

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 14:25-33; (R1) Wisdom 9:13-18; (R2) Philemon 1:9-10, 12-17.

Our blessed Lord was on His way to Jerusalem, on His way to the cross. The crowds following Him thought He was on His way to empire. That is why He spoke as He did in Sunday's gospel — with Oriental hyperbole and vividness.

When He said His disciples must turn their backs on their nearest and dearest, He didn't mean to be taken literally. He meant that no love on earth can compare with the love we must bear Him; no person or thing should ever be permitted to stand in the way of serving Him.

It is possible to be a follower of Jesus without being a disciple, to be a camp-follower without being a soldier, to be a hanger-on in some great enterprise without pulling one's weight. One of the handicaps in the Church is that there are so many followers of Jesus, but so few disciples.

The follower uses cheap grace, as Bonhoeffer called it — just talk. The follower seeks to explain away sin without converting the sinner, and preaches forgiveness without penance.

The disciple, on the contrary, counts the cost of grace. He realizes the suffering and sacrifice that discipleship entails — that it is the treasure hidden in a field for which one sells all he has in order to obtain it.

Golda Meir was one of the founders of the state of Israel and the fourth prime minister of that country. Although she wasn't of the Christian faith, her life exemplifies what Jesus was talking about when He asked His disciples to abandon all in following Him.

Golda, as she was known to Israelis, was born in the Soviet Union. When she was eight years old, her father brought his family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her parents thought she should work in the family grocery store, but Golda wanted to be a schoolteacher.

In 1921, after she and her husband moved to Israel, she took in washing to support her small family. Soon she became active in politics, out of a great love for her fledgling country, and in time became ambassador to Moscow, the minister of labor, and finally foreign minister.

In 1965, Golda Meir decided she was ready to quit government service. She became the head of her political party, and when the prime minister died suddenly in 1969, she was asked to succeed him. Seventy-one years old at the time, she took office and served for five years.

Golda Meir abandoned her life to that of her country. As prime minister, she worked hours longer than any man in her cabinet, rising early and often not retiring until three o'clock the next morning. When there were cabinet meetings at her home, she often served chicken soup that she herself had made. She made tea for the bodyguards who kept watch outside her small apartment. Commitment and humility gave her greatness, and since her death in 1978, she has been remembered for those two qualities especially.

That's what Jesus was asking of His disciples: commitment, lifelong commitment, in the face of blood, sweat and tears. This is a bit frightening until we gain the joyful conviction that God will not abandon us. For it is God who sends His Holy Spirit from on high to prosper the work of our hands!

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Father Curran and the Holy Spirit

Father Charles Curran is the most publicized priest of the Church in the United States. I do not know whether he is his own public relations man or if he has an agent, but for weeks he has been on about every newscast and panel discussion, and in leading newspapers and magazines. Always he is treated as the martyr, a victim of the oppressive Vatican. The Vatican is equated with the Spanish Inquisition, Cardinal Ratzinger with Torquemada, and the pope is shown seemingly devoid of the Holy Spirit.

That Spirit seems to have a special lodging in the mind and soul of our dissident theologian, so think his disciples. Almost the only words I have heard spoken with understanding and logic about this destructive contestation came Aug. 2 in a two-and-a-half minute National Public Radio editorial comment, which I caught while returning from Auburn. I have written to the editor, and if I get his copy, will share it with you.

A June 14, 1968, OTRSide article discusses the origins of the present explosion and the hostility toward Rome, toward Pope John Paul II, toward logic and toward the Catholic faith. The article reads: Pope Paul VI requested, not that the study on contraception be stopped, but rather that the theologians make their studies in the theological laboratories. Public discussions among people unskilled in theological language and background would only confuse them."

The Food and Drug Administration requires rigid testing and conclusions in laboratories before allowing unproved foods or drugs on the market, lest they harm people's health. Father Curran 20 years ago was going around lecturing on theories that belonged in the theological laboratories. In 1966, I went to his lecture for married couples at St. Helen's Hall, Rochester, and left wondering if I had heard what I thought I had heard. I had.

In June, 1968, I met Father Curran at Stella Maris Camp, Rochester, where he had come to counsel a priest about to leave the priesthood. I accosted him.

"Father Charlie, how do you reconcile the reasonable request of Pope Paul VI with your broadcasting to every

Tom, Dick and Nellie who are mystified and shaken by your theories?"

With the smile that charms, he replied, "I have to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit."

With some pique, I retorted, "So you think Pope Paul is devoid of the Holy Spirit?"

Father John Philipps, one of our more scholarly priests, wrote in his Brockport church bulletin, which was copied by St. Ambrose, St. Helen's and God knows where else: "Few are trained in the art of theology, or the skill of making the extremely subtle distinctions which must enter into theological thought, as we struggle to apply moral principles to the very complex issues of the day." To which I add a triple amen.

In 1968, the OTRSide article came to the following conclusion: "Mischief has been done to the Church by the disregard of the pope's request. We are in for some theological thalidomide babies as a result!" This prophecy has come into bloom today — with a Church divided, dissent demanding to be canonized, the Holy See denigrated as a source of oppression, and the faithful in a state of confusion.

St. Thomas teaches: "Two contradictions cannot both be true at the same time and under the same circumstances." Within the Church, we cannot hold two contradicting teachings in mutual regard. In Christ's words, "He who is not with Me is against Me." This statement applies to His teaching, as well.

Father Philipps writes, "Curran does not advocate abortion, or sodomy, or fornication, or divorce." Where has Father Philipps been? I believe that Father Curran, clearly, albeit with limitations, does so advocate through his comments on television, radio, in newspapers, magazines and lecture halls. As one priest said sadly, "Father Curran would take the cross out of Christianity — make Catholicism a comfortable religion. He is 'Water-Down Charlie' in my book."

That does seem to picturesquely describe the present state of confrontation. And in the contestation, Rome and all the U.S. bishops are wrongly depicted as "the bad guys," and Father Curran as a unique vessel of the Holy Spirit.

Sisters of Mercy reaffirm political ministry

Baltimore (NC) — The Sisters of Mercy of the Union, meeting in general chapter, reaffirmed the commitment to political ministry which has led to the forced departure of three of their members in recent years.

Former Mercy nuns in public office are Arlene Violet, Rhode Island attorney general; Elizabeth Morancy, a four-term member of the Rhode Island legislature; and Agnes Mansour, director of the Michigan Department of Social Services. Each was required by the local bishop or the Vatican to leave the order as a prerequisite to holding or running for public office.

The Mercy chapter, the highest policy body of the 4,000-member order, affirmed at its July 22-27 meeting that political ministry was an appropriate expression of the mission of the Sisters of Mercy.

The 69 chapter delegates said provincial leaders should seek a dispensation from the relevant Church laws when they determine that there are compelling reasons for a member of the order to seek or hold public office. They also said the order's national leadership should be involved in the process of making such decisions.

On the key internal issue facing the order, the chapter gave overwhelming approval to the Core Constitutions proposed as the basis for uniting the Sisters of Mercy of the Union and 17 other Mercy congregations in the Western Hemisphere.

The Core Constitutions document is to be submitted to Rome this fall by the Mercy congregations that approve it. If all the other congregations accept it and Rome approves it, some 8,000 nuns will be united in the new congregation under the name Sisters of Mercy in the Americas.

The chapter also approved a resolution expressing support for the international leadership of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in their recent decision that "there was not sufficient cause for dismissal" of two U.S. members on the basis of a 1984 statement they signed on abortion.

Notre Dame de Namur Sisters Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey, both of Charleston, W. Va., were among 24 nuns whom the Vatican Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes threatened with dismissal from religious life because of their signing the statement, which appeared as a full-page ad in The New York Times on Oct. 7, 1984. Since then the other 22, including Mercy Sister Margaret Farley of Yale Divinity School, have been cleared, but Sisters Ferraro and Hussey could still face disciplinary action.

In a statement this June, the Notre Dame de Namur leadership in Rome said the ad itself could be interpreted in different ways and was not itself a sufficient reason to start dismissal proceedings, but "the public pro-choice stance" of the two nuns caused "grave concern" and would have to be clarified.

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Committee seeks suggestions on pastoral letter

The diocesan steering committee on the U.S. bishops' economics pastoral is inviting people from the diocese to suggest amendments to the third draft of the pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All."

Mary Heidkamp, chairperson of the diocesan committee, said that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee that is drafting the pastoral letter has set a September 25 deadline for amendments to the pastoral letter. "We want to give anyone interested the chance to impact the process," she said, "and so we are inviting Catholics from throughout our 12 counties to offer

amendments."

The committee requests anyone interested in suggesting specific changes in the pastoral to contact the Economics Pastoral Steering Committee at the Diocesan Pastoral Center. The process for submitting amendments will be made available upon request. Copies of the pastoral letter are also available for \$2.50.

"At this point, the pastoral's basic direction has been established, and no major changes are likely to occur," Heidkamp added. "The bishops' committee is looking for very specific, line-by-line amendments."



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