



### A Word for Sunday Father Albert Shamon

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 3:15-16, 21-22; (R1) Isaiah 42:1-4; (R2) Acts 10:34-38.

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is a two-faced event: it concludes the Christmas Cycle, and at the same time begins the Sundays of the Year. This is fitting, for in fact the baptism of Jesus concluded the baptismal ministry of John and began the public ministry of Jesus.

Regarding the baptism of Jesus, Luke wanted to stress two things.

First, he wanted it to be clear that Jesus' ministry did *not* begin with His baptism by John, as some kind of religious response to it. That is why Luke has Jesus baptized last — "when all the people were baptized" — to indicate that His baptism climaxed and concluded John's ministry.

Jesus' ministry began with the coming of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Luke separated the phenomena following Jesus' baptism from the baptism itself. Mark merges into the baptismal event itself the opening of the skies, the coming of the Spirit and the heavenly voice, while Luke places these events *after* the baptism of Jesus, while "Jesus was at prayer." In this way, Luke would have us see that the true source of Jesus' mission isn't John, but the Holy Spirit.

Later on, in the Acts, Luke has the Church's mission begin the same way: the apostles pray, the Holy Spirit comes upon the Church, and her mission begins.

Secondly, Luke wanted to make it clear that John's baptism was not the same as Jesus' baptism. "I am baptizing you in water, but ... He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire." John's baptism was *only* in water; that is, it was only a ritual sign expressing outwardly what a person must express inwardly. The baptism of Jesus occurred when the Holy Spirit came down upon Him. From then on, His baptism (and Christian baptism) was to be seen as a salvific act: the giving of the Holy Spirit to purify souls as with fire.

In the Acts, Jesus says, "John baptized with water, but within a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (1/5). Jesus, in other words, interpreted the descent of the Holy

Spirit as baptism. His true baptism at the Jordan, therefore, took place when the Holy Spirit had come upon Him. Christian baptism is the same thing: the giving of the purifying Spirit.

Jesus' baptism with the Spirit occurred while He was praying. More than five centuries before, Isaiah had prayed for the heavens to open and let down a redeemer to liberate his people in a final exodus (63/19). Like Isaiah, Jesus also prayed for the redemption of mankind. His prayer was instantly answered: the skies opened and God, the Holy Spirit, came down in the form of a dove. The dove, symbol of Israel (Hosea 11/11), implied that Jesus was the new Israel, who would bring redemption through baptism with the Holy Spirit. The voice from the skies stated why Jesus could redeem, since He is God's beloved Son — "Here is my chosen one with whom I am pleased" (R1).

The Transfiguration (Luke 9/28f.), another occasion on which the skies opened and a voice was heard, also happened while Jesus was at prayer. This event marked the beginning of the Jerusalem ministry of Jesus. Similarly, after Jesus' baptism by John, the descent of the Spirit and the heavenly voice introduced Jesus' Galilean ministry (R2), the beginning of man's final redemption.

Christian baptism, though with water, resembles Christ's. For it, too, offers the Holy Spirit, making one a temple of God and a child of the Church. But the wonderful thing about all this is that all of us — whether cradle Catholics or converts — had nothing to say about it. It was all God's doing. His pure gift to each one of us. "I am what I am," wrote Paul, "by the grace of God." And grace means "a totally undeserved gift, freely given."

How grateful, then, we ought to be! How thankful! In fact, that is how the Mass came to be called the Holy Eucharist. Eucharist is the Greek word for thanksgiving. The early Christians could think of no better way than the Mass to express their thanks to God for having called them from darkness to light and from death to life, through no merit of their own. That, too, ought to be a prime reason for our going to Mass.

### On the Right Side Father Paul J. Cuddy



The poet wrote, "I shot an arrow into the air. It fell to earth, I know not where." The letter below is a good example of the simple things that bring good results, affecting our lives for years to come. The writer was a 13-year-old altar boy I'd known in Ithaca in 1941. He had a smile to melt the heart and a virtue to match, and I hadn't seen him or heard from him in 43 years. Then at Christmas came this letter, like the arrow shot into the unknown, returning:  
"Dear Father,

"Some time ago I received a letter from my brother, Bernard, who still lives in Ithaca. (The letter) contained a column you wrote in the Courier-Journal on Thomas Merton's 'Seven Storey Mountain.' It brought back memories on several counts, and prompted this letter.

"In 1940-41, I was your altar boy on your weekly trek to Biggs Memorial Hospital. You may recall that my father died there in June, 1941. My last recollections of him include his receiving Holy Communion from you in Room 245. I also remember vividly the day you left for the Army, and somewhere around here in a box of the past is a prayer book you gave me that day, and a bundle of letters from Europe.

"Those trips to Biggs Hospital and my brief association with you have turned out to be among the more important experiences of my youth. The seeds you planted then are still alive and still struggling to survive and grow.

"I was first introduced to Thomas Merton at St. Bonaventure College, which I attended for two years prior to transfer to Cornell. He was a remarkable man and ranks with you as an influence on my life.

"During the Korean War I got the chance to put to work the public speaking lessons you gave me each

Sunday morning at the Biggs Hospital Mass in the auditorium. "Would all those planning to receive Holy Communion please raise their hands?" This to be spoken loudly, clearly, slowly, as you directed. You would have me practice that speech standing on a chair backstage at the auditorium. Then I would stride out on the stage, stumble through the line and count the hands that arose. As I remember, the delivery was less than perfect, but the counts were accurate! Years later, on Bikini Atoll, I was responsible for delivering security lectures to all participants in the atomic tests. I thanked God for your instructions.

"Most of my working life was spent at IBM, and I now run a small computer company outside Boston. The enclosed picture was taken when son, Bob Jr., was married. My wife, Fran; her parents; Bobby's bride, Nancy; and our eight children are pictured as well as Bobby and me. They're a good group, and we are blessed. All are either through with college or still there, with the exception of Chris, who is still in high school. We have had representatives at St. Anselm's, Dartmouth, Boston College, Babson College, Colorado University, Catholic University and Harvard. Our first grandson, Bob III, was born this year, and, as you might expect, is a welcome addition to the clan.

"This coming summer we hope to get to Cayuga for two weeks. If we can find a cottage, I'll call and hopefully arrange to visit. In the meantime, many thanks for your help these past 40 years."

Longfellow's "The Arrow and the Song" concludes: "Long, long afterward in an oak/ I found the arrow still unbroke./ And the song from beginning to end/ I found again in the heart of a friend."

### Urban League Essay Contest

The Urban League of Rochester is seeking entries for the 11th Annual Grand Met and National Urban League Essay competition. Black students who are either entering college freshmen or undergraduate college students at an accredited institution of higher learning during the 1986/87 school year are eligible. Fifteen \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded nationwide.

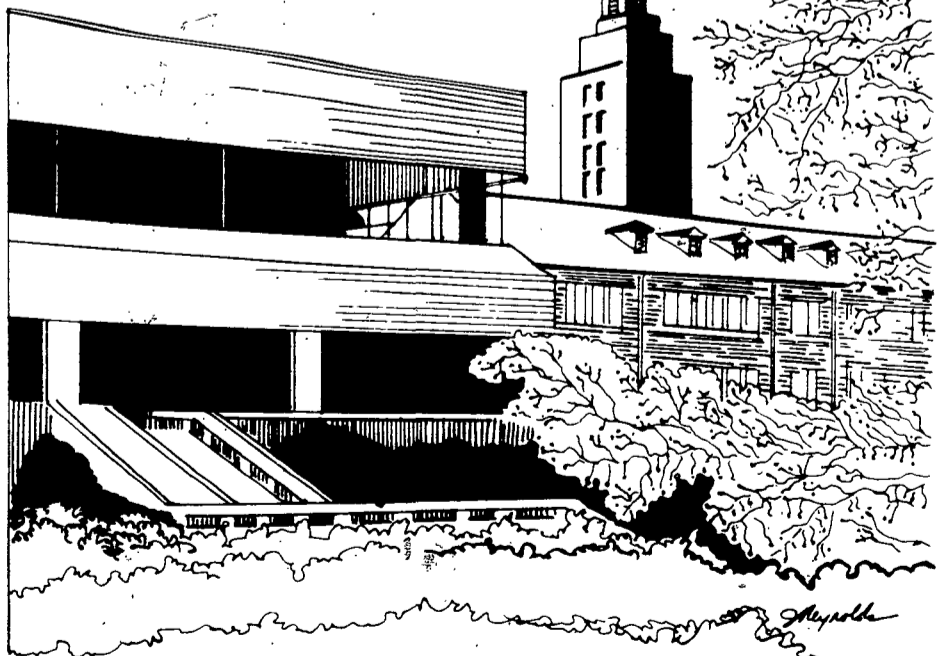
"The Minority Viewpoint: the Role of Family, Community and Student in Motivating Minorities Toward Achieving Academic Excellence" should be the essay topic. One entry, between 500 and 1,000 words in length, will be accepted from each entrant. Deadline is March 28. For more information, call (716)325-6530, ext. 245.

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An Invitation

### Continuing Education Open House

You will meet other students, Fisher Faculty, Financial Aid Counselors, Academic Counselors, and Administrators. The Open House will provide an opportunity to discuss any questions you may have about St. John Fisher College and the Continuing Education Program.

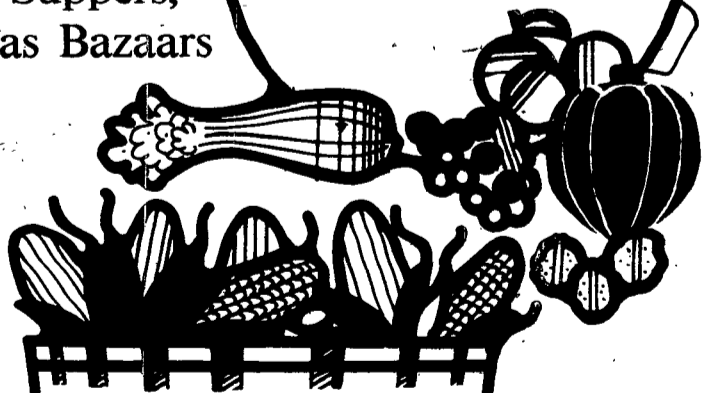


Monday, January 13, 1986 7:30-9:30 P.M.  
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For further information call 385-8317  
Spring Semester starts January 20, 1986

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