

Father Albert Shamon

# A Word for Sunday



**Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 10:38-42; (R1) Genesis 18:1-10; (R2) Colossians 1:24-28.**

In this coming Sunday's readings, we have two beautiful domestic scenes: one in a tent and one in a home.

The first scene is about Abraham and Sarah. Three strangers visited them. It was the hottest time of the day — probably siesta time. But no matter. So hospitable was Abraham, that he insisted that the strangers rest and dine. After they had agreed, Abraham rushed to Sarah and excitedly ordered her to bake bread and make a banquet for the strangers who had come from nowhere out in the desert. Imagine! And what happened? One of the visitors turned out to be God.

God doesn't need a temple to visit us. Nor a lofty mountain. He doesn't even need a perfect marriage — Abraham and Sarah had their ups and downs. Nor does He need youth — Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age for childbearing. All He needs is kindness, hospitality and love on our part toward others: He found these in the tent of Abraham and Sarah, and promised them a child — a child from whom the Messiah would descend.

The second scene takes place in the home of Mary and Martha. To this home, God came again, not as a stranger, but as a friend. He came not to work any miracle, but to teach a wonderful lesson — a lesson Christianity taught long before any women's liberation movement ever existed — a lesson the Church has always taught; namely, that women have equal rights with men.

Martha's complaint about her sister not helping in the kitchen has a thousand years of tradition in it. In the ancient world, a woman's place was not only in the home, but in the background of the home. Her place was to keep busy

in the background! Where was Sarah at the banquet she had prepared for the three strangers? In the tent. Only men could sit at the table together or sit as disciples at the feet of great masters. Never in ancient history, except perhaps for a few women like Sappho or Aspasia, did women sit at the feet of teachers. That was a man's place. So Martha complained.

But our Lord, in His remarks to Martha liberated women that day. First, He championed Mary by saying, "Martha, leave her alone. Mary has as much right to sit at my feet and listen to me as any man." Then He liberated Martha herself when He said "only one thing is required." This could well mean, "Don't make a fuss; I don't need much." If Martha continued to wait on him, then she would be doing it not because women were expected to do so, but because she wanted to.

In homes we often find two temperaments that often cause misunderstanding: the active and the contemplative — the ones who want to do; the others who want to think and pray — those whose work is their prayer, and others who work at prayer. Neither one nor the other is right or wrong. Both are needed in homes; both are needed in the Church. Both serve Christ.

In one church bulletin, after the listing of Masses, there was this reminder: "The end of worship, the beginning of service." At worship we meet Christ; in service we wait on Him in others. Thus at every Mass, we are dismissed with the words: "The Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord." To serve is to love; to love Christ in others — in strangers, as Abraham and Sarah did, and in friends as Mary and Martha did. This is the mystery of Christ: He is present in strangers at work and on the streets; He is present in friends, at home and away from home.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

# On the Right Side



## Indecency and virtue

**Q. What did you think of those Rochester women who took off their blouses to expose their breasts?**

**A. Wasn't it funny? They were having a good time. The spectators had a jocose time. The whole thing was more risible than anything else.**

**Q. Aren't you concerned about indecency?**

**A. Oh, I don't think their exposure was titillating. The television news I saw just showed one woman's back, and if her front is as big as her back she would be a danger to no one. It seems to me that in a nation accustomed to abbreviated bikinis and g-strings and documentaries of African tribes dancing around in the nude, our people are inured to fantasies from such exposures.**

**Q. You are disappointing. Why aren't you up in arms about impurity?**

**A. When I was a child, women wore long skirts, multiple petticoats, steel-ribbed corsets. Their bathing suits were something to behold, as you will sometimes see in Keystone Kops movies. The long skirts, petticoats, corsets and prudish language are gone. What I think is the real problem is the shift in the thinking and teaching about the virtue of purity.**

**Q. What do you mean?**

**A. The Church has always taught that sex is sacred and good. She has always taught that lust, the defrauder of the virtue of purity, is bad and sinful. Religion teachers have taught that, because of the consequences of original sin, the temptation to lust stalks in every man. The Church always presents our Blessed Mother as "the virgin most pure, virgin most chaste, mother inviolate." The symbol of purity is the lily, since it is beautiful but easily bruised. Isn't it beautiful that St.**

Joseph is pictured with the Christ child and a lily?

**Q. Well, what's the problem?**

**A. The problem is the blatant broadcasting that rampant sex is the norm for our people today. That dreadful sexologist, Dr. Ruth, spends hours on the television blating immorality in her sex instructions. The Planned Parenthood outfit has successfully promoted sexual promiscuity, with an adamant assumption that purity is passe. Live-in liaisons are common. Teen-agers are expected to use contraceptives, with the assumption that all teen-agers are promiscuous. The country is sex-soaked.**

**Q. Have you any solution?**

**A. When Christ came into the pagan world, it was steeped in a similar state of immorality. In the course of centuries, the Church was certainly up against a block. Yet in time, purity came into honor; chivalry honored the pure maiden. Our Lady became a model for purity. Saints died defending purity. Even in our own day, we have St. Maria Goretti and the African martyrs of Uganda, some 30 or 40 of them who accepted death by fire rather than submit themselves to the lusts of a degenerate king.**

**Q. Are our teen-agers today keeping pure?**

**A. I should wish so. But with Planned Parenthood, Dr. Ruth, drugs and alcohol, abortion, broken homes, pressure from impure peers and a common irresponsibility, it takes heroic virtue. And it must be hard for parents today. Certainly the best influence for our youngsters are parents, teachers, friends and chaste peers who are people of integrity, and the encouragement of Christ and our Lady through the Church.**

## Religious orders

Continued from Page 5

Such other orders as the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, whose members staff St. Peter and Paul Parish, have offered the diocese "contributed services" over the years.

"We depend on the provincial fund," explained Father Richard McNally, pastor. "When people come to retirement age, they can live in one of the community's homes."

Contributions to the provincial retirement fund are optional. Some dioceses make payments on behalf of Sacred Heart priests, brothers or sisters who serve them. Others, including the Diocese of Rochester, do not.

The Sacred Hearts are among the congregations that declined to participate in social security. "As it is now, the numbers of retired are not that high, but we do have a large number approaching retirement age," Father McNally said. He expects retirement

funding to be a central topic at the province's approaching chapter meeting later this year. "There is no firm proposal, but there's been a lot of discussion," he said.

### Loss of self-concept

Retired brothers and sisters are clearly distressed by the focus on how much their care costs. "Sisters were not brought up to expect to be retired and taken care of," Sister Helen pointed out. "They expected to 'die with their boots on' so to speak. It's a reflection of our society. A lot of older people are burdened with a loss of self-concept when they retire. Religious suffer from the same doubts — perhaps even more so, having dedicated their whole lives to service.

Sensitivity is needed toward those presently retired (sisters) who did not collect salaries," Sister Muriel added. "It was not considered — it was just one of our sinful structures."

Although their retirement years may still be distant, the crisis has not spared brothers

and sisters in active ministry either. Their day-to-day lives as well as choices in ministry are increasingly affected by financial concerns. "We take vows that say we're at the service of the Church, and we don't want to think of that in terms of money," Sister Elizabeth Anne said. "There is a perception that congregations seeing financial problems are making decisions based on that rather than on their core purpose."

But it was renewal, rather than financial gains that prompted members of most congregations to choose professional fields,

such as law or medicine, as their ministries, Sister Elizabeth Anne said. "It so happens that those salaries have been very helpful," she added.

Renewal has entailed new expense as well, from educational courses to where and how sisters live in community.

Lay people and even some sisters fail to understand some of the ministries sisters have chosen, Sister Muriel said. "Out of justice, you want to serve the poor. But you need funds to feed a clothe the sister who's doing that."

## Reunion planned to coincide with Father Baker Day fest

Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity in Lackawanna, more commonly known as "Father Baker's," is planning a reunion for the former residents of St. John's Protectors and St. Joseph's Orphanage.

The reunion will coincide with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the death of the home's renowned administrator,

Monsignor Nelson J. Baker. The Buffalo-area agency will commemorate "Father Baker Day" on July 27.

For information, contact Monsignor Robert C. Wurtz, executive vice president and treasurer, Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity, 780 Ridge Rd., Lackawanna, 14218, or call (716)827-9641.

## COURIER-CROSSWORD

### Last Week's Answers

#### Across

1. FLANAGAN
5. EMV
6. THORN
8. AMP
10. ID
11. BR
12. GOA
15. SO
16. EI
17. ELMOS FIRE
19. RD
20. BAG
21. SS
22. INO
23. LAST
24. DONS

#### Down

1. FITZGERAL
2. GE
3. AMA
4. NUMBERS
7. NISSAN
9. PRIESTS
13. OLD
14. AM
18. OBIT

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