

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 16:19-31; (R1) Amos 6:1, 4-7; (R2) 1 Timothy 6:11-16.

Last Sunday's gospel story of the wily manager (Luke 16:1-8) provided an example of behavior to be imitated. This Sunday's parable of the rich man provides an example of behavior to be avoided. The rich man loves money and enjoys all the good things of life but refuses to share with the desparately poor, whom Lazarus represents.

The point of the parable is to teach the proper use of wealth. It was not wealth that put the rich man in the abode of the dead; it was the abuse of wealth.

The lives of both men differed dramatically, and so did their deaths. Lazarus was carried away by angels; the rich man was simply buried — it was the end for him, but the beginning for Lazarus.

Even after death, the rich man still thought of Lazarus as his errand boy. First, he asked that Lazarus bring him water, then that he go to warn his brothers. This last request was the first sign of the rich man's concern for others — but it was too late; the toothpaste was out of the tube. Still, even in this instance, his concern was also selfish, for he cared only for his brothers, not at all for his neighbors.

Once, in Missouri, there lived a boy named Jim. When he reached the age of 12, his father told him that from now on he'd have to buy his own clothes. Young Jim soon needed a pair of shoes, and to the end of his life he remembered how proud he had been when he bought those shoes with money he had earned.

It was the beginning of his interest in clothes and the clothing business. During and after high school, Jim clerked in what was then called a "dry goods" store. When his parents moved to Colorado, Jim tried to open his own clothing store, but it didn't work out. He continued clerking till he was in his early 30s. Then one day he was offered a partnership in a store in Gillette, Wyoming. He jumped at the chance,

and the store was a success. Soon he opened a second store, then a third, and within five years, he owned more than 20 stores.

Young Jim's full name was James Cash Penney, and that was the beginning of the J.C. Penney Company.

But Jim got so engrossed in amassing wealth that he ended up like the rich man in the parable in his own hell — a mental institution.

But unlike the rich man in the parable, J.C. Penney could come back. And he did. One day in the institute, he heard music coming from a worship service being conducted for the patients. The music struck a responsive chord in Penney's life, taking him back to the faith of his youth. It transformed him from one pursuing wealth to one pursuing Christ.

From that day, J.C. Penney worked to spread the Christian faith. He devoted much of his time and wealth to Christian activities. He traveled extensively, working to create a Christian world. In Florida, Penney built a retirement community for religious workers.

J.C. Penney was lucky: he woke up to the truth of the gospel before it was too late.

There is a Broadway legend of a playwright who was cooped up in a telephone booth, holding the giant-size New York City Telephone Directory in his hands. Curiously, he looked at the hundreds of pages of Cohens, Joneses, Smiths, O'Briens, Johnsons. Thinking like a playwright, he exclaimed, "Not much of a plot here, but what a cast!"

True. But enlarge the New York City Directory to a World Directory. What a cast here! Men and women of all colors, races, creeds.

"Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief. Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief."

They're all in it. But according to the gospel, all will be divided into only two classes: those acceptable to God, like Lazarus, and those unacceptable, like the rich man.

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Will freedom enslave us?

No one denies that "society," a vague term which may mean many things, influences individual behavior. No one denies that environment and heredity do affect the behavior of individuals.

But in blaming society, environment and genes, there is a danger of a false writing off of individual free will, and consequent individual responsibility. For example, there are an estimated 14 million people in the U.S. who are alcoholics. Of these, 3 million are youths between 14 and 17. And one fourth of the total are women. It is accepted today that an alcoholic has a chronic disease, namely alcoholism. However the hundreds of thousands of "dry alcoholics" testify to freedom of choice — that alcoholism can be controlled by *not taking the first drink*, even as diabetes can be controlled by careful diet.

An alcoholic who obdurately persists in drinking — declaring "I can take it or leave it alone" — cannot fault society. He has a choice — either not to take that first drink (and he may well need the help of Alcoholic Anonymous or other therapy) or to continue to drink as he freely chooses. Every dry alcoholic I've ever known says the same thing: "If a man just refuses to be helped, you cannot do anything about it. You cannot help him." But dry alcoholics do attest to the fact that each man or woman or youth has freedom of choice.

Some time ago, I watched a TV program on heroin control. The commentator made this observation: In Japan, 1954, the use of opium had become so bad the government decided, to take strong measures to eradicate it and thus safeguard the nation. Anyone caught in possession of opium was sentenced to three years imprisonment. There was absolutely no exception for class or vocation or position. There was no commutation or lessening of the sentence. It was a flat three years, and

during that time rehabilitation was also encouraged.

In 1955 more than 55,000 opium users were imprisoned for three years. These people were so detrimental to Japanese society that they had to be withdrawn. In 1971 there were only 236 persons imprisoned. Today opium is no great problem in Japan.

Communist China has been even more drastic. When the communists took over in 1949, the communist regime gave one warning to dope pushers. A second offense brought beheading. Within six months there were neither pushers nor users.

As long as there was rigorous enforcement, China was free of opium and other such drugs, as well as of prostitution. The Democrat and Chronicle of Rochester had a recent article indicating that with the easing of some governmental rigor, crime has greatly risen, and presumably drugs are becoming a problem again. The irony of it is that the politically freedomless Chinese were free from the devastation of drugs while our free Americans are destroying our society through loopholes in law, law enforcement and attitudes toward drugs.

No, to blame society or ancestors or environment for the choices of free men is a glib way to excuse ourselves and malefactors of personal responsibility. Modern psychology has revealed many marvelous and mysterious workings of the human body and spirit, and many influences on the human will: physical conditions, chemistry of the body, milieu of the person. But the conclusion is always the same; excepting for the mentally unbalanced, men and women and children are free to choose.

Otherwise, there is neither praise nor blame due anyone, nor reward nor punishment. Free will may be a mystery, but as Pascal wrote: "Free will is a self-evident fact."

Ministry, leadership conferences coincide

"Building the City of God: Our Call to Leadership" is the theme of this year's diocesan leadership conference, Friday and Saturday, Oct. 17 and 18, at Keuka College.

This year, the leadership conference has been planned in conjunction with the fall ministry conference, "Partnership in Ministry, Part II," which is scheduled Friday, Oct. 17, from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Henrietta Holiday Inn.

Keynote speakers for both events will be Father Thomas Sweetser, SJ, and Carol Holden, D.Min., co-directors of the Parish Evaluation Project. Both Father Sweetser and Holden teach at the Institute of Pastoral Studies, a department of Loyola University in Chicago, and at the Center for Religious Studies at St. Thomas College in St. Paul, Minn.

Also featured at the leadership conference will be Sister Mary Benet McKinney, OSB, a leading adult educator and consultant, and

priress of the Benedictines of Chicago.

Participants in Saturday's program may attend one of the following workshops: "Changing Patterns of Ministry: Challenge of the People of God;" "Ministry of the Baptized;" "Portrait of the Successful Parish;" "Leadership for Young Adult Ministry;" "The Excitement of Initiation: Renewing Your Parish Through the RCIA;" "The Successful Meeting: How Do We Contribute and Prohibit;" and "Models of Decision-making."

Discounts are available to members of parish or ministry groups who attend either event.

For more information and to register for the leadership conference, contact Deacon Claude Lester at (716)328-3210 before October 3. Registration for Friday is limited to 150 and for Saturday, to 550.

For more information about the ministry conference, contact Father James Schwartz at (716)461-2890 before October 1.

Nazareth College names assistant coach for women's soccer

Cathy Moon, a former high school standout at Honeoye Falls-Lima, has been named assistant women's soccer coach at Nazareth College. Moon will assist Jacklin Randall-Ward, who is in her fourth season as head coach of the women's soccer program.

Last season, Moon completed for George Mason University, which captured the NCAA Division I championship. Moon added to her experience last month when she competed in the National Sports Festival in New Orleans.

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