



A Word for Sunday Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 4:1-13; (R1) Deuteronomy 26:4-10; (R2) Romans 10:8-13.

The Lenten season is so important that Vatican Council II devoted an entire paragraph to it in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (No. 109). This special season has a twofold character: 1) it recalls baptism or prepares for it, and 2) it stresses a penitential spirit.

The Council also urged that wider use be made of the baptismal features proper to the Lenten liturgy, and that lapsed traditions be restored (No. 64). This restoration was accomplished when the catechumenate was reintroduced a few years ago, as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RICA). Strictly speaking, the RICA is for adults who have never been baptized. The basic process involves nurturing and provoking the candidates' conversion within a hospitable community of faith.

The initiation of adults into the

Catholic faith is tailored to the spiritual journey of the candidates. The pace varies for each person. The journey is marked by four periods, and the candidates move forward from one period to the next in three transitional stages. An outline of the process might be helpful.

Period I. The Precatechumenate is a period of inquiry and evangelization. Its goal is to create a disciple for Christ.

Stage A. Rite of Becoming a Catechumen: The candidate wishes to become a Christian and thinks this can best be done in the Christian community.

Period II. The Catechumenate is a long period of instruction on the Christian life. These instructions can end with celebrations of 1) the word of God, 2) minor exorcisms, and 3) blessings. If all goes well, the candidate will want to become a Catholic Christian.

Stage B. Rite of Election or Enroll-

ment (Lent) is a profound period of spiritual preparation for the sacraments of initiation. During this period there are three scrutinies and two presentations.

First Scrutiny: third Sunday of Lent. Presentation of the Creed.

Second Scrutiny: fourth Sunday of Lent.

Third Scrutiny: fifth Sunday of Lent.

Presentation of the Lord's Prayer with profession of faith, rite of the Ephpheta, choosing a name, anointing with the oil of the catechumens. (The Presentations may be anticipated and take place during the Catechumenate.)

Stage C: Celebration of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (Easter Vigil). Candidates become neophytes.

Period IV: The Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogia (Easter to Pentecost) is a period of deepening and strengthening of the new faith of the candidates by their joyful insertion into the faith community.

At the Sunday Masses through the Easter season, the neophytes should be mentioned in the homily and in the General Intercessions.

The end of this period, around Pentecost, should be celebrated with a jubilant party. Each year, an anniversary celebration of this great event should

follow.

The rites can be related to the gospel readings of Cycle C during Lent in a way similar to this:

First Sunday: Temptation of Jesus. The Rite of Election takes place, a call to reject the temptations to give up.

Second Sunday: The Transfiguration. A call to new life, following the transformation effected by baptism.

Third Sunday: First Scrutiny. A call to conversion.

Fourth Sunday: Second Scrutiny. Parable of the prodigal; a call to the community to be a welcoming community like the father in the parable.

Fifth Sunday: Third Scrutiny. Story of the adulteress; a call to be merciful and compassionate as Jesus is.

Passion Sunday: A call to have the same attitude Jesus had when confronted with suffering and death.

Temptations are rather unfashionable today, but they are always present. As Satan tried to undermine our Lord's mission, so all of us can expect the same treatment — those who are journeying toward faith and we who have it. Nor will temptation be one isolated incident. This is one of the reasons why the Church insists on penitential practices during Lent for both catechumens and ourselves.

Father Walczak

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holler at the kids when they mess up. People seem to think we have candles burning all over and that we say the rosary every night before dinner. That just doesn't happen. We're as close to a regular American family as can be," he explains, adding that the Walczak family is not like "Ozzie and Harriet."

"My perception of priesthood isn't some kind of magical call to a mystical vocation," he explains. "I find myself treating my profession the same way anybody else would treat theirs, with a great deal of love."

"As far as hours and time, I don't consider my call to priesthood different from that of any other professional person who feels strongly about professionalism. I would spend the same amount of time if I was doing any other thing. The priest takes time for himself in one way or another; I do it with my family."

He met his wife, a clerk in the intake office of the Monroe County Health Department,

when he was on his first assignment at a Buffalo parish. His wife, a member of that parish, "passed out" at her sister's wedding, and Father Walczak "had to drag her off the altar and revive her" while another priest continued with the ceremony. Later, he called her and asked her for a date.

A while ago, he told that story to a class in St. Joseph's school, and recounts that students were astounded that a priest had gone out on dates and were curious about where he had taken his future wife. Based on that reaction, both he and the teacher anticipated more amazed questions about the origins of his children, but evidently the notion of a dating priest was enough for the class to assimilate that day.

Students did ask, however, if priests ever drink. Unsure of how to handle that query, he said he has from time to time seen some priests drink. Does Father Moynihan? "I told them I had seen him drink once in a while when he has guests for dinner."

The class' reaction was typical of what Father Walczak termed a "mysticism around the priesthood." "It appears to me that most lay people have take the priesthood and put it

on some elevated pedestal ... I don't know if priests really want that, though I'm sure some enjoy it, but I think it's too hard to live up to.

"People want to put a priest on a different level — they want to see him act differently. It's a real dichotomy. They want a priest to

be human, but not too human," he says.

In fact, he says he has told Father Moynihan that his role is that of "demythologizing" the priesthood. "I told him that I will destroy his image in no time," he concludes with a laugh.

Democratic church

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Changes in the Polish National Catholic Church over the years have been equally as dramatic as those observed by Roman Catholics since the early 1900s. In fact, Father Grube said, the word "Polish" has become something of a misnomer. Although it was organized primarily by and for Polish people, and although St. Casimir's parishioners still observe some Polish traditions, the church's ethnic makeup varies widely today.

"Our people are very diverse," Father Grube said. "They come from all social,

ethnic and cultural levels."

In fact, he said, St. Casimir's has enjoyed something of a recommitment since he arrived last June. Despite the fact that Father Walczak, the former pastor, left to become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, membership and collections are up at St. Casimir's. Nor has the loss of their pastor festered as an issue among parishioners.

"We have tried to teach respect and maturity for other people's decisions," Father Grube explained. "We get nowhere in conflict with one another. It only comes back to haunt us."

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