and Jesus.

John heralded the end of the age of the Law and the Prophets (Luke 16:16). Thus, his parents, advanced in years, are near the end of their lives, symbolizing that an era (that of the Law and the Prophets) was coming to a close. So, Elizabeth goes into seclusion, whereas Mary goes out to Elizabeth and brings Jesus with her to usher in a radically new age — the age of the Holy Spirit.

"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby stirred in her womb." The voice that would cry in the wilderness heard the Word that had been made flesh by the Holy Spirit. And the Word's giving of the Holy Spirit sanctified the voice in the womb. For that reason, we celebrate the birthday of John (June 24). After the stirring of John, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Later on, Zechariah would be, then Simeon, all foreshadowing the new age of the Spirit to be at last given to the Church (Acts 2:33).

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth proclaimed the significance of what had taken place in Mary.

She extolled the blessedness of Mary. Mary is twice-blessed: she is blessed, because chosen to be "the Mother of my Lord;" and she is blessed, because of her faith — she "trusted that the Lord's word to her would be fulfilled 'that a virgin could conceive.'" Sarah and the mother of Sanson and Hannah, the mother of Samuel — all were blessed, because they had believed that a sterile womb could conceive. But Mary had believed what was humanly unbelievable: that a virginal womb could conceive. Hence, she merited the title of "Queen of Confessors."

St. Luke contrasts Mary's faith with Zechariah's. Without faith, Zechariah was struck dumb, could not proclaim the word of God. With faith, Mary could sing the praises of God in her glorious Magnificat.

Elizabeth further marvels that the "Mother of my Lord" should come to her. A Protestant writer wrote that nowhere in scripture is Mary called the "Mother of God." Well, who was Elizabeth's Lord if not the Lord God? She calls Mary the "Mother of my Lord" — my God!

Elizabeth's question, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me," recall the words of David when the Ark was being brought back to Jerusalem after having been recaptured from the Philistines. "How," David asked, when Uzzah, dropped dead after reaching out his hand to steady the Ark, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me," (2 Samuel 6:9). The Ark symbolized the presence of God among His people. Mary was the true ark housing the living God, bringing Him to the house of Zechariah. Spirit-filled and in profound humility, Elizabeth asks, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

One of the great blessings of the advent of Jesus is joy. Joy is the possession of good. God alone is good. Christmas celebrates the gift of God to us: "A child is born for us, a son is given to us," (Isaiah 9:5). No wonder an angel said to shepherds, "I come to proclaim good news — tidings of great joy!" In fact, before Jesus was yet born, His presence stirred an unborn John with joy, elated Elizabeth, caused Mary to break into song. The coming of Christ must always be associated with joy. His birth gives us one of the happiest seasons of the year — Christmas. His resurrection, the other happiest season — Easter! Christianity is the most joyful of all world religions, and the Bible is the most joyful book in all sacred literature. Jesus came to bring joy to the world (Jonah 15:11). Whenever we help bring joy to others, help to make Christmas merry, it is a sign we are of Christ and that Christ is in us! A merry Christmas to one and all!

COURIER-JOURNAL/CATHOLIC CHARITIES CHRISTMAS APPEAL SOCIAL MINISTRIES OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER 150 BUFFALO ROAD, ROCHESTER, N.Y. 14624 (716) 328-3210



Continued from Page 1

90 Mr. and Mrs. W. have five children. Mr. W. has been able to find temporary minimum wage jobs, but no full-time work that would give the family medical benefits. Mrs. W. babysits children in her home to supplement their income. They are in need of a car for Mr. W. to get to work from their rural home. Help with a down payment on a car would enable him to keep his jobs.

91 In November, Mrs. N. and her five children lost their recently purchased home and its contents in a fire. Insurance will not adequately replace the loss. Mrs. N. desires to resume a stable family life as soon as possible. She needs much financial help to secure another house.

92 Mr. P. is 30 years old and has a history of psychiatric problems. Although he has held several jobs, he is now unable to find suitable work. Without finances, Mr. P. spent the summer living out of his car. He would like to find an apartment and resume his job search.

93 A young mother whose husband left her for another woman finds it difficult to care for four young children. She receives \$40 monthly for child support and is on public assistance. She is without enough money to buy food, winter clothing and footwear, and to pay heating bills.

94 A mother whose husband has left her for a teenage girl, has two sons, 13 and 11. She is finding it difficult to support herself and her sons. She has sold some of her things in order to keep her sons in a Catholic school. A few months ago, a major fire in her apartment caused her to lose almost everything. This mother is looking for employment and is unable to find a position.

95 A young wife who has spent most of her childhood in an institution is finding it difficult to cope. Her husband left her for an older woman. She is left to support four young children. She needs a stove and a couple of beds. They have nothing for Christmas.

96 Mr. and Mrs. B. have 5 children. Mrs. B. is dying of cancer. Their 11-year-old son has a kidney disease. One of their daughters needs glasses and braces for her teeth. The husband is unable to work because he has chronic back trouble.

97 The A. family has three teenage children. The father was a successful manager for a manufacturing company, but the factory closed and his unemployment has run out. This father has been earnestly looking for work for a long period of time. His wife is unable to work.

98 Mrs. M. is a 65-year-old single parent. She is alone, struggling with the limited income she receives to support and educate her two sons. She is in poor health, and there is very little she can do at this time in her life to make things better.

99 Mr. B. is working, but his salary is not enough to cover the needs of his family. His wife is emotionally ill, and one of their two children has Down's syndrome. Medical expenses do not allow him to cover basic needs, and at times it is a struggle to pay the rent.

100 Ms. P. is an unwed mother. She has spent most of her life in various foster homes and has been on the streets since she was 16. Recently, she and her daughter have settled down in a rural community and she is attempting to bring her child up in a secure and stable environment. She wishes to pursue her education and recently passed her High School Equivalency. She wants to go to college so she can get a job and no longer depend on welfare.

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



Pursuit of Gregory Bonfiglio

Gregory Bonfiglio was a 25-year old Jesuit Volunteer who worked as youth minister at St. Monica's parish, now an inner-city parish in Rochester. I met him in January, 1983, while he was delivering some posters at Good Counsel Church where I was filling in for the pastor, Father Wohrab. We had lunch together at a little restaurant (I paid), and I was impressed by his virile goodness.

He was living with three other Jesuit Volunteers working in Rochester. While an idealist, a graduate of Santa Clara Jesuit University in California, he was not particularly headed for religious life. Since four JV's lived together, I gathered some tapes and books for their edification. He left the diocese around the summer of 1983, and my book never returned.

To my surprise, less than a year later, I saw his picture in "COMPANY," a monthly magazine put out by the Jesuits to inform members and patrons of activities of the Jesuits in the United States. So I wrote:

"Dear Greg,
"It's just a year ago I met you, when I was taking care of Good Counsel, and we had lunch together. At the time, I prayed God and Our Lady that you would land up with the Jesuits, and am pleased to see your face in "COMPANY" as a candidate. When I saw your picture, I thought, 'Why, that crook. He went to California without returning my book!' I had sent you a bundle — 'Padre Pio,' by Rufkin, 'Brideshed Revisited,' by Waugh, which was being televised at the time, 'Timothy Commentary,' by Dr. Barclay, and 'Jesuits in History,' by Martin Harney, S.J. The only one I asked to be returned was the history book.

"This morning I phoned St. Monica's for your address. The girl who answered told me you left a package of books for me months ago. So now I eat humble pie, and repent of thinking you a crook,

and regret we did not meet again, for my sake, not for yours. I hope you will persevere. Keep me in your good prayers, and may you ever be close to Christ's Sacred Heart."

(November, 1984) "Dear Greg,

"In going over files, I find a letter of last January. I delayed going after the package at St. Monica's. When I did get there six months later, no one could find the package. However, I stayed for supper with Father Barrett and a music minister whose name I forget, which was a plus.

"Enclosed is 'The Pope and the Jesuits,' by James Hitchcock, which expresses the anxiety many have regarding the order we have admired for years. I understand that Monsignor Higgins in Washington was furious about it, and that several angry Jesuits are writing a counter book. It does seem to me that the Opus Dei and the Legionaires of Christ have taken up where the Jesuits left off.

"Hope all goes well with you if you are still in. Of course, I hope all goes well with you if you have left. In any event, may Our Lord bless you wherever you are, and Our Lady be her gracious self to you."

(November, 1985) "Dear Greg,

"To recall to your memory, I am the fat old priest whom you met at Good Counsel when you were putting up a poster about your youth work. We had lunch together one noon. I have often wondered if you still have your hand to the plough. This noon I phoned St. Monica's and got Joan McGuire to see if anyone had your address.

"Not only did she get the address, but she told me the package of books which you left for me is still at St. Monica's.

"So now I write just to say I am glad you are still with the Order, and pray to God and Our Lady that you will persevere with the enthusiasm and doggedness of the early Jesuits whom I have so much admired."

Fiesta Navidena Hispana

La Oficina del Apostolado Hispano anuncia que el sábado, 28 de diciembre, celebrará su tradicional Fiesta Navidena para las personas Hispanas mayores de 62 años. Las festividades comenzarán a las 9 de la mañana y concluirán alrededor de las 4:30 de la tarde, en la parroquia Corpus Christi, ubicada en el #864 de la Calle E. Main.

Esta actividad será auspiciada por el Thanks Giving Appeal y el Programa "Buenos Días Abuelos" del Apostolado Hispano, en colaboración con la parroquia Corpus Christi, algunas agencias y

firmas comerciales de la comunidad. Se les avisa a las personas interesadas mayores de 62 años se comuniquen al teléfono (716)436-9090 para mas información.

Prayer Group

McQuaid Jesuit High School is offering prayer group meetings Tuesdays, at 7:30 p.m., and Thursdays, at 1 p.m., in the Conference Room adjacent to Room 11, near the chapel.

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him to Herod, who was extremely

