

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 1:29-34; (R1) Isaiah 49:35-6; (R2) 1 Corinthians 1:1-3.

Last week we discussed the concept of baptism as a call. We saw that Christ's baptism was a call to evangelize — and so is ours! That is why a lighted candle is given at each baptism. It signifies that we, enlightened at baptism, are to be lights to others.

This Sunday's liturgy, however, goes one step further: it points out what one's response ought to be to God's call. "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will" (Responsorial Refrain). The Responsorial Psalm speaks of "waiting for the Lord ... with ears open to obedience ... coming to do His will ... which is to announce your justice in the vast assembly."

There is no doubt we are a called people — called to be a holy people, precisely that we might be witnesses to others, like Isaiah, Paul, and John.

All of us are familiar with the annual draft of college athletes. Hundreds of athletes, eligible for the draft, sit by their telephones anxiously awaiting a call that will inform them that they've been picked by one of the pro teams, either in football or basketball. Very few receive a call — only one out of 12,000 basketball players, for instance.

It is not like that with God's call. Each one of us is called by God at baptism — not to play football or basketball, but to become holy and share our good life with others.

So many lives today are wasted. So many people just drift along. So many, as a result, turn to palliatives: drink, drugs or illicit sex. The fundamental reason is that they have forgotten they've been called by God to fulfill a goal beyond themselves.

This call of God is what gives purpose to life. Purpose gives meaning to life. Meaning makes life a romance, a joy, a challenge! Seneca wrote that "our plans miscarry because we have no aim. When a man does not know what harbor he is heading for, no wind is the right wind." He just drifts.

As the new year rolls along, it

behooves us to try to determine the nature of our call in life and how to respond to it.

This effort, of course, requires patience, first of all — "I have waited, waited for the Lord." David waited 18 years for the throne.

Secondly, this effort requires a response. "Behold I come to do your will" — to do, not just drift.

Who are those who never connect with their call? The Ahab's of the world who relentlessly but unsuccessfully pursue the great white whale that constantly swims beyond their harpoon? Have they misread the call? Or were they just hearing things?

By no means! The call can be the struggle itself, the striving. The saint is the sinner who keeps trying. It is not the achievement but the effort that counts. In his poem "Ulysses," Tennyson echoes this thought: "How dull it is to pause, to make an end, / To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!" Then the climactic challenge: "Strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield." Tennyson just couldn't envision Ulysses, after the fall of Troy and the reconquest of his tiny kingdom of Ithaca, just sitting at home and doing nothing.

Life is a call — a call by God to strive for the stars. Longfellow in his "Psalm of Life" encapsulated it all when he wrote:

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us farther than today.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Perhaps that last line disappoints — "to labor and to wait." How easy it seems if one has only to wait. Yet it isn't really so easy, for the waiting comes after laboring. After you've labored and done your best but no fruits seem to result, then wait, wait for the Lord. Such waiting is pregnant. "I have waited, waited for the Lord."

Obituaries

Rita Mills Rhinehart, fourth-grade teacher

Rita Mills Rhinehart, a fourth-grade teacher at St. Michael's School in Penn Yan, died unexpectedly Saturday, November 15, at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hospital in Penn Yan. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on November 18 at St. Michael's Church.

Mrs. Rhinehart, a 1966 alumna of Nazareth College, graduated from St. Michael's Parochial School and DeSales High School. Her life, as well as her long and distinguished teaching career, was dedicated to the mission of the Catholic school.

A member of St. Michael's parish all her life, Mrs. Rhinehart was active in numerous church and community service organizations, includ-

ing the Catholic Daughters of America, the Nocturnal Adoration Society, the American Association of University Women and the Girl Scouts of America. She also served as a Eucharistic minister at St. Michael's.

She is survived by her husband, Wallace K., a daughter, Theresa, and two sons, Wallace Kevin Jr. and Robert, all of Penn Yan; her parents, Metz V. and Helen C. Mills of Penn Yan; two sisters, Mrs. David (Mary Jane) DeSmith of Fairport and Mrs. Brendan (Virginia) Curtin of Elmira; and two nieces and nephews.

At the request of her family, memorial contributions may be made in Mrs. Rhinehart's name to St. Michael's School.

William Roeger, 85, St. Michael's parishioner

A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated Dec. 6 at St. Thomas More Church in Rochester for William Roeger. Mr. Roeger died on December 1 at the age of 85.

Born in Germany on July 5, 1901, Mr. Roeger emigrated with his wife, Anna Vorbeck Roeger, settling in Rochester in December of 1927. He worked at Bausch and Lomb Optical Company until his retirement in 1970.

A lifetime member of the Catholic Central Union, he served as president of the New York State branch of the organization and was a member of its Social Action Committee. He also transferred his membership in

the Kolping Society in Germany to the newly founded Rochester off-shoot, for which he served as treasurer for many years. Mr. Roeger was also a member of the Knights of St. John and the Nocturnal Adoration Society of St. Michael's Church in Rochester, where he was a parishioner for more than 50 years.

He is survived by his wife, the former Anna Vorbeck; a son, William; and his daughters, Ann Elizabeth, Catherine Abel, and Sister Marlena Roeger, SSJ, of Brazil. He is also survived by nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Father Curran

Continued from Page 1

He also objected that the archbishop had no statutory authority to suspend him from teaching students enrolled in civil degree programs, but only from teaching those studying for the ecclesiastical degrees. The courses he was scheduled to teach in the spring were open to students in both the canonical and the civil degree programs, he said.

In his January 12 press release, Father Curran also quoted from letters to the archbishop by Fathers Cenknér and Power, although he did not release the full texts of their letters.

From Father Cenknér's letter of December 29 he quoted an appeal to Archbishop Hickey that "Considering the gravity of the situation and the precarious moment in which our university stands, I humbly suggest a dialogue between the concerned parties."

The release quoted Father Power as saying, "I see no acceptable warrant for this suspension."

Archbishop Hickey, in a response dated January 9, said Father Curran had offered "no conceivable basis" for arguing that his teaching faculties should not be withdrawn "when the highest authorities of the Church have expressly and finally declared that you are not suitable to teach Catholic theology."

He said he had informed the bishop-trustees of the university of the responses by Fathers Curran, Cenknér and Power, and "it remains my judgment, and the judgment of the episcopal members of the board, that you should be suspended from teaching."

Father Curran, who was on sabbatical from the university until the end of 1986, said he intended to teach the three courses he was originally slated for: Social and Political Ethics 626, a master's-level graduate course; Moral Theology in Practice 724, which could be used as credit toward either a master's or a doctoral degree; and The Bible and Moral Theology 824, a doctoral-level course.

When the spring catalog came out last fall, Father Curran's name was not listed on the courses. Their teacher slots were designated "TBA," for "to be arranged."

The ecclesiastical degrees of STB, STL and

STD — baccalaureate, licentiate and doctorate in sacred theology — are offered by the theology department as a papally chartered faculty.

In addition, the department offers four graduate degrees that are usually called "civil" because they meet civil accreditation standards of the American academic system rather than the Vatican requirements for church-authorized degrees. These are the master of arts, master of divinity, doctor of philosophy and doctor of ministry.

Father Curran said the preamble to university statutes concerning ecclesiastical faculties states that those faculties "are not exclusively ecclesiastical." He quoted language from the preamble, saying that the special rules governing them as ecclesiastical faculties are not applicable to their programs as non-ecclesiastical faculties.

He cited that argument in his January 7 letter to Archbishop Hickey, saying, "I am ready, willing, able, and, I believe, lawfully entitled, to teach in that non-ecclesiastical portion of the department of theology."

Archbishop Hickey's letter of January 9 did not directly address the question of whether the priest could teach those courses as non-ecclesiastical courses.

In the key passage conveying the suspension order, Archbishop Hickey said, "I hereby suspend you from teaching in an ecclesiastical faculty pending the outcome of the proceedings to withdraw your canonical mission. Pursuant to section V 9.4 of the Canonical Statutes, you will continue to receive full salary and benefits."


The letter said nothing about the theology department's parallel status, under some aspects, as a non-ecclesiastical faculty.

Officials of Catholic University could not be reached for comment on January 12, and Anne Smith, the university's director of public information, said no statements regarding the case would be offered.

Nor was comment forthcoming from the Archdiocese of Washington, which was referring all inquiries to the university information office.

The spring semester opened January 12 with a two-day period during which students register for their courses. Classes are slated to begin January 14.

Father Curran said his first class was scheduled for 9 a.m. on January 15.



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