

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Siren song

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 10:1-10; (R1) Acts 2:14, 36-41; (R2) 1 Peter 2:20-25.

Once in a while, teenagers will say to me, "Father, I don't want the Church telling me what to do!"

To which remark I always reply "Well, then, don't let the world tell you what to do, either. If you want to be independent, be also independent of the world. Don't let television, the media, peer groups and rock stars tell you what to do."

When the Church warns teenagers not to fool around sexually, how many listen?

But when Tina Turner sings, "What's love got to do with it?... It's only physical... you must try to ignore that it means more than that" — why is her record a smash hit?

Why Tina? Why not the Church?

Recently, I received a fine letter from Peter Cole, a senior at Geneva High School. The high moral tone of his letter made me see that there are many, many wonderful teenagers in our society. Among other things, he wrote that he had said to a Catholic friend of his, "When I date, it will be in a manner appropriate to a young Catholic gentleman ... I am going to wait until I marry to have sex with a woman."

His good friend scoffed, "No one waits 'til marriage anymore."

There we have exactly what our Lord talks about in next Sunday's gospel. Two voices in this world are calling to each one of us: the voice of Christ, the Good Shepherd, and the voice of the stranger, the thief and marauder. The stranger calls to steal, destroy and slaughter.

Every age of history has its strays — sheep who have listened to the stranger's voice. But perhaps no age has had so loud a voice as ours. We have television! Despite all its potential for good, it can become a clever sheep-stealer.

The basic premise of advertising is that

what one sees and hears affects what one does. More often than not, television depicts marriage as taboo, infidelity as fun, the unattached woman living in luxury and false happiness as the really "liberated" woman. It portrays murder and violence excessively and as the normal way to get what one wants. Newscasters slant the news toward the sensational.

Although there is much good in television and the print media, too often they echo a voice and peddle a way of life that is the very opposite of that voiced by the Good Shepherd.

In his journeyings after the Trojan War, Odysseus wanted to pass the island of the sirens. The sirens were mythological mermaids, half woman and half bird, who lured mariners to destruction by their singing.

The adventurous Odysseus wanted to hear the songs of the sirens without being lured to his death. So he sealed his crew's ears with wax, and had himself bound to the ship's mast. Thus prepared, he was able to hear the sirens without harm. Roped to the mast, he could not jump overboard; nor would his crew, for their ears had been stopped.

So there is one of two ways to escape the siren voices of the media. One way is to seal off our senses, let us say, by "selecta-vision" or "selecta-media" — that is, be selective! Don't watch everything on television. Don't read everything in print. Don't listen to everything. Just as we are careful about what we eat, should we not be as careful about what we feed our minds and hearts?

Whenever we cannot seal ourselves off from the voices of the world, then we ought to do as Odysseus did — make the temptations remote by tying ourselves to the mast, to the bark of Peter, to the Church. Give equal time to the voices of truth — the Church's teaching disseminated every Sunday in the Liturgy of the Word and the homily, as well as in Catholic papers and magazines. Then follow their voices.

If the Lord is our Shepherd, then we shall want for nothing.

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



A widow

When Anna first heard the knock at her door, it startled her. The first few strands of dawn's light had filtered into the otherwise darkened room, casting odd shadows. But it wasn't the time of day that caused her uneasiness. Rather, it was the fact that a knock had occurred at all.

Anna was a widow, with no living relatives or even close friends in Jerusalem. She had accepted her meager existence long ago. A widow's lot was precarious, and she promised herself that she would never resort to public charity. So Anna faced each day with a fierce determination, in part born of this stubborn pride. But, more importantly, Anna's life was firmly rooted in her strong faith that God would sustain her.

She was just about to dismiss the knock as some other sound in the narrow city street, when the gentle tapping occurred a second time. Anna opened the door only a few inches. The events of the past few days were still fresh memories, and her hands were trembling as she looked out.

The man who stood at her door did not have the eyes of someone who intended harm. "May I trouble you for a drink of water?" he inquired politely.

"Yes, of course," Anna replied, opening the door wider now and motioning for the stranger to enter. "I've already been to the well this morning, and the water is fresh and cool."

"Thank you, that's very kind of you," he replied. "Do you live here alone?" he asked as he glanced at the scant surroundings of the room. It may have been the man's gentle demeanor that beckoned her or the fear Anna seemed to feel all the time lately, but suddenly she found herself pouring out her entire life story to this stranger.

"I've been a widow for many years," she began, "without any children to help me in my old age. But that never caused me to worry. I managed to support myself by baking a few loaves of bread and selling them every day. Last week, I made the unleavened bread of Passover. It was to be a good week for business. The city of Jerusalem was crowded with those who came for the holiday." She stopped abruptly, frowning.

"Please continue," the man said gently.

"Roman soldiers came by, and on a whim, they took all of my bread!" she cried. "Hebrew bread is not much to our liking," they laughed, "but it is better than nothing. And it is our right to take it!" But that's not the worst of it," Anna sobbed. "Did you hear about the terrible things that happened in Jerusalem last week?"

"What things?" the man asked.

"When the great teacher, Jesus, came to Jerusalem, many of us believed that He was truly the long-awaited Messiah. We thought that someone had finally come to free Israel from the Roman oppressors. But, in the end, it was our own religious leaders who handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities to be crucified. Jesus came right by my door, carrying that cross. I tried to give Him some water, but I couldn't get to Him."

"All is not lost," the stranger said. I see that you have a bit of flour and oil left. Why don't you make us some bread?"

Anna brightened a little at the suggestion. "Yes, I'll do that. You must be hungry."

She set herself to this task then with great care. First she mixed all of the ingredients together and kneaded them in a stone bowl. Then she formed it into a round loaf and placed it on a hot stone in the fire. When the bread was ready, Anna set it before the stranger, saying, "You've been so kind to listen to me. Please take all of this bread with you on your journey."

"I will accept your gift only if you allow me to leave a small portion for you," he replied.

Not waiting for Anna to answer, he took the bread and asked for God's blessing on it. As he broke it, and passed the bread to Anna, she saw the strange markings on his hands. The scars remained as evidence of some horrible brutality.

"Take and eat; this will sustain you. Everything will be fine now, Anna," he said, calling her by name.

The stranger departed, and with his passing, so did Anna's fear. The flour and oil never ran out all of the days of her life.

Meditation: "Perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18).

Obituary

Father Bernard V. Kuchman at 73

Father Bernard V. Kuchman, pastor emeritus of St. John's Church, Port Byron, and St. Michael's, Montezuma, died Wednesday, April 29, 1987, at St. Ann's Home. Father Kuchman, the son of Stephen and Mary Kuhn Kuchman, was born in Rochester on November 11, 1913. Following theological training at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, Father Kuchman was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop James E. Kearney at Sacred Heart Cathedral on

May 18, 1940.

Father Kuchman served as associate pastor in parishes in Rochester and Auburn until 1964, when he was named pastor of St. Januarius in Naples and St. Matthias, Atlanta. He subsequently served as pastor of St. Andrew's, Rochester; St. Pius X, Van Etten; St. Michael's, Montezuma; and St. John's, Port Byron until retirement in 1984.

Mass of Christ the High Priest was celebrated at Father Kuchman's home

parish, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, on May 1. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on May 2, with interment at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

During Father Kuchman's tenure in Naples, an innovative church in the form of a cluster of grapes was constructed, attracting wide attention throughout the country. It was subsequently named Our Lady of the Grapes Shrine.

Father Kuchman was noted for his generous, priestly spirit and for graciously accepting the many appointments made by his

bishop. Although in declining health since retirement, he was ever available when his priestly services were needed. In fact, he had just completed substituting for the chaplain at St. Ann's Home when the Lord summoned him.

Father Kuchman is survived by his brother, Norbert; and five sisters, Marian Camp, Lucille Stoltz, Ruth Flanagan, Agnes Sauers and Sister Mary Christopher, SSJ, of Waterloo. His brother, Father Thomas Kuchman, died in 1961 while serving as associate pastor of Holy Family, Rochester.



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