

Father Albert Shamon

# A Word for Sunday



**Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 3:13-17; (R1) Numbers 21:4-9; (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.**

Sunday is the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, once called the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Protestants celebrate it as Holy Cross Day. Since Sept. 14 occurs this year on Sunday, the readings of the Feast supplant those of the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Feast is timely in September. After vacation and Labor Day, we are trying to get back into the swing of things — perhaps into the busiest season of the year, with school reopening and with Thanksgiving and Christmas in the offing. Re-entry can be a cross.

However, simply looking at a crucifix can bring strength and wholeness, as looking upon the poled saraph did for the Israelites who were snake-bitten in the desert. The healing incident is a recommendation to us to venerate the crucifix. Do we have crucifixes in our homes?

St. Thomas said he learned more kneeling before the crucifix than from all the books he had ever read.

In the cathedral in Mexico City is a black crucifix. Once it was a masterpiece of snow-white marble. Centuries ago, it underwent a miraculous transformation.

In 1649 a Spanish grandee, Don Fermin, used to pray every day before the snow-white crucifix. The poor loved Don Fermin because he helped them, but his peers hated him because his goodness highlighted their own selfishness. One grandee, Don Ismael Trevino, sent Don Fermin a poisoned cake. Having eaten it, Don Fermin, in mortal agony, dragged himself to the feet of the snow-white crucifix. Don Ismael followed his victim and saw him kiss the feet of the crucified Lord.

Then the miracle happened: the white feet slowly turned black, and the blackness, like ink in a thermometer, rose steadily until the entire crucifix became as black as ebony. Don Fermin rose to his feet a healthy man. Today, that crucifix is venerated as Our Lord of the Poison.

As the Hebrews in the desert poisoned by the bite of the saraph snakes were healed by looking on the poled saraph, so the poison of sin is taken from those

who look with love upon the crucified. After each Holy Communion, we can gain great indulgences simply by looking upon an image of Christ crucified and praying the prayer: "Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus..."

In 1968, the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary of Rome issued an *Enchiridion of Indulgences*. (*Enchiridion* is a Greek word for handbook.) As Vatican II desired, the Penitentiary revised the Church's discipline on indulgences. Partial indulgences are no longer counted quantitatively in days or years (for example, 300 days indulgence). And plenary indulgences have been so reduced that one can count them on one's fingers.

The Penitentiary said that the aim of the Church was to attach indulgences "only to the most important prayers and works of piety, charity and penance."

When one considers that the *Enchiridion* contains only 70 grants of indulgences, one can glean some idea of how important those prayers and devotions now indulgenced must be in the eyes of the Church.

To the prayer "Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus..." for instance, the Church attaches a plenary indulgence each Friday of Lent and Passiontide, and a partial indulgence on all other days.

The Way of the Cross, like the rosary with its crucifix, is not so popular as it once was. This is indicative of the adled thinking of many people today.

To the recitation of the rosary, the Church encourages such devotions by granting a plenary indulgence if the rosary is recited in a church or a family group or religious community or pious association; in other circumstances, a partial indulgence is granted.

As for the Way of the Cross, the Church grants to the faithful who make this pious exercise a plenary indulgence.

There you have it. No matter what others may say, the Church has shown how much she values these devotions by granting them her highest possible reward to those who practice these — a plenary indulgence.

As St. Ignatius used to say, "Think with the Church," not with popular opinion.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

# On the Right Side



## Will we be priestless?

Many are dismayed at the prospects of too few priests for the future, but I have high hopes. The church was in a mess at the time of the Reformation, and God raised up St. Ignatius, Francis Xavier, Peter Canisius and the Jesuit order to haul the Church back to sanctity and orthodoxy.

The Columbia-Viking Encyclopedia records: "Their zeal and solidarity and their peculiar devotion to the Holy See aroused the jealousy of some religious orders and ecclesiastical vested interests and especially the monarchs of Catholic Europe who wanted to be free of all papal influence" (p. 905). In recent years the loyalty for which the Jesuits were famous has become diluted. It looks as if God has raised up a new congregation, the Legionnaires of Christ, to do in this generation what the Jesuits did in the 16th and following centuries.

The Legionnaires of Christ was founded in Mexico only 45 years ago. It is established now in nine countries. It has 200 priests; 900 seminarians; a seminary in the United States at 475 Oak Avenue, Cheshire, Conn. 06410; and headquarters in Spain and in Rome. The Legionnaires seem like a resurrection of the early Jesuits, with their devotion to the Person of Christ, to the Catholic Church, to Our Blessed Mother and to the magisterium. The order has an utter loyalty to the Holy Father; a strong community life; an intense discipline; a profound prayer life; a systematic system of education comparable to that of the Jesuits; and music as a strong part of its development.

As with the early Jesuits, the Legionnaires are criticized by some clerics for strange reasons. "They wear black suits, double-breasted. They all carry the same kind of black briefcase to school. They wear cassocks. They are exclusive. Their apostolate is to the rich. They never smile." The only objection I thought worth attention was the charge of never smiling. In meeting them, however, I found great cheerfulness, camaraderie as well as dedication.

Two years ago, while in Rome, I went to their motherhouse with Fathers

Heisel and Wohrab, and put the above objections to a 28-year-old Legionnaire seminarian, Brother Slattery of the Bronx. With virile directness he responded. "Black suits? What's the objection? Cassocks? A uniform identifies. We are witnesses that the priesthood is for the young as well as the old. Exclusive? We do have a strong sense of community. Apostolate to the rich? Yes. If the rich are converted truly, they will help the poor."

"I was headmaster at a poor school, we established in Monterey, Mexico. The school came into being through the generosity of seven wealthy ladies who are patrons of one of our schools for the rich. One of the students from Monterey is now studying to be a Legionnaire," he concluded.

The confidence, certainty, dedication and intelligence of Brother Slattery seemed in contrast to men who approach the religious life with diffidence. Our Lord, the Apostles and the great people of the Church evangelized with confidence and enthusiasm.

Am I unconcerned about seminarians in our own diocese? No, but the milieu of today seems to affect men so that they walk cautiously, are hesitant about making permanent commitments and are concerned about happy personal results.

I do not know seminarians very well, though I met seminarian Brian Jeffers of St. Rita's several times at Frani's religious store and was pleased to read his thoughts about the priesthood in the August 21 Courier-Journal. Recalling Easter Mass in Florida, he said: "The liturgy really seemed to come alive. It wasn't the glitter or the robes, the respect and dignity of the priesthood. I saw more of the love and service Christ gave us, the meaning of His death and resurrection and the possibility of bringing that alive through the priesthood."

This fine spirit reminds me of my favorite Bible quotation: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your Name give glory."

### Kingston Trio, Sunshine Too to aid hearing, speech center

The Kingston Trio and National Technical Institute for the Deaf's Sunshine Too Theatre Troupe are teaming their talents to help Northwest Hearing and Speech Center make a dream come true. The two groups will be taking the stage at Nazareth Arts Center on Sunday, September 28, to help the center raise enough money to purchase a soundproof room. Performances will be at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12 and \$15, and can be purchased through Linda Spall at

(716)663-5912.

A non-profit organization, the center sees more than 40 clients weekly at its Latona Road office, and maintains outreach services to five nursing homes and to migrant families in the Brockport/Kendall area. The addition of the soundproof room will make a marked improvement in the center's ability to assess speech and hearing impairments.

### Garage sale at SSJ motherhouse to raise money for renovations

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester are hosting a garage sale on their motherhouse grounds at 4095 East Ave., on Friday and Saturday, September 19 and 20, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The purpose of the sale is to raise funds, which are needed to install a new elevator and a fire- and smoke-alarm safety system.

Call Sister Betty Mulcahy at (716)586-1000, ext. 18 for information.

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