

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 16:13-19; (R1) Acts 12:1-11; (R2) Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18.

Many skeptics dismiss St. Peter as a weak, bumbling vacillator. They insist that it was St. Paul who built the Church in spite of St. Peter. That would be robbing Peter to pay Paul. In the Acts, St. Luke gives both equal space and placement.

Peter and Paul — sure, we put them together. Both were heroes and giants of the Christian faith. But Peter was ever the leader of the apostolic band. The evangelists always list him first in naming the apostles because he was first! St. Luke portrays him as taking the place of the ascended Jesus — as His vicar. In the first 12 chapters of Acts, Peter works miracles just like those of Jesus. He takes over the leadership of the apostolic body. Was it not Peter who prompted the replacement of Judas? Who set up the diaconate? Who received the first Gentiles into the Church? Who dominated the Council of Jerusalem (49 A.D.)? To whom Saul went after his conversion to be confirmed in his faith? Peter showed himself truly the Rock.

After his escape from Herod's clutches (R1), Peter left Jerusalem to go to "another place." He did not tell his friends where he was going in order to keep them from having to lie to protect him. According to Eusebius, Peter never returned again to Jerusalem to stay. He spent years traveling throughout Asia Minor, stayed seven years in Antioch, and finally went to Rome in the late 50s.

Why did Peter go to Rome? According to the Acts of Peter, it was to confront Simon Magus. Simon Magus, you must remember, was the magician of Samaria who wanted to buy the power to confer the Holy Spirit. That is how any attempt to buy spiritual offices in the Church came to be called "simony." Of course, Peter refused, and Simon became a fierce enemy of the good news.

In Rome, Magus was making inroads with an immoral and satanic cult. By the power of Satan, he was able to simulate some of the miracles of Jesus. For instance, he was able to levitate. When Peter arrived in Rome, Simon challenged him publicly. He said he would rise above the Roman

skyline and neither Peter nor Jesus could stop him. Before a large crowd, he ascended, but Peter prayed aloud to Jesus, and Simon plummeted to the ground, breaking his leg. Before he could limp away, the crowd, which was convinced Jesus was Lord and Magus a phony, stoned Simon to death.

Peter's popularity increased rapidly after that. Pagans were attracted by his humility, gentleness, tenderness and loving concern for all. Peter's secretary, John Mark, was asked to write a summary of Peter's instructions. Mark did so in his graphic gospel. Only from Mark do we learn of Peter's denial of Christ; it seems Peter could never forget nor forgive himself for that.

On the night of July 19, 64 A.D., the city of Rome burned out of control for nine days, destroying two-thirds of the city and hundreds of people. The Christians knew they were in for it because Nero hated all religions — especially the Christian religion, which he called a "pernicious superstition." Rebuilding the city absorbed Nero's attention for a year; then came the storm! In 66 A.D. Paul was beheaded.

Without Paul the Church could survive. But the Christians of Rome thought it could not survive without Peter. So when Peter's life was threatened, they urged him to leave the city. According to legend, at a spot now marked by the Domine Quo Vadis Chapel, Peter met our Lord headed for the city and carrying a cross. Peter exclaimed,

"Domine, quo vadis?" or "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "To Rome to be crucified in your place." Shamed, Peter returned to Rome. For nine months he was chained to a column in a noisome and fetid dungeon called the Tullian Keep. The guards had to be changed repeatedly, for Peter converted them almost as soon as they were assigned to him.

On June 29, 67 A.D., Peter was crucified — upside down apparently at his own request. One story has it that he felt unworthy to die as his Master had; another says he expected that upside down he would lose consciousness more quickly.

Peter was no coward, but often he met challenges in life too great for any man to face alone. When he relied on his own strength, he made a fool of himself. But when he relied on the Lord, he became a rock!

One day, when I was walking around the rim of the dome of St. Peter's, I read the words around it — "Ihou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." Then, as I looked down from the rim 350 feet below, I saw the stairway before the main altar leading to the tomb of St. Peter. I cannot explain the feeling that surged within me as I realized that what our Lord had said to Peter 2,000 years before is at this late date fulfilled literally. The greatest church in Christendom is built over the bones of St. Peter. How that thought alone should confirm our faith!

Assignments

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Sabbaticals

Father David Bonin, C.P.P.S. from pastor, Most Precious Blood Church, Rochester, to sabbatical.

Father Donald J. Curtiss, to Angelicum Gregorianum, Rome, Italy.

Father Thomas M. Erdle to Institute of Continuing Theological Education, North American College, Rome, Italy.

Father William Michatek to Notre Dame Institute for Clergy Education.

Father Walter L. Wainwright to Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

Father Eugene Weis to Notre Dame Institute for Clergy Education.

Priest Interns

(Newly Ordained)

Father Alexander Bradshaw from graduate studies at North American College, Casa Santa Maria, Rome, to priest intern, St. John of Rochester Church, Fairport, New York.

Father James Jaeger from deacon intern to priest intern, Holy Name of Jesus Church, Greece, New York.

Father Gary Tyman from deacon intern, Church of the Good Shepherd, Henrietta, to priest intern, St. Ambrose Church, Rochester, New York.

Deacon Interns

Rev. Mr. John Hayes from Seton Hall, Immaculate Conception Seminary, New Jersey, to Deacon Intern, St. Catherine's Church, Mendon, New York.

Rev. Mr. James Mooney from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., to Deacon Intern, St. Andrew's Church, Rochester, New York.

Permanent Deacons

Deacon Leo G. Aman to parish deacon, St. Anthony of Padua, Rochester.

Deacon Albert P. Bergeron to assisting chaplain, Rochester Psychiatric Center, with liturgical base at St. Joseph, Penfield.

Deacon George Burnett to parish deacon, St. Patrick, Owego.

Deacon Michael Campanelli to parish deacon, St. Cecilia and St. John the Baptist, Elmira.

Deacon John J. Cosmic to chaplain, Legion of Mary, Southern Tier Curia, in addition to parish deacon, St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads.

Deacon Greg Doyle from parish deacon, St. Augustine, to deacon, Matt Talbot Ministries.

Deacon John Erb from parish deacon, St. Francis Xavier to deacon, Cameron Street Community Ministry, with liturgical base at St. Francis Xavier.

Deacon Gregory J. Kiley to parish deacon, St. John the Evangelist, Clyde, with additional responsibility as chaplain, Legion of Mary, Finger Lakes Curia.

Deacon Daniel M. Kinsky from deacon with the Office of Family Life to parish deacon, Church of the Resurrection, Fairport.

Deacon Brian J. McNulty to parish deacon, St. Augustine, Rochester.

Deacon Eliseo Melendez to parish deacon, St. Michael, Rochester.

Deacon Conrado Mercado to parish deacon, St. Michael, Newark, with additional responsibilities with the Spanish Apostolate.

Deacon Michael J. Pighler from parish deacon, St. Francis Xavier, to parish deacon,

Church of the Transfiguration, Pittsford.

Deacon William F. Schmitz to parish deacon, St. Leo, Hilton, with additional responsibilities with the permanent diaconate program.

Deacon Julio Vasquez from deacon with the Spanish Apostolate to parish deacon, St. Michael, Rochester.


Deacon Victor M. Yanaitis from parish deacon, St. Paul of the Cross, Honeoye Falls, to parish deacon, St. Mark, Rochester.

Leave of Absence from Active Ministry

Father David E. Fedor

Father Timothy McCluskey

Father Robert Muhlnickel



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Thanks for your cooperation.

