

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 3:1-12; (R1) Isaiah 11:1-10; (R2) Romans 15:4-9.

Advent begins, as everything should begin, with the end. If you are planning a trip, don't you start with where you are going? For the last destination, even though it is the last thing arrived at, determines what preparations you have to make.

So Advent begins with the Parousia, the second coming of Christ at the end of the world. That is where we are going: to meet Christ, who will judge the living and the dead. And that should determine our preparation. Advent simply says, "Get ready."

In these next three Sundays of Advent, the Church shifts our focus to our Lord's first coming, with a view of detailing how we are going to get ready for the Parousia.

When the historical Jesus came to earth, John the Baptizer asked people to ready themselves by reforming their lives. Reform means changing one's way of thinking and acting.

The great obstacle to reform is a smugness that says in effect, "I don't need to reform. I'm OK, you're OK." That was the problem of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Yet John branded them "a brood of vipers." And when he tore off their masks, they showed their fangs.

St. Paul (R2) hints that we can find directions for reform in the scriptures.

Books, as Hamlet told Polonius, are "words, words, words." However, the Book of books, the scriptures, is the inspired word of God and therefore "living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). Moreover, St. Paul said, "Everything written before our time was written for our instruction;" that is, the Old Testament was written for New Testament believers — for from it, Paul says, we can "derive hope from the lessons of patience and its words of encouragement."

Three things are needed for reform: hope, patience and encouragement. Hope points to the future and patience to the present, while words of encouragement inspire us to be patient and hopeful.

Scriptures offer lessons for hope. Abraham hoped. Was he disappointed? Esther hoped. Was she disappointed?

The prophets hoped. Were they disappointed? Indeed, their hope buttressed their patience in the dark night of trials.

In addition to examples, the scriptures give words encouraging us to hope and be patient. Here are a few picked at random. St. Peter wrote: "Christ suffered ... and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps" (1 Peter 2:21).

From St. Paul: "I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). And why is it as nothing? Because patience with the pinpricks of life wins heaven.

If I paid \$100 for a brand new Cadillac, wouldn't I say, "It was a steal. I got it for practically nothing"? Paul says so elsewhere: "The present burden of our trial is light enough, and earns for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison ... which lasts forever" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

When it's a question of making money, worldly people try to procure as much as they can; and yet when it's a question of winning the priceless treasure of eternal life, most people say, "It's enough if I just get to heaven." The saints didn't think that way; they left everything for God. Who is the wiser?

If we knew the value of patience, of suffering for God, people would rush after it, as hordes did for gold in 1849. When John of the Cross was asked by Christ to name whatever he wanted, the saint said only, "Aut pati aut mori" — "Let me suffer or die."

Therefore, said St. James, "Count it pure joy when you are involved in every sort of trial" (1:2).

We said we needed three things to reform: hope, patience and words of encouragement. But since all these three are found in the scriptures, we have a fourth need: namely, to read scriptures.

Here's an offer you can't refuse: Promise God that you'll read one line of scriptures every day before going to bed. One line a day! Who can refuse that? Put your Bible on your pillow and before your head hits the pillow, read one line of scriptures. Try it and see how many blessings will come.

For "Everything written was written for our instruction, that we might derive hope from the lessons of patience and the words of encouragement in the scriptures" (R2).

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Kenyan sisterhood

A few months ago, I wrote Bishop Raphael Ndigni of Kenya, asking, "What is the approximate cost of training a sister for the native Franciscan congregation that you founded some years ago?"

"I would estimate that keeping a sister in formation would cost \$312," he wrote back. "A sister in training for teaching costs \$625, a trainee nurse about \$800."

One reason for the low cost of training is that the sisters grow their own food: vegetables, chicken and a few cows for milk. Also, like St. Paul, they largely sustain themselves. Since the cost of training is a pittance compared with the cost of training an American sister, I suggested that to share in such a training is a good spiritual bargain. Several people sent donations amounting to \$2,000.

On Nov. 11, Bishop Raphael wrote: "Thank you for your letter of October 27 and the enclosed checks. I have noted that the check from Elmira for \$625 is specified for the education of a sister. This money came just in time, as we were sending one of our St. Francis sisters to Immaculata College in Pennsylvania to do teacher education. Her name is Sister Fidelis Mukhwana. She is already a trained teacher for native Africans. In the past we have had sisters studying at Immaculata. They have come back and they are doing very well."

In October, 1984, Fathers Wohlrab, Heisel and I visited the sisters' motherhouse outside Nakuru, Bishop Raphael's See. We also met the mother superior. The bishop mentioned that he had sent her to the States for special training.

"I should think twice before sending a native sister to the States for training," I remarked. "So many of our religious communities have changed from traditional religious life to embrace a kind of feminist direction."

The bishop smiled and said, "I realized that. That's why I sent her to Immaculata." Immaculata motherhouse and college

are near Philadelphia and are run by the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters. There are 2,000 sisters in the community. One, Margaret McLallen from Trumansburg, is now Sister Regina Rosarii. They conduct many schools in the States.

The Philadelphia IHMs follow traditional religious life. They wear a neat, blue and white habit with a light blue veil. They have a strong community life. They are deeply devoted to the Eucharist, to Our Lady, to the Holy See and to teaching.

Our communities in the States are of two kinds: the traditional and the progressives who have dropped the habit, changed the vows of poverty and obedience, and are committed to social activism and feminist movements. Some are tenuous about fidelity to the Holy See. They often do good work, but they would not be good for the Church in Africa, which needs stability, cohesion and a strong sense of community.

The bishop continues: "I have also noted the checking for Mass stipends. People, including priests who live in decent comfort, often do not realize that Mass stipends are a main support for many priests in the Third World. When SVD Father Thibault left Rochester for Mexico, he wrote to friends that Mass stipends are the only support the priests in his area have. If you are making a will, and want Masses celebrated for your intentions, why not specify to the Propagation of the Faith that the Masses are to be celebrated by Third World priests?"

If anyone wants to help in the development of the native St. Francis sisterhood — with its traditional concept of poverty, chastity, obedience; with a mother superior rather than a consensual community; with sisters who give visible witness of the consecrated life with their blue and white religious habit, enhancing the lives of thousands in Africa — you might send a donation directly to: Bishop Raphael Ndigni / Bishop's House, P.O. Box 938 / Nakuru, Kenya, E. Africa, or send it to me and I will forward it to him for the work of the native Sisters of St. Francis.

Prayer group invites all to attend services

The Padre Pio Prayer Group of Holy Spirit Parish, Penfield, presents its regular holy hours at 2 p.m. on the fourth Sunday of each month. The services are held at the church, on the corner of Plank and Hatch roads.

The group's aim is to pay homage to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Mother, and to pray for the beatification of Padre Pio and for personal intentions. Father Frederick Bush, spiritual director of the group, conducts the services.

Padre Pio was a Capuchin (Franciscan) friar who lived a life of thorough dedication to Jesus. He died Sept. 23, 1968, at the age of 81. On Sept. 20, 1918, he received the stigmata, unexplained wounds resembling those inflicted on Christ at the time of the crucifixion.

At the age of five, Padre Pio decided to

dedicate his life to God. He entered the Franciscan novitiate at 16 and was ordained a priest at the age of 23. Long hours of prayer, meditation, penance and dedication to the salvation of souls were the hallmark of his ministry. Moved by the reverence with which Padre Pio celebrated his daily 5 a.m. Mass, believers flocked to his confessional. He is believed to have heard approximately 2 million confessions during 15- to 19-hour stints in the confessional. Padre Pio is also credited with having inspired the construction of the Home for the Relief of Suffering, the largest hospital in southern Italy.

All are welcome to join the Holy Spirit group to pray and to obtain more information on Padre Pio.

Rt. Rev. Msgr. William B. Smith, STD



Nationally — Renowned Priest/Educator to speak at St. Margaret Mary's Church

When: December 7, 1986

Time: 7:00 o'clock, PM

Where: 174 Pennsylvania Ave.

(1.5 mi. south of Rt. 434)
Apalachin, NY 13732

TOPICS: Life Issues; Quality of Life; Abortion; and Euthanasia

Don't miss this rare opportunity to listen to, question, and meet with Msgr. William Smith, a widely-respected Pro Life speaker!

Brought to you by: C.A.L.L. — Christian Action League For Life

Program seeks families to assist recovering patients

DePaul Mental Health Services, in cooperation with the New York State Office of Mental Health, is offering a Family Care Program, which will provide homes for people recovering from mental illness. The program matches persons willing to share their homes with individuals in need of guidance, support and companionship.

Family care providers may be single, married, widowed or divorced, and may be either

homeowners or renters. They must be willing to provide the understanding and security needed by people recovering from mental illness.

DePaul Family Care staff will offer training, ongoing support and 24-hour emergency back-up services to providers to ensure that all residents receive proper care.

Those interested in learning about family care may contact DePaul Mental Health Services, (716)436-8020.

Give your pennies and quiet money to



Ed Meath's TV 10 Children's Christmas Fund

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