



## A Word for Sunday

### Father Albert Shamon

**Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 13:31-35; (R1) Acts 14:21-27; (R2) Revelations 21:1-5.**

"God is glorified in the Son of Man," wrote St. John (R3). We might ask, "How is God glorified in the Son of Man?" The liturgy answers, by the conversion of the Gentiles (R1) and by the new Jerusalem, the Church (R2).

The first reading narrates the conclusion of Paul's first missionary journey. This mission began from Antioch in Syria. From there Paul and Barnabas sailed west to the island of Cyprus, then north to Perge in Asia Minor. Next they trudged over 100 miles through robber-infested mountain passes to Antioch in Pisidia, then 81 miles southeast to Iconium, then 25 miles more to Lystra (where Paul was stoned almost to death) and finally they went 30 miles to Derbe. From Derbe, Paul and Barnabas could have taken a shortcut home to Antioch in Syria. Instead they backtracked and revisited all the places to which they had been. The journey covered over 500 miles on foot and took four years (from 45 to 49 A.D.).

Why did Paul and Barnabas return to the places they had evangelized, since they had been driven out of them by violent persecution? They returned for the sole purpose of strengthening the churches they had founded in these places.

They did this in two ways. First by establishing a hierarchy. "In each church, they installed elders." It is significant that Paul and Barnabas — not the Christian community — created the hierarchy! Secondly, they strengthened them by their words. One thing Paul had learned in spreading the gospel was that somebody had to pay the cost in suffering. "We must undergo many trials if we are to enter into the reign of God" (2 Timothy 3:11). It is a law of life. The brightest scarf that heaven makes — the rainbow — is thrown over the shoulders of a storm. Life can no more be all sunshine than a

picture can be all light and no shadows. When Paul and Barnabas reported to their home base in Syrian Antioch, they did not dwell on the difficulties of their journey. Instead, they focused on their gains. They "related all that God had helped them accomplish"; how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles — the door shut by the Jews.

The works of Paul and Barnabas had ushered in a new order. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away. No longer was salvation only for the Jews; no longer were death and sin supreme. A new Jerusalem was here, not the old with its bloody sacrifices and exclusivism, but a Church established by God ("come down from heaven"). In her God dwells among men, making all things new, changing relationships between God and men, altering society itself — causing anxiety to give way to trust, crime to virtue, enmity to love. "The sea" (which divides nations and separates peoples, and in which the demons of darkness were thought to dwell) "was no longer." For all are one in Christ.

Long after World War II, Japanese soldiers who hid themselves for a long time in the Philippines because they thought the war was still going on. These desperate men kept hiding and fleeing because they did not know the former things had passed away.

The author of Revelation warns us not to live according to the past. What is past is past. Writing in the midst of persecution, he sought to rally Christians to the values of the new age, the values of the Church.

Do we live in the world as formerly? By the law of survival of the fittest — every man for himself? Or do we live and labor for a city that has foundations? Do we live by trust and reconciliation; by love and friendship; by being just and merciful; by caring for the poor, the oppressed, the sick — by the new values? "I give you a new commandment."

### Presentation on Padre Pio

On Saturday, May 3, at 7:30 p.m., Joe Peterson of Hillsdale will speak on Padre Pio at Holy Trinity School, 1456 Ridge Rd., Webster.

Padre Pio was the Italian, Capuchin Franciscan Priest, who bore Christ-like wounds in his hands, feet, and left side, from Sept. 20, 1918 until his death, 50 years later,

on Sept. 23, 1968. Peterson met Padre Pio during World War II, and had visited Italy 15 times to spend a month each year to visit the "Stigmatist." Peterson has presented an illustrated slide lecture on the life and work of Padre Pio to church groups for the past 32 years. The presentation, which is sponsored by the Holy Trinity Spiritual Action Group, is free and open to the public.



## A Closer Look

### Victor Bartolotta Jr.

This week we begin a semimonthly column by Victor Bartolotta Jr., social ministry coordinator at Mt. Carmel Parish in Rochester. Bartolotta has worked in professional church ministry for seven years and holds masters' degrees in theology and religious education. A single parent, he lives with his four-year-old daughter, Lynn.

By Victor Bartolotta Jr.

As emotionally satisfying as the U.S. bombing raids on Libya may have been for many Americans, as the dust settles, Christians are urged to think again about what has happened. In one sense, Americans may feel vindicated: we fought fire with fire; we taught Khadafy a lesson; we told the world that America is not going to take it any more.

In another sense, if we allow our eyes and our consciences to function as they ought, we can see the work of our bombers: slain, an elderly man, a 15-month-old child and numerous others.

For a moment, let us put aside the fact that the U.S. bombing raid violated international law as set down by the United Nations. Or, on the other hand, let us put aside the emotional intensity which surrounds the issue of terrorism.

Instead let us ask ourselves whether as Christians we can justify the killing of innocent victims out of a sense of retribution. Do we really think that the act of violence can be justified (if ever) in punishing someone for a wrong committed against us?

There is no question that the Reagan administration, acting within its own system of values, can legitimately justify

the killing of innocents because innocents on our side have been slain. But the same argument can be used to justify the reign of terror Khadafy promulgates. Within Khadafy's own perverted system of values is not only room but a mandate to commit terrorist acts. But isn't there a wider picture by which we can judge the actions of both Khadafy and Reagan? Is there a Christian system of values that supersedes those of Khadafy and Reagan?

For example, in examining the gospels, can we as Christians ever find a reason to condone the taking of innocent life? Do the gospels tell us that if we are maimed we then can maim others? In what sense is violence against someone who has done violence to us ever condoned by Jesus?

To top everything off, Americans, and I include President Reagan in this, do not seem to understand why Libya or Khadafy are angry at us. Neither can I uncover evidence that our country has done much to find out why. In light of this, then, can we justify letting F-111 jets act as our negotiators and "smart bombs" as our envoys?

Within my understanding of Christianity, if I am able to put aside my emotional urgings to feel a sense of satisfaction, I have to admit honestly that I cannot justify our country's bombing of Libya. Furthermore, the silence of Christians like myself can only be taken as complicity with the Administration's actions. But I think that if we look at Jesus and the gospels we shall be hard pressed to find any justification for what America has done.

## The New Code of Canon Law

By Father Kevin McKenna  
vice chancellor  
Diocese of Rochester

The revised Code of Canon Law promulgated by Pope John Paul II on January 24, 1983, is Church's latest legislative document, but has a history that stretches back to the earliest beginnings of the Church.

It is clear that St. Paul himself articulated many moral disciplinary norms for converts to the Christian community. Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles describes what many have understood as an ecclesial legislative session, held to assess the problem of the Gentile convert. It becomes quickly apparent that very early in its history, the Church recognized a need to provide answers and concrete solutions to problems that emerged within and outside the community.

The earliest authority that supported the Church's legislative activity was the moral persuasion that accompanied traditions associated with the apostles. Rules of conduct (or "canons") that could be identified with a particular apostle or apostolic tradition were revered and accepted. Many of the oldest sources of Church law — including the "Didache," "Didascalia Apostolorum," and the "Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus" — claimed authority for the wider Christian community as teachings that had been passed down from "the Twelve."

Another source for law within the Church was the development of the local "synod," a gathering of bishops to discuss matters of common concern. Modeled on the Roman Senate and closely following its procedures, the synods took place in the chief city of metropolis and were presided over by the bishop of that city (metropolitan). At the synods, bishops discussed and voted on "resolutions," so that some order and uniformity could be maintained in the particular province.

Concurrently with the synodal development, the See of Rome, since earliest times identified with the apostles Peter and Paul,

became a natural reservoir and repository of the Apostolic Tradition. Rome was the place where authoritative statements of the canons could be found, interpretations of the canons provided, and was also the location for recourse from judgments of bishops and synods. Through the centuries, decretals (or papal replies and mandates) received increasing authority and usefulness for the universal Church and became a source in themselves for the expanding Church law.

By the 12th century, confusion characterized the legal structure of the Church: several sources — sometimes contradictory — were being used for law. Gratian, the great Camaldolese monk and Bologna University professor, studiously assembled the traditional law, harmonizing classical texts into a coherent and useful collection. His great work, since titled "Gratian's Decree," combined with additions by later popes (Gregory IX, Clement VI, John XXII) plus some minor additions, was published in 1500 in Paris as the "Corpus Juris Canonici" (Body of Canon Law), which remained the fundamental law in the Roman Catholic Church until the 20th century.

The First Vatican Council (1869-70) perceiving the need to once again review and compile new legislation for the Church, was interrupted in its efforts by an invasion. It was to be the pontificate of Pope Pius X that saw renewed efforts at resolving east legislative confusion.

Following the model provided by 18th century secular codifications of law, Cardinal Gasparri and his council of consultants prepared for Benedict XV an authoritative collection of laws of the Latin Church containing 2,414 canons. This 1917 legislative landmark in a five-book format was to remain the basic law-defining instrument for the Latin Church until 1983 and the revised Code promulgated by John Paul II.

**NEXT WEEK:** The revised code: a Church with a new complexion.

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