

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



The story of the human race

After the Hebrews left Egypt, where nearly all of their ancestors had existed as Pharaoh's slaves, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Throughout this period, Moses led the people as they journeyed toward the Promised Land. Now everything was about to change.

For on this very day, the Hebrews were camped on the plains of Moab, just outside of Canaan, their new home. And Moses had blessed a new leader, Joshua, to take his place. Later that same day, Moses climbs Mount Nebo, where he was soon to die. From this vantage point, he could see Canaan, the land promised long ago by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Joshua approached, and Moses seemed unaware of him, even as Joshua came to stand next to him.

"Moses, I come at your request," Joshua said, breaking the silence of the place. "Why did you want to see me?"

"These Hebrews will always be a stubborn lot," Moses warned. "It's important that you are a very strong leader."

"Yes," Joshua agreed. "They seem determined to go their own selfish ways. How soon they easily forget all that God has done for them through you. I won't forget — I'm really going to miss you, Moses."

"I will miss you, too, my friend, but my work is finished now," replied Moses. "The people have God's laws to guide them. If they choose to obey, they will receive a blessing from the Lord. But if they are swayed by the evil of this world, then they will be cursed."

"I will do my best to remind the people of all that you have taught us," Joshua replied.

"You must never give up," cautioned Moses, who then brought out a long scroll and handed it to Joshua, saying, "Here is something to guide you on the rest of your journey."

"What is it?" said Joshua, unrolling it.

"It's the story of the human race from the very beginning of time," Moses answered. "God has revealed everything to me, all that happened from the very first day. He wants the story made known to all people forever."

"What does God say in the story?"

Joshua asked.

"Through His words, the people will learn about God and all that He has done for them. God will show them how to live in a way that is pleasing to Him. And the story contains a great promise, too."

"What promise?" Joshua asked.

"God promises that He will never leave us," said Moses. "His mercy and love is so great for His people that even when we fail Him, He will still be with us. He is here now, Joshua. And so you must tell this story to everyone and pass God's words on to all generations."

"Maybe thousands of years from now, people will read God's story and not make the same mistakes we have," Joshua mused.

"And if that ever does happen, the world will be perfect, as it used to be in the very beginning. Goodbye, Joshua," Moses said.

Joshua left Moses on Mount Nebo and returned to the Hebrew camp below. He stayed up a long time that night reading the story. Before he placed the scroll in the Ark of the Covenant with the rest of the sacred things, he added something to the end of the story.

Joshua would never forget Moses and all he had done for the Hebrews. He wanted everyone to know how faithful Moses had been to all that God had commanded. Perhaps someone is reading Joshua's words about Moses at this very moment...

"So Moses, the disciple of the Lord, died in the land of Moab as the Lord had said. The Lord buried him in a valley near Beth-Peor in Moab, but no one knows the exact place.

"Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was perfect and he was as strong as a young man. The people of Israel mourned for him for 30 days on the plains of Moab.

"There has never been another prophet like Moses, for the Lord talked to him face to face. And at God's command, he performed amazing miracles which have never been equaled. He did great and terrifying wonders before Pharaoh and his entire court in Egypt, and before the people of Israel in the wilderness" (Deuteronomy 34:5-12).

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Sowing the good seed

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 11:24-43; (R1) Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; (R2) Romans 26:27.

The gospels of three Sundays in July (12, 19, 26) are taken from Chapter 13 of Matthew's gospel, whose readers will recall that Matthew wrote for Jews — to present Jesus as the new Moses and His Church as the new Israel.

So Matthew divided his gospel into five booklets, alluding to the five books of Moses. Each booklet has a discourse by Jesus, composed of sayings spoken by Him at different times and in different places. Each discourse (Chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18 and 23-25) is introduced with a narrative of the deeds of Jesus, to show how unlike the Scribes and the Pharisees he was. As the gospel points out, "Their words are bold, but their deeds are few" (Matthew 23:4).

By way of this structural device, Matthew presents Jesus as a doer as well as a teacher. The following table serves to illustrate the principle.

Bk. 1: Deeds (Ch. 3-4) Words (Ch. 5-7)
Bk. 2: Deeds (Ch. 8-9) Words (Ch. 10)
Bk. 3: Deeds (Ch. 11-12) Words (Ch. 13)
Bk. 4: Deeds (Ch. 14-17) Words (Ch. 18)
Bk. 5: Deeds (Ch. 19-22) Words (Ch. 23-25)

Moses established the Church of the Old Testament (the Qahal). Chapter 13 presents seven parables of Jesus about the reign of God, the new Israel, the Church of the New Testament. The importance of this chapter is clear from its position: it stands almost at the dead center of Matthew's gospel.

Four parables were addressed to the crowds outdoors — "leaving the house" (Matthew 13:1). The Jews did not understand. So verse 36 represents the turning point in Jesus' attitude toward the Jews: He turned from those who would not understand to those who would. From then on, His instructions focused on His own followers.

"Then dismissing the crowds, He went home" (Matthew 13:36). When indoors and alone with His disciples, Jesus turned to them, explained the parable of the weeds and told the parables of the buried treasure, the pearl of great price and the dragnet (July 26). The disciples understood.

The parable of the weeds warns against seeking a sinless Church. The Church has a human element — people — and a divine

element — the sacraments. Because it has people, it will always have sinners, it will always need reform. A sinless Church is a utopia, a "no place."

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven were told for encouragement. The mustard seed illustrates the expansive power of the Church; the leaven, its transforming power.

The parable of the weeds, however, can also apply to social sin. Occasionally, some activists seek to violently uproot all evil from society. To rid society of all evil is impossible, according to our Lord. Revolution might be the quick way, but renewal is the Lord's way. Change people, and society will change.

So the parable of the weeds counsels patience with ourselves and others. For whenever we try to follow God faithfully, we discover weakness in ourselves and the people around us.

Yet we are not left hopeless in the face of weakness. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness," said St. Paul (R2). God is good; He will give His strength to those who ask Him.

To prayer, however, we must add action. Jesus' advice about patience is not an invitation to inactivity. For instance, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography issued its fine report last June. How many have read it? How many have acted on it — to uproot this evil of pornography from society?

This past June, I invited a panel of three people on my radio program "Listen" to discuss this report. We did four shows that resulted in the formation in Auburn of an organization called CANDO. Many people who listened to the program expressed the belief that they "can do" something about pornography, because we can do all things in the name of Him who strengthens us.

So the first step CANDO is undertaking is to educate people about this issue. CANDO's first meeting will be held August 11 at the Auburn YMCA. Does CANDO expect to eliminate all pornography everywhere in America? Of course not! As our Lord said, evil will be with us until Judgment Day.

We can curb the spread of evil and lessen its power, however, making America a better place for our youth to live. What we can do, we ought to do — sow the good seed.

Obituaries

Father Charles B. Connell, 73; noted for preaching, gracious ministry

Father Charles B. Connell, pastor emeritus of St. Philip Neri Church in Rochester, died on June 30 after a long illness. He was 73.



Father Connell, the son of Thomas and Emma Connell, was born in Rochester on June 12, 1914. After attending both St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, he was ordained to priesthood by Bishop James E. Kearney at Sacred Heart Cathedral on June 7,

1941.

In addition to ministering as associate pastor in several parishes, Father Connell was named chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital in 1944 and was later appointed chaplain of Nazareth Academy in 1952.

After serving as pastor of St. Gregory's Church, Marion, in 1965, he became pastor of St. Philip Neri Church in 1967. Upon his retirement in June, 1984, he took up residence at St. Joseph's Rectory in Penfield. Father Connell built the present St. Philip Neri Church after the former building was destroyed by fire in 1967. The church implemented the new liturgical directives set forth by the Second Vati-

can Council.

Father Connell was known among his classmates and those to whom he ministered as a gracious and empathetic person, reflecting in his presence the spirit of Christ. He was especially noted for his outstanding preaching, as he carried on the tradition started by his brother, the late Monsignor Maynard Connell, who taught homiletics to generations of St. Bernard's Seminary students.

A Mass of the High Priest was celebrated at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield on Thursday, July 2, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial on Friday, July 3. Father Connell was buried at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Survivors include two sisters-in-law, Evelyn and Adele Connell; nieces Bernadette Connell, Barbara Byer and Kathleen Webb; and nephews Thomas, John, William and Walter Connell.

Sister Mary Ursula McQueeney, 97, senior sister in Mercy congregation

Sister Mary Ursula McQueeney, a Sister of Mercy for more than 78 years, died on July 3 in Lourdes Hall, the Mercy infirmary, at the Mercy motherhouse in Rochester. She was 97.

Sister Ursula's wake took place at the motherhouse on Sunday, July 5 and Monday, July 6. A prayer vigil service was held in the motherhouse chapel on Monday, July 6, and a Mass of Christian Burial was also celebrated in the chapel on Tuesday, July 7. She was buried at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Sister Ursula was the most senior sister in the congregation. She entered the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy as a postulant on September 8, 1908. She was received into the novitiate on May 22, 1909, and professed final vows on July 14, 1911.

Born in Auburn on November 30, 1889, Sister Ursula was the daughter of Patrick McQueeney and Anne McLoughlin, who were both Irish immigrants from County Leitrim.

A member of Holy Family Parish in Auburn, she earned a bachelor of arts degree in education from St. Bonaventure University in

1935.

Sister Ursula taught in the Rochester diocese for 55 years, primarily at the junior high level. She also served as convent superior in Elmira and Hornell.

Her teaching assignments included St. Mary's, Corning, 1909-1910; St. Mary's, Rochester, 1910-1911; Mount Carmel, Rochester, 1911-1912; St. Ann's, Hornell, 1912-1925 and 1952 to 1960; St. Patrick's, Elmira, 1925-1952; and Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira, 1960-1964.

After retiring from teaching, Sister Ursula remained at Our Lady of Lourdes in Elmira for one year, then moved to St. Helen's Convent in Gates, where she stayed from 1965 to 1971. She was convent superior and librarian at St. Helen's School.

She retired to the Omega Community of senior sisters at the motherhouse in Rochester in 1971, and in October, 1981, was admitted to Lourdes Hall. Sister Ursula's ministry since she retired had been the Spiritual Apostolate of Prayer.

She is survived by five nephews.

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