

Father Albert Shamon

# A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 1:18-24; (R1) Isaiah 7:10-14; (R2) Romans 1:1-7.

The two great virtues of Advent are patience and hope. Patience is the waiting virtue, and hope is the basis of patience.

Hope is as necessary to life as oxygen is to the lungs. Take oxygen away and death occurs. Take hope away and humanity smothered — the spirit goes, mankind is overwhelmed by a feeling of purposelessness and senselessness.

The Old Testament is a book of hope, for God promised again and again to send a Messiah (R1). He did! He kept His promise. That's what Christmas is all about: God is dependable.

The New Testament is also a book of hope, for it brought to earth the Son of God made man: Jesus who is the ground of our hope. "Take courage!" He said. "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Three classes of people populate today's world: 1) the hopeless: those who don't believe in promises, even when God makes them; 2) the hoping: the day-dreamers, those who do nothing to act on hope; and 3) the hopeful: those who base their lives on the promises of God.

The *hopeless* are the prophets of gloom and doom, the blind pessimists. Woody Allen captured the hopelessness of the hopeless in this quip of his: "More than any time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and the other to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

People get this way when they put all their trust in human resources alone. When they get trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea, they panic, for they do not believe in a God of Moses.

The *hoping* are at the other extreme: the blind optimists. They believe that somehow tomorrow will be better, whether or not they lift a finger. They believe change itself will come automatically to correct despair. Literature is full of these day-dreamers: Hamlet, Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner*, the kids in the musical *Annie* who sing

"Tomorrow."

The hoping are the "unrealists," who believe the Soviets when they talk peace and who won't believe the Mother of God when she points out the way to peace at Fatima. The blind optimists love to cuddle their hoping, because it permits them to live in a dream world and do nothing.

In an old Marx Brothers movie, Groucho and Chico search for a missing work of art. "I believe," says Groucho, "that the missing picture is hidden in the house next door."

"But there isn't any house next door," Chico replies.

Groucho answers, "Then we'll build one." Hopeless hoping gets a laugh and nothing else, for it is senseless.

Finally, there are the *hopeful*, who possess a confidence in the present based on promises made by God regarding the future. Never has hope been more needed than today. The world is suffering, because true hope has not been preached enough. Youth of the '60s and '70s just gave up, while adherents of the "Death of God" movement felt God had given up on the world. The despair continues in the drug culture of today, with its code of "shoot it up today, for what is there to live for?"

One of the themes of Christmas is hope. We must not let commercialism, partying or Santa Claus cloud the way of hope: Christ. For Christmas is Christ's birthday. Christ came to bring tidings of great joy to all. Let us never forget that.

Christ's salvation can be depended on, for He conquered death. This Christ has not left us orphans, but He still comes, again and again, not as an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, but as risen and free from all human limitations, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of bread and wine. And He comes again, as when He first came — to bring hope, so that His Mass, Christ's Mass, will make our Christmas and every other day merry.

Let us never forget this, either: the hopeful find hope in Christ's Mass. A merry Christmas to one and all!

Father Paul J. Cuddy

# On the Right Side



## That 'Smile: God loves you' sign

Q. What do you think of those "Smile: God loves you" stickers?

A. They give me the willies. We are redeemed through the blood of Christ, and through His merits. But that does not mean that we have no responsibility toward our salvation. Such signs are misleading and do harm.

Q. But they have been around for years, and no one has contested them.

A. I don't know about others, but I have. In 1979, I was a member of our Priests' Council, and after each meeting, used to send a letter to "Constituents of Block II." Our block was composed of the second oldest group of priests, and the letter narrated what happened at the last meeting. This subject came up, and so did my ire.

Q. What and why?

A. The president of the council was Father Louis Hohman, now pastor of St. Louis parish in Pittsford, a priest of charm, piety and graciousness, and an effective preacher. He was rector of Becket Hall. At the June 19 meeting, he struck a nerve in my soul.

Q. What was that?

A. Well, let's start from the letter to the constituents of Block II.

"Father Hohman opened the meeting with a prayer. He often has a mode of expression that raises my hackles. When his prayer put a heavy emphasis on 'God's unconditional love,' my adrenal glands began to boil. After his prayer, he invited us to add to his prayer.

"With some warmth, I said, 'Mine is not a prayer, but I need an exegesis of the term *God's unconditional love*. Maybe I missed a cog in Scriptural exegesis, but it seems clear to me that the Gospel is definite about certain conditions that have to be met to keep God's love.

"Father Hohman replied coolly, 'Yes. You have (missed a cog). God's love remains constant. It is men who turn away from him.'

"That I know," I replied. "Dr. William Barclay, so highly recommended by Archbishop Sheen, gives a clear explanation of that. But, so expressed, you give the impression you can shack up

with the lady down the street, and it's fine with our unconditionally loving God."

"Father Hohman retorted, 'I'll make that the subject of my next Open Window column.'"

The meeting continued, but in my letter to constituents, a development of my thoughts was expressed in the following way. "Those signs that read 'Smile: Jesus loves you,' in my opinion urge people to believe that anything goes. And I think there is evil in this impact. Because of our human psyches, spiritual concepts are usually best expressed analogically. Certainly the Gospels express them that way. They are consistent in expressing qualifications to keep God's love."

Consider Matthew 6:15: "If you do not forgive the wrongs of others, then your Father in heaven will not forgive the wrongs you have done." Or Matthew 7:16: "Then I will say to them: 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evil-doers.'" Matthew 7 concludes: "When Jesus had finished this discourse the people were astonished at his teaching; unlike their own teachers he taught with a note of authority."

No wonder our people are muddled because they have heard so much about the theological metaphysics of the "unconditional love of God" that they are not clear about what Christ means when He constantly equates our relationship to His Father with the qualifying conjunction, *if*. Note how often our Lord uses that qualification, as you read the Gospels.

Q. Do you think that "unconditional love" idea is responsible for the irresponsibility of so many today — adults as well as youngsters?

A. For several years our catechists practically ignored the notion of sin and therefore of responsibility. Some religion teachers taught that the Ten Commandments were just a lot of Jewish legislation. People have lost reverence, so that many go to Holy Communion in any condition of soul. Pope John Paul II is working for spiritual stability and responsibility.

## CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S EVE AT... Logan's PARTY HOUSE

1420 SCOTTSVILLE ROAD

9:00 P.M. - 2:00 A.M. OPEN BAR  
9:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M. Deluxe Buffet  
1:00 A.M. - 2:00 A.M. Sandwiches, Danish & Coffee

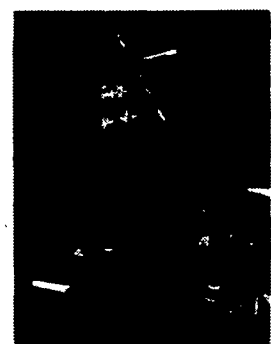
- SHRIMP COCKTAIL
- Hot Roast Sirloin of Beef
- Hot Baked Ham
- Roast Chicken
- Italian Sausage
- Rigatoni in Sauce
- Meat Balls in Sauce
- Potatoes, Salads, etc.

**\$75.00** Per Couple  
Includes TAX & GRATUITY

The Great Sound  
**LIVE MUSIC BY TIME PIECE**  
For Your Dancing  
and Dining pleasure!  
9 P.M. - 2 A.M.

Call: **235-6978**  
RESERVATIONS MUST BE PAID BY DEC. 27th

## NEW YEAR'S EVE Party Assortments



Make your Parish New Years' Party's a night to remember!

Our "Jubilee" Assortment for 50 includes hats, horns, noisemakers, balloons, leis and confetti! All for only **\$29.95**

We carry everything for a happy holiday party. Plastic champagne glasses, table covers, service trays, plates, cups, napkins, and more.

Ask about our 15% Parish Discount for all Church and School functions

**the PAPER STORE**

a world of paper products

175 Monroe Ave  
354 3798  
M-F 9-6  
Sat 10-4

**GIFT CERTIFICATE**  
Some Very Special Person... Deserves A Special Gift  
A Gift Certificate From  
**Rose Lummis Cruises, My Brothers Place, or Arney's Marina...**  
all on beautiful Sodus Bay  
Call Collect for more information.  
Phone (315)483-9111 or (315)483-4065

### When was the last time you knitted a sweater over the weekend?



We have several "quickie" sweater and vest patterns

**FREE**

with purchase of yarn  
"Make Several for Gift Giving."

**Knit 'cetera**



1790 Penfield Rd., Penfield, N.Y. (716) 248-3623