

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Center of faith

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 14:15-21; (R1) Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; (R2) 1 Peter 3:15-18.

A question often asked is, "What is the basic difference between the Old and the New Testaments?"

The Old Testament gave man the Law, the moral law of the Ten Commandments. That, indeed, was a great boon, especially in a world that had lost its moral sense. But the gift had one flaw. Law, as you know, is always something outside us. It tells us what we must do, but offers no help in the doing. Thus the history of God's people in the Old Testament is a record of consistent failure to measure up to the Law.

The gift of the New Testament, on the contrary, is not a law, a something outside us, but a person, a someone inside us: the Holy Spirit. "That we might live no longer for ourselves but for him, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as his first gift to those who believe..." (Eucharistic Prayer IV).

Whereas the Law tells us what to do, the Holy Spirit invades our hearts and changes them, disposes and inclines us to do what we ought. "I will place my law within them," prophesied Jeremiah, "and write it upon their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). A good citizen, because he is good, has no trouble keeping the civil law; similarly, when gifted with the Spirit, the Christian delights in keeping God's law. Man need not fail in achieving his destiny. Thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the cards are stacked in our favor in the New Testament.

Pentecost celebrates this gift of the Spirit. To ready us for His coming, Sunday's readings focus on the Holy Spirit: in the gospel, He is promised; in the first reading, He is given.

Joe Garagiola was talking to a sports writer once on television's Today Show. Both men were recalling humorous incidents in baseball lore. Joe told the story of a batter who stepped up to the plate at a crucial point in the game. Being a devout Catholic, the batter drew the sign of the cross with his bat in the dirt near home plate.

Catcher Yogi Berra of the opposite team, also a devout Catholic, signaled for a time out. He reached to the side of

the plate and, with his catcher's mitt, rubbed out the cross traced on the ground. Then he said to the batter, "Why don't we just let God watch this game?"

A recent Gallup poll reported that 94 percent of the American people believe in God. But the question Gallup should have asked was, "Where is God in the lives of the American people?" Is God at the center of their lives, or is He on the fringe, on the outside, just watching?

Sigmund Freud, in his introductory *Lectures in Psychoanalysis*, wrote: "Darwin has banished God from nature, Marx has banished him from history, and I have banished him from man's inner life." The Luciferian arrogance — has he?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, penned shortly before his execution by the Nazis, wrote: "I should like to speak of God, not on the boundaries, but at the center... I therefore want to start from the premise that God should not be smuggled into some last secret place, but that God... must be in the middle of things." Bonhoeffer did not believe in a God "out there" or "at the edges," but a God in the middle of things.

After God had redeemed His people from Egyptian slavery, He gave Moses detailed instructions on building a tabernacle. The reason for this construction was "that I may dwell in their midst."

Most importantly, God told Moses exactly where His dwelling place was to be positioned among the 12 tribes. "The Lord said to Moses... the Israelites shall camp around the tabernacle." The 12 tribes were to pitch their tents thus: three tribes on each side of the quadrilateral courtyard surrounding the tabernacle. In other words, God was to dwell in the very center of His people — not above them, not outside them, not near them, but in their very midst.

Such was the type — but the fulfillment, as always, surpasses the type. God now dwells not only in our midst, but even within us, in our hearts! "If you love me," said Christ, "my Father will love you and we will come and make our abode with you."

At every Mass, the priest prays, "The Lord be with you" — in you, an end to be devoutly desired.

Diocesan Spanish Apostolate establishes community library

The Spanish Apostolate of the Diocese of Rochester has established a Spanish community library called *Biblioteca Guarionex*. Two hundred books and articles donated by Dr. Roger Baglin made establishment of the library possible. Books have also been contributed by other donors.

The collection contains some of the finest works of literature published in Puerto Rico and Latin America. Books by Rene Marquez, Eugenio Maria de Hostos, Luis Lloren Torres

and Julia De Burgos are among those in the collection, which has been valued at more than \$3,000 and includes a number of books that are now out of print.

Diocesan officials hope the library will continue to expand through additional donations, to become a valuable resource for those working to maintain the cultural identity of the local Hispanic community.

The library has been named after Guarionex, a leader of the indigenous Taino people of Puerto Rico.

For information, call Father Larry Tracy or Angel Rivera at (716) 232-4844 or 436-9090.

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



A letter home

From his vantage point across the room, Alexander sensed his mother's anxiety. Her face was drawn into tight lines of worry. Nearly a month had passed since his mother had watched her husband, Simon, disappear from sight on this same road on his way from Cyrene to Jerusalem for the Passover. He was a devout Hebrew, and his trip to the city fulfilled a lifetime dream of celebrating this feast at the temple.

"Mother," Alexander said gently, "if you like, Rufus and I will leave immediately and begin searching for father."

"No," she said firmly. "We'll wait a few more days. Surely we'll receive some word — either way," she added sadly.

Later that same day, Alexander was working outside with his brother when he first caught sight of a solitary figure approaching. The messenger carried no bad news back from Jerusalem concerning Simon. Instead he brought a letter from him.

"Here, Alexander, read it aloud," his mother suggested, hastily handing the letter to her son.

"Greetings from Jerusalem!" the letter began. "I know how worried you've probably all been about my long absence. Something has happened to me in Jerusalem — my life has been completely changed because of it."

"Before I left for my trip, I neglected to tell you something. For the past year, I have been hearing reports about a certain Jesus, known throughout Galilee as a great prophet and teacher. Some people even said that Jesus was the Messiah that we've been waiting for all of our lives. Now that I was finally going to Jerusalem, I was determined to find this Jesus and see for myself."

"When I arrived in the city, I immediately realized just how foolish this idea was. Jerusalem was mobbed with Hebrew visitors who had also come for Passover. Roman guards were stationed everywhere. So I decided to go instead to the temple and pray. The writings of the prophet, Jeremiah, were being discussed. As I listened, I was stricken by some of the words he attributed to God: 'You will find me when you seek me, if you look for me in earnest.'

"Just at that moment, I heard a great commotion outside in the streets and felt compelled to investigate the cause. 'What's

going on?' I asked a bystander.

"Roman justice for those accused of crimes against the government," he replied. "There's going to be a crucifixion today."

"The man I saw dragging the cross through the street didn't look capable of any crime. He had been beaten, and someone had placed a crown of thorns on his head. A group of women followed at close range and were weeping for him. Several times, this man stumbled and fell under the weight of the cross."

"I felt such pity for him that it gave me the courage to approach a Roman soldier who was forcing the crowds back. 'What has this man done?' I demanded. 'No human being deserves this sort of treatment!'

"I was never given an answer. Instead, the soldier turned to me and ordered, 'If you feel so sorry for him, you carry the cross!'

"I followed behind this man all the way to a place known as 'The Skull.' He offered his persecutors no resistance as they nailed him up. Someone hung a placard over his head on the cross with the charge, 'The King of the Jews.'

I stood nearby with many others who witnessed his death. With his passing, an eerie darkness came over the city in the middle of the afternoon and the ground shook."

"Who was this man?" I asked one who wept near the cross.

"This was Jesus, the Son of God!" he told me.

"Three days later, the rumors began. 'Jesus has risen from the dead. He's alive!' His followers proclaimed. The chief priests and Pharisees tried to hush the whole thing up. But the word still continues to spread throughout the region."

"A few days ago, I met one of Jesus' followers, someone who had been with Him the whole time. John told me something that Jesus had once said about all that I saw in Jerusalem. Jesus said: 'All of this must happen to me. It was told to me by my Father in heaven. It is the only way to make the world right again after the first sin of Adam.'

"I am determined to help Jesus' followers in any way I can. I am sure that Jesus is the Messiah I was searching for. Please come to Jerusalem and join me at once. May the peace of Christ be with you all."

Scripture Reference: Jeremiah 29:13; Mark 15:21.

Fund raiser for national building set for Doud Post on May 30

The Rutherford Family Showband of Rochester is sponsoring a fund raiser May 30 for Our Lady of Knock National Building Fund. The event will take place at the Doud Post, 898 Buffalo Road, Rochester.

A Mass will be celebrated by Father Jeremiah Nunan and Father Thomas Mallon at 7 p.m., followed by continuous entertainment from 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. Master of ceremonies will be John Finucane, and featured entertain-

ment will include the Blackthorn Ceilidh Band, Cathy McGrath, the Rutherford Family Showband, and Penrose Academy of Dancers.

A \$10 tax-deductible donation will be asked. Children 16 years old and younger will be charged \$5 at the door. All checks should be made payable to St. Mary's Church, Building Fund, East Durham.

Call (716)392-7707 or 227-1661 for ticket information.

Driver Education classes set for Cardinal Mooney this summer

Driver Education classes are set for June 22 thru July 30 at Cardinal Mooney High School, 800 Maiden Lane, Greece. Classes are scheduled for 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Registration for non-Mooney students will begin on Tuesday, May 26, at 8 a.m.

Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Information, schedules, fees and applications may be picked up at the school's main office. Interested individuals may also call (716)865-1000.

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