

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 17:11-19; (R1) Kings 5: 14-17; (R2) 2 Timothy 2:8-13.

Ironically, Sunday's readings show a pagan, Naaman, and a non-Jew, a Samaritan, giving thanks to God for favors received, whereas God's own people do not.

Judging from the gospel, nine out of 10 people never say thank you. Sometimes the ratio is even higher.

Ed Spencer, for instance, was studying for the ministry in the Methodist Seminary at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. On the night of Sept. 8, 1860, he was awakened by shouts of his fellow students who were saying that an excursion ship had collided with a lumber freighter on Lake Michigan and was sinking off shore about three miles from the seminary. Spencer jumped out of bed, dressed, and raced to the scene of the collision.

Ed was a strong swimmer. That night he made 15 trips to the wreckage and brought in 15 persons. As light dawned and Ed was resting, drinking a cup of coffee, someone shouted, "There are two more out there." Despite his exhausted condition, Ed plunged into the surf again, barely made it to a piece of wreckage onto which a man and a woman were clinging for dear life. He brought them in and collapsed on the shore. Two hundred eighty-seven people drowned that night, and only 98 survived — 17 of them rescued by Ed Spencer.

Ed was carried off the beach to a hospital. The ordeal so weakened his body that he was unable to continue his studies for the ministry. He lived out his days as an invalid in California.

Years later, when an old man, Spencer was interviewed and asked if he remembered anything particular about the rescue. Spencer replied, "Only this: of the 17 people I saved, not one of them ever thanked me." Imagine that — not one out of 17!

Art Linkletter asked a little girl, "What is salt?" The girl replied, "Salt is what spoils the potatoes when you leave it out."

We might ask, "What is gratitude?" It is not hyperbole to say, "Gratitude is what spoils life when you leave it out."

There are two kinds of gratitude: negative or thankfulness for what is not; and positive or thankfulness for what is.

The classic example of negative gratitude occurred at the 1954 commencement ceremony of Hamilton College.

The speaker took for his text the four letters Y-A-L-E. For 10 minutes he held forth on Y for Youth, and the audience was unimpressed. Undaunted, he carried on for seven minutes and eight seconds on A for Ambition; by this time he lost the entire audience. Courageously, he went on for four minutes and 10 seconds on L for Loyalty, until the audience was ready to break up. Doggedly, he finished E for Energy with a rousing peroration of three minutes and 15 seconds.

When at last he had finished and was proceeding down the aisle to leave, the speaker found a student on bended knees in the last seat. The speaker asked, "Young man, would you be good enough to tell me what it was I said that moved you so deeply."

The young man said, "Yes, of course. I was just thanking God that I go to Yale rather than to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology." That indeed is negative gratitude.

Both Naaman the leper and the Samaritan in the gospel exemplified positive gratitude. Jesus' complaint has an edge of personal hurt about it. He seems to be asking about what we all ask from time to time, "How do people get that way?"

Basically, it comes down to this: God gives and gives and gives and we receive and receive and receive. Unless we give thanks, we become unhealthy, no longer whole. As in breathing, there is a double rhythm of inhaling and exhaling, and to stop one or the other means death. So in life there must be a double movement of receiving and giving thanks. To receive only and never give thanks is to die as a human being.

In the New Yorker, whose cartoons are not only witty but also barbed, there was a dandy one in the November issue a few years ago, just before Thanksgiving. It pictured a table fairly groaning with well-prepared food and the father at the head of the table saying, "Shall we say grace?"

How opposite still are the words of the psalmist: "Blessed the Lord, O my soul, add forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:2).

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Educating sisters in Africa

In the August 14 issue of the Courier Journal, this column described the development of a native Franciscan sisterhood in Kenya, East Africa. The column suggested that a good spiritual investment would be to help financially with the training of native African sisters, at a fraction of the cost of training an American sister.

The following is a letter from my friend, Bishop Raphael Ndigni, who, while a student at St. John Fisher College, assisted at Good Counsel parish in Rochester. He is the spiritual godfather of the Kenya Franciscan sisterhood. He writes:

"I was happy to hear from the Courier. The gift of Miss XXX, a generous \$100, also arrived. I will get some pictures taken of the sisters and send one to her. Sister Irimina, who comes from Nairobi, has been elected as mother general. She is the first Kenyan mother general, and I hope she will help set up Kenya as provincial of the order."

"In reply to your question: 'What would it cost to educate a sister for a year?' — I can give only a rough estimate, as they take different courses. To begin with, I would estimate that keeping a sister in formation would cost \$312. A sister in training for teaching costs \$624; and a trainee nurse about \$800. Courses in the social sciences tend to be more expensive but are of shorter duration."

Training sisters in Kenya, economically, is quite different from the States. In this country, we are relatively affluent, so that candidates for the sisterhoods in the States must pay many of the costs through their families or with money earned during previous work. The African sisters-in-training come mostly from backgrounds of great poverty, and must be supported by the community. But their costs are a pittance compared to ours.

In the Kenyan motherhouse, for example, hardly any money is spent on

food, because the sisters live very simply and raise their own food and animals. What is needed is money for medicines, clothing and minor needs. So the training is relatively inexpensive — though it seems costly, considering their income. That is why to help support the education of these Kenyan sisters is a great spiritual bargain.

I had written to Bishop Raphael: "When visiting your schools, I looked over the libraries, and found them scanty of standard useful books. Would it be helpful to send carefully chosen books? The cost of shipping them is great. We would not want to send any if they were not useful."

"I would say the books would be very welcome if they were well selected," he replied. "We have very few books in the various libraries. They could be imported tax-free. I do not know how they might be shipped. I have seen crates of books sent from the United States. If you can get something going, it would be great."

Some Rochesterians knew Father Conrad S. Schomske, OFM. He came from Perpetual Help parish, Rochester, and became a Franciscan missionary. Father Schomske was an ardent promoter of the Legion of Mary, both in Japan and in Kenya. He died a few months ago, and a memorial Mass was celebrated at St. Cecilia's, Rochester, where his brother is a parishioner.

Bishop Raphael wrote: "We were sorry to lose Father Conrad Schomske, OFM. He was a most saintly man. I am afraid he neglected his body, though. He died a very peaceful death and was buried at the Franciscan parish of Lower Subukia, near Nairobi."

If any wish to contribute to the education of African sisters, send a check to me, or to Bishop Ndigni, Catholic Diocese of Nakuru-P.O. Box 938, Nakuru, Kenya, E. Africa.

Seminar on moral questions set at Guardian Angels school

"Moral Questions Today's Major Life Issues" is the title of a seminar scheduled for Saturday, October 11 at Guardian Angels School on East Henrietta Road. The program

is co-sponsored by the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry and Guardian Angels parish.

Diocese to offer wellness day

The diocesan Clergy Health Board and St. Joseph's Hospital will sponsor a Clergy Wellness Day Sunday, October 28, in Elmira.

Speakers will include Father George Freemesser, CSB, a psychiatrist; Dr. Joseph Calderone, an internist; and Carolyn Hodges, clinical coordinator of dietary services at St. Joseph's Hospital. Participants can also be screened for blood pressure, glaucoma, lung function, blood glucose imbalances and other health conditions.

Father James Callan, pastor of Corpus Christi parish, will deliver the keynote address for seminar. Father Callan will address the question, "Is Life Sacred in the Eighties?" Workshops will focus on three issues which present real life dilemmas for today's Christians: abortion, capital punishment and euthanasia.

The seminar runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and has a \$3 fee. Those wishing to register are asked to bring a brown bag lunch. Beverage and dessert will be provided.

Call (716) 546-4894 for information.

Father Curran to lecture on being Catholic, American

Father Charles E. Curran, the outspoken theologian at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. will talk about being Catholic and being American when he delivers the 1986 John Henry Newman Lecture October 17 at the University of Rochester's River Campus.

This lecture, given annually on the themes of faith and reason, will begin at 8 p.m. in the Interfaith Chapel. Tickets are required even though the lecture will be free and open to the public.

Curran recently became the subject of world-wide attention when the Vatican censured him in August for his dissenting views on social and moral issues. Curran's liberal beliefs toward divorce, birth control, homosexual acts and abortion led the Vatican to revoke his license to teach Catholic theology.

Weekend of Directed Prayer at Mt. Saviour Monastery

A weekend of Directed Prayer is being offered for men and women in the Southern Tier at Mt. Saviour Monastery, Pine City. Beginning on Friday, November 14 at 7 p.m. and ending on Sunday, November 16 at 2 p.m., the weekend will provide a special time

of prayer with individual direction.

For information and reservations, please call Joyce Trifoso at (607) 739-5580, evenings. The reservation deadline is October 17.

The purpose of the lecture is to explore those intersections of faith and reason, religion and life as well as Church and higher education that make membership in the Catholic tradition challenging.

Tickets will be available to the general public after October 22 at the Wilson Commons Information Desk on the River campus. Call (716) 275-5911 for information.

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