

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sunday in White

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 20:19-31; (R1) Acts 2:42-47; (R2) 1 Peter 1:3-9.

Next Sunday has a number of names: Low Sunday, Sunday in White, Octave of Easter, to mention some. The gospel reading is always the story of the evening appearances of the risen Christ to the disciples and to Thomas. These two appearances emphasize the physical reality of the resurrection of Jesus, who is no ghost.

At His first appearance, Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Through this directive, the Eleven were made apostles.

Then, "He breathed on them." This was not a symbolic gesture. Rather, it recalled the Spirit breathing over the waters at creation (Genesis 1:2), and the breath that caused man to live (Genesis 2:7).

Christ's breathing on the disciples was the moment of a new creation (the institution of the sacrament of penance) and a new commissioning and mission. Jesus gave them peace by forgiving their sins; then He sent them with power to bring peace to others through a similar forgiveness of sins.

Peace and forgiveness are both the fruits of the resurrection and the basis of the apostolic mission.

Thomas represents all of us whose faith in the resurrection of Jesus must depend on the testimony of the Church, the faith community.

Last week I wrote of Sister Faustina Kowalski, whom God asked to promote the message of His mercy to the world. Fourteen times in her diary, she quotes our Lord as requesting that a "Feast of Mercy" (R2) be officially established in the Church on the first Sunday after Easter. On this day, He promised to pour out a whole ocean of graces and forgive not only sin, but also the punishment for sin, due to all who would receive Holy Communion (R1) on that Sunday and go to confession (R3) on any day immediately before or after that Sunday.

I am sure many of you are aware that our Lady is appearing all over the landscape. She talks to Father Stefano Gobbi, founder of the Marian Movement of Priests. (Incidentally, Father Gobbi

will be at Holy Trinity in Webster on June 8. Try to make the evening Mass there at 7 p.m.) She has been appearing to six children in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, since 1981. I hope to make a pilgrimage there from May 20-27. I do ask your prayers for a safe and fruitful pilgrimage.

I mention just these two visitations, because one of the messages our Lady keeps repeating is the need to go to confession — not just once, but monthly.

At Medjugorje, our Lady spoke of confession as "a medicine for the whole sick Church in the West." Then she promised "that whole areas of the Church would be healed if believers went to confession once a month."

Lucy Rooney, SND, and Robert Faricy, SJ, have written a very worthwhile book entitled *Medjugorje Up Close*. Their account of the miracle is very objective and critical. The authors refer to Mary's message of worldwide conversions. "Conversion means reconciliation with God and with others in the overall framework of the Church," they write. "Not surprisingly, Mary urges the sacrament of penance as a fundamental part of conversion."

"A good confession has its part in the beginning of an authentic conversion, and regular, monthly, confession is a basic element in the ongoing conversion that the message of Medjugorje calls us to," the authors comment (p.74).

If people knew the real value of confession, they would be fighting to get into the confessional or reconciliation room.

On October 3, 1915, Our Lord told Sister Benigna Consolata to make known His mercy and how easy it is to obtain it in the sacrament of penance. "The gate of my mercy is not locked; it is only slightly closed," He said. "To open it, it is sufficient to touch it. The gate of my justice, however, is locked, and it is opened only to him who forces me to do so" (Beattie, *Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet*, p. 91).

God promised us mercy whenever we ask for it, but He has not promised us tomorrow. Tomorrow, judgment. Today, mercy!

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



The real story

Many years before the Temple even existed in Jerusalem, Moses had, on God's authority, assigned the care of this sacred place to the descendants of the tribe of Levi. Today, as a member of the Temple guard, Ephraim took this responsibility seriously. He walked a fine line with regard to the Roman authorities, since Jerusalem was under Roman jurisdiction. Nevertheless, in the Temple, it was Hebrew law that reigned.

When King Herod had come into power, he had restored the Temple in Jerusalem for selfish motives. If the Jewish hierarchy were not given some token of independence, they might ruin his career by reporting their troubles to Rome.

Pilate, the Roman procurator in Jerusalem, had viewed the situation in the same manner as Herod. So even though he had found no real crime had been committed by Jesus, Pilate had given in on this point to appease the Jews.

It had all come down to power. Jesus threatened the Jewish hierarchy.

Ephraim had no feelings either way about Jesus. For a time, he had been assigned to a special task force to keep tabs on Jesus' activities. But a few days ago, Jesus had been condemned to die by crucifixion. Ephraim wasn't sure of the charge against Him, but on the day Jesus died, darkness had fallen on the city at midday and an earthquake had occurred. And there were the strange remarks of a Roman soldier he had overheard: "Truly this was the Son of God."

The very next day, Ephraim had gone with the chief priests to see Pilate. "Your excellency," they said, "this impostor, Jesus, once said, 'After three days, I will rise again.' His disciples may come to His tomb and steal the body to perpetuate this lie. We request that a guard be placed by the tomb tonight and that the entrance be sealed."

"I don't understand your obsession with Jesus!" said Pilate with disdain. "Thanks to all of your efforts, the man is dead. What more do you want? Do whatever you like; it's of no concern to me. Only use your own Temple force. They can guard a dead body as well as Roman soldiers."

Ephraim and several others had been dispatched to the tomb immediately. The whole matter seemed rather foolish to Ephraim, but he was not one to question authority. It would be an easy assignment. There was nothing to do but wait for dawn.

Ephraim didn't sleep. In the first place, it was strictly forbidden while on duty, and his strong sense of honor prevented him. Besides, his mind was uneasy. All through the night, those same words echoed in his head: "Truly this was the Son of God."

Just before dawn, the earthquake began. Suddenly, the huge stone that had sealed the entrance to the tomb rolled aside. At first, Ephraim thought it had moved by the force of the tremors. But then a light came forth that flooded the entire landscape. Just at the center of this radiance stood two men.

Samuel and all of the other guards had fallen into a deep faint. Only Ephraim remained. He watched three women approach now, carrying precious oils. One of the men at the entrance of the tomb greeted them, saying, "Why do you come looking for someone who is alive? Jesus has come back to life again just as He promised. Go quickly now and tell His disciples that He has risen. Jesus is going to Galilee to meet them."

It wasn't until after both the women and the angels had departed that the other guards awoke. Samuel tried to believe Ephraim's strange tale, but only out of a sense of loyalty. The others refused to accompany them to the Temple, where they proceeded in haste to inform the chief priests.

The story received a half-hearted response from the Sanhedrin, and an appropriate action was decided upon. "Sleeping is strictly forbidden," the chief priests were quick to remind Ephraim and Samuel. "But don't worry, we'll cover for you."

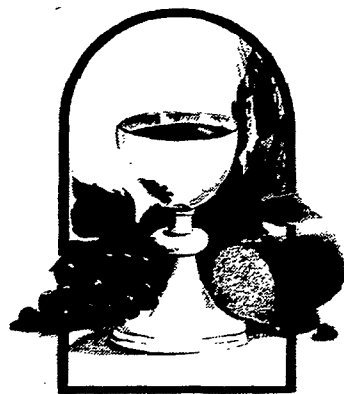
They were dismissed then and given a large sum of money for the other guards, all of whom were handsomely rewarded for merely confirming the story that they had been sleeping when Jesus' disciples had come and stolen the body.

Only Ephraim knew the real story. In the end, he gave his share of the hush money to Samuel, then headed north to Galilee to become part of the truth.

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Zerbe, Browne poetry performance at GeVa to benefit St. Martin's Place meal program

Anthony Zerbe, Roscoe Lee Browne and St. Martin's Place will present "Behind the Broken Words," a program of performance poetry, for the benefit of St. Martin's Place, a free meal program administered by Margaret Brennan, SSJ, and Marie Brown, SSJ. The program will be presented for one performance only on Saturday, April 25, at 4 p.m. at GeVa Theatre, 75 Woodbury Blvd., Rochester.

"Behind the Broken Words," a tribute to the power of the human spirit and the power of language, will include works by Ferlinghetti, baraka, Cummings, Rostand, Millay, Yeats, Eliot and other poets.

Anthony Zerbe is currently playing the leading role of Alceste in the GeVa Theatre production of *The Misanthrope*.

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Can we count on you?

Roscoe Lee Browne, who recently won an Emmy for his work on "The Bill Cosby Show," will soon be seen in an upcoming segment with Christopher Plummer.

Proceeds from "Behind the Broken Words" will be given to St. Martin's Place, a neighborhood meal program located at 55 Ontario St. in the northeast section of downtown Rochester. St. Martin's Place, which opened in 1986, serves approximately 1,000 meals a week and provides additional services that include referrals to social agencies, summer camp sponsorships for neighborhood children, transportation to hospitals and clinics, and support services to individuals in drug and alcohol programs. St. Martin's is supported by the congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph and through donations and the support services of more than 100 volunteers.

Admission to the April 25 program is \$8. Tickets can be reserved by calling the GeVa box office at 232-1363, or may be purchased at the door the day of the performance.

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