

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



All Saints: (R3) Matthew 5:1-12; (R1) Revelations 7:2-4, 9-17; (R2) 1 John 3:1-3.

In November, the first two Sundays' readings are pre-empted by the Commemoration of All Souls (Nov. 2) and the Feast of the Dedication of St. John Lateran (Nov. 9). The first of November is the Feast of All Saints. Because of the history and the theology involved in these feasts, I am going to devote an article to each: All Saints (Nov. 2), All Souls (Nov. 9), and St. John Lateran (Nov. 16).

Many scholars believe the Feast of All Saints originated in Ireland, spread to England, then to Europe and finally to Rome.

The idea of a feast for all saints goes back as early as 270, to a festival of all martyrs. In 610, Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon (originally a pagan temple to all the gods) to Our Lady and all the martyrs. The feast was celebrated on May 13.

The Irish perhaps extended this feast of martyrs to embrace all saints — virgins, confessors and religious. Gregory IV (828-44) adopted the feast in reparation for iconoclasm.

Iconoclasm (the word means "image-breaking") was a heresy condemning the veneration of holy images and the intercession of the saints.

The heresy probably had its roots in Moslems' violent opposition to images. Perhaps in an effort to ingratiate himself with his powerful neighbors and because he was convinced that images posed an obstacle to the conversion of Jews and Moslems, Leo the Isaurian (717-741) in 726 decreed the destruction of all images, or icons, as condemned in the Old Testament.

Widespread persecution resulted. Appeal was made to Rome. In 787 the Second Council of Nicea was called. It condemned iconoclasm and reaffirmed the Church's tradition of praying to the saints.

The council ended the controversy — but only for a time. Some interpreted the religious and political upheavals after the council as the God's punishment of the Church for restoring image veneration. So, Leo V (813-820) initiated another iconoclastic persecution, which lasted to 842.

Two of the many effects of iconoclasm were the creation of the Papal States and the feast of All Saints.

In 756 when the Lombards invaded Italy, the Holy Father turned for help to the West, instead of to the East which was tainted by iconoclasm. Pepin responded to the appeal, defeated the Lombards and created the Papal States ("Donation of Pepin"). The Holy Father, not the Eastern Emperor, became the protector of Italy — "Il Papa," the Pope.

The iconoclastic persecution drove many monks and nuns to Rome. They brought with them the relics of many saints to prevent their destruction in the East. In reparation for this desecration, Pope Gregory IV universalized the feast of All Saints and changed the date of its celebration from May 13 to November 1.

Today the removal of statues from our churches and the ignoring of sacramentals makes one wonder if iconoclasm is not rearing its ugly head once again.

I am convinced that one of the purposes of the apparitions of Our Lady in the 19th and 20th centuries is to restore image veneration and sacramentals. In 1830 she gave us the miraculous medal. At Lourdes she pleaded for the rosary. At Fatima she repeated her plea and, in addition, urged the wearing of the brown scapular. And have not the popes blessed statues of the Pilgrim Virgin of Fatima?

God knows we arrive at the invisible through the visible, for we are not angels, pure spirits. The Incarnation says as much.

The Feast of All Saints is meant to teach us that sanctity is not the inaccessible preserve of the privileged few; rather, it is the ordinary destiny of all Christians. "This is the will of God," wrote Paul, "your sanctification." The essential spirit of sanctity is, as the gospel tells us, the beatitudes. The beatitudes are attitudes and virtuous deeds resulting from the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit within us. The cross, the eighth beatitude, is common to all the other seven; for sanctity is by way of the cross, happiness by the way of sanctity. The cross is the mark of the Christian life, but its goal is happiness.

the human, the Catholic tradition has also accepted the importance of faith and reason. Medieval scholastics boldly asserted that faith and reason can never, contradict one another," he said.

Thirdly, Father Curran said that "Catholic ecclesiology has insisted on the incarnational principle," which "means that Jesus became truly human at a particular time and place in human history ... The Church like Jesus must become incarnate in time and space."

Father Curran also pointed out that the Church has adapted itself to prevailing historical and cultural realities, and noted that — had it not done so with respect to the culture and law of Roman civilization — the Church would be quite different from its current reality.

Since Vatican II, the Church has come to acknowledge the role of history in the development of tradition. "The Vatican II renewal of the Church was also rooted in a

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Tours and their complications

This article is being written at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., on October 9.

For weeks, people have asked: "Have you returned from Ireland or are you going?" The answer is that we leave on Saturday, Oct. 11, and return on Saturday, Oct. 25.

Q. How many times have you been to Ireland?

A. Escorting groups, this makes 15 times. The first group I escorted anywhere was to the Holy Land in 1972. The Courier-Journal was starting a series of tour programs, and Tony Costello, then the business manager, asked me to be tour conductor. We were 47 people, and it was such a success that the next group was to Ireland.

The capacity was 42 people. Milt Voorhees, our travel agent, phoned: "You'll have to make a decision. Either tell 25 that they can't come or take two buses for 67." In my innocence, I replied: "I'd hate to say no to 25. Father Herb Sturmer and his sister, Betty Beikirk, are slated to come. If Father Sturmer will take care of the second bus, let's take them all." It was done, and it turned out happily.

Q. How many do you need to form a group?

A. I've never quite known. If there are 15, the tour goes, but it is often joined with other groups to fill a bus with 30 or more. On this coming Ireland trip, we will have 34 and our own tour bus. Unfortunately, several last-minute applicants had to be turned down.

Q. Why?

A. The travel agencies must take complex steps to arrange the trip. A definite commitment for seats on the plane, reservations of hotel rooms and

for meals at the hotels (all of which are included in the package price) have to be nailed down a few weeks before leaving. Then reservations have to be made for entertainment — usually a medieval banquet at an ancient castle or an evening at the cabaret at Jury's with the greatest of humorists, Hal Roach — and several other events have to be pre-arranged. Of course there is free time, especially in Dublin, when the ladies invent their passion for shopping.

Q. It seems to me that this work has little to do with your vocation as a priest.

A. Does it? I wonder what you think the vocation of a priest entails. When I go to Friendly's for a soda or to the Knights of Columbus for a fish fry on Friday, I am a visible and substantial witness to Our Lord and His Church. Our tours are composed largely of devout Catholics, with a few Presbyterians and Methodists also joining. Each day I celebrate Mass in the hotels for those who wish to go, and this usually is most of them. I always bring a load of Archbishop Sheen cassette tapes, and they are spread in many parts of Ireland. One outstanding success was my persuading the manager of Veritas in Dublin, the largest Catholic book store in the country, to stock Sheen tapes. They bought several hundred, which are floating all about Ireland. And I also bring a bundle of the little prayer book, "A Treasury of Prayers," which is avidly received by many people we meet quite casually. Oh, there is much evangelization to be done everywhere in diverse ways, besides talking about it.

A report on Ireland will be given at the return.

knowledge that in history the Church had taken on different understandings and forms. The Catholic Church insists on the importance of the role of pope and bishops in the Church, but history reminds us of the different ways these offices have functioned and been related to one another ... Thus history reminds us of the diversity that has existed within Roman Catholicism and the possibility of other changes today."

Furthermore, Father Curran said that the American political culture has had beneficial influence on the Church. In the 19th century, the church denied the possibility of religious freedom and opposed United States democracy which provided this right constitutionally. But with the emergence of totalitarian regimes in the early 20th century, the Church began to move toward defense of individual rights and toward approval of democracy.

"Finally, at Vatican II, the Church teaching changed with the recognition that the fathers of Vatican II had learned from the experience of Christian people the importance of religious freedom. This change was arduous, slow and not without considerable pain, but the Roman Catholic Church finally came to accept the American understanding of religious freedom.

Finally, Father Curran argued that the

Church "has recognized that importance of historical consciousness and its consequences." Contrasting historical consciousness with Classicism, Father Curran said, "Classicism stresses the eternal, the immutable and unchanging. The danger of classicism is to identify the eternal plan of God with what is in reality a historically relative condition."

Despite his insistence that American culture has much to offer to the Roman Catholic Church, Father Curran offered some cautions to be kept in mind. First of all, he said, "American" is a misnomer when applied only to the experience of U.S. citizens. Secondly, it is unwise to make sweeping generalizations about U.S. culture because even within this country there exist numerous variations.

Thirdly, he said, U.S. Catholics tend to look only at their differences with Rome, and forget that Catholics of other cultures are also having problems.

Father Curran also noted that in learning from American culture, the Church must not forfeit its ability to criticize that culture for its faults. "Yes, there must be a dialogue between the Church and contemporary culture. At times, the Church will learn from the culture, but at times it must negatively criticize it," the theologian warned.

Fr. Curran

Continued from Page 17

the institutional Church and could cause many to drift away from the life of the Church. Thus, it is understandable that many people today are calling for a truly American Catholic Church."

To support his belief that the Church should become more American, Father Curran developed seven arguments. First of all, he noted, "the Catholic tradition has consistently recognized that the word and work of Jesus must be made relevant and meaningful in the light of the historical and cultural circumstances of the day.

Secondly, he noted that "the Catholic tradition has taken human experience and human reason very seriously" — upholding that grace builds on nature.

"In addition to its emphasis on grace and

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