

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



Elisha, God's prophet

Elijah, the prophet, preached God's messages to the people of Israel for many years. And because of his efforts, a great number of the Israelites turned away from the false gods of Queen Jezebel and began to follow the one true God.

One day, the Lord told Elijah, "Your time on earth is nearly over. I want you to train Elisha to serve as your successor." So Elijah went and found this young man.

"Your father is a very wealthy man, Elisha. Are you willing to give up all this, to do the Lord's work?" Elijah asked, gesturing to a huge farm.

"A man's life should never be measured by his possessions," Elisha replied. "I hold you in great esteem, and I want to help others as you have done," he said humbly.

Elisha left his father's house the next day and became Elijah's assistant. They traveled together all over the country, and Elijah taught the young man many things. One day while they were talking, Elijah said, "I know that I shall die soon. Is there anything I can give you before I leave?"

Elisha thought for a few minutes, and then he suggested, "Please give me twice as much prophetic power as you have had. Then I shall be able to do even more to help the people of God."

"That is a difficult request," Elijah said. "But if you see me as I am taken from you by the Lord, then this request of yours will be granted."

As they continued on their way, a great windstorm came up. Suddenly, Elisha could not see his companion. But, as he looked up, he saw Elijah sitting in a huge chariot of fire, drawn by fiery horses. The chariot took Elijah high up into the sky, and then he disappeared.

When all was calm again, Elisha remembered their conversation, and he was certain that his request had been granted. "I will miss you, Elijah," he said, sadly. "You were a great prophet for Israel, but you also have been my friend."

Then Elisha noticed the prophet's cloak lying on the ground. He picked it up and placed it over his shoulders, becoming the new prophet of Israel from that day on.

In his travels, Elisha visited the city of Shunem often. There, a wealthy family provided for his needs. On one of his visits, the woman of this family announced, "You have done much good in our city and are welcome here anytime.

Come and see the room we have built for you in our own house."

Elisha was very grateful to this woman for her kindness. "Is there something I can do for you?" he asked.

"I am quite content," she said, smiling. "There is no need to bother yourself about anything."

But later, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, advised him, "I know there is something this woman wants very much. She and her husband are getting old, and they never had any children."

Before Elisha departed from Shunem, he told the woman, "When I return here next year, you will be holding your own child in your arms."

And when Elisha visited Shunem again, this woman greeted the prophet at the door of her house, carrying a beautiful baby. On his visits for several years, Elisha watched as the young boy grew.

Several years later, while Elisha was preaching in another town, Gehazi informed him, "The woman from Shunem is here to see you, and she is quite upset over something."

The woman began to cry when she saw Elisha. "Better that I never had a child at all," she sobbed. "To lose him now is too much to bear."

"What happened to the boy?" Elisha asked.

"He was taken ill while he was working with his father out in the fields, and now he has died!"

Elisha left for Shunem at once. When he arrived at the house, he went to the boy's room alone. After the prophet had prayed to the Lord, he placed his hands on the child's lifeless body. After a few minutes, he felt a bit of warmth coming back. Next he breathed into the boy's mouth, and suddenly he began to sneeze loudly and his eyes opened.

"Come quick!" Elisha called to the woman. "Your son lives!"

After Elisha had thanked God for this great miracle, he thought of the request he had made to Elijah just before the prophet departed in the fiery chariot.

Elisha performed many other miracles during the 50 years in which he served as God's faithful prophet. The Lord worked many signs through Elisha so that the people of Israel would come to believe in the one true God.

Scripture reference: 1 Kings 19:15-21; 2 Kings 2:9-15; 2 Kings 4:8-37.

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Redemptoris Mater

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 21:33-43; (R1) Isaiah 5:1-7; (R2) Philipians 4:6-9.

October, the month of the Holy Rosary, calls to mind the Marian Year. I have read letters expressing concern about exaggerated Marian devotions. Exaggerations, if they exist — for who can honor Mary more than God has? — are due to poor theology.

Fathers Bradshaw, Mugavero and I met a few months ago to discuss what could be done for the Marian Year. One conclusion we arrived at was that the prayerful study of our Holy Father's encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer) was a must project to be undertaken both on the personal and parish levels.

First, I suggest parish groups order copies of the encyclical from the United States Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005-4105.

Then study it alone and/or with others during Advent or Lent. Like so many of our Holy Father's encyclicals, it isn't the easiest reading in the world. Maybe this is due to his Eastern background or existentialist philosophy.

The Holy Father doesn't use a scholastic style, developing his thesis by clear-cut rigorous progression from point A to point B. Rather, he moves on from a given beginning to a given end: begins with the Annunciation and ends with its bimillennium. Within this historical framework, there is a kind of undulating flow, allowing for asides and eddies and replays of the same theme. In a word, his style is biblical, but once we analyze the text, we shall discover the logic and the richness of his message.

So, the top-priority project for the Marian Year is to study the encyclical "The Mother of the Redeemer." To help you in your study, I shall devote my articles this month to a commentary on this encyclical. You may wish to clip these articles and save them for later use.

The encyclical is divided into three parts with an introduction and a conclusion. Each part is subdivided into three sections. Themes explored are: Mary in the mystery of Christ, Part I; Mary in the mystery of the Church, Part II; and Mary's heavenly role, Part III. Simply, the three parts discuss Mary in the life of Christ, in the life of the Church and in our lives.

The introduction begins with the

words, "The Mother of the Redeemer," giving the encyclical its name. The Holy Father concluded the encyclical with a beautiful reflection on the same words, on the ancient hymn of the Church — *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, "Loving Mother of the Redeemer".

The introduction answers four questions:

1) What is the theme of the encyclical? It is the role of Mary in Christ, in the Church, and in our lives.

2) Why a Marian encyclical at this time in history? To prepare for the bimillennium jubilee of the birth of Christ (#3). As Mary preceded the coming of Jesus 2,000 years ago, a precedence reflected in our Advent liturgy, so it is fitting she prepare for His bimillennium. She is the *stella matutina* (the Morning Star) preceding the dawn of the Sun of Justice.

Whether by reasoning or institution or revelation, the Holy Father seems convinced that the year 2,000 is going to be some kind of turning-point in history. He wants to rally the Church around Our Lady to prepare for it. He wants us to spend the last 13 years of this century with our Lady as an "advent" for the year 2,000.

The Holy Father specifies at least one great event he anticipates for the future — the union of the Roman Church with the Orthodox Church in Russia, so that, as he put it so strikingly, the Church might once again breathe fully with her "two lungs" (#34). Ultimately, he hopes, this will pave the way for the reunion of all Christians.

3) This emphasis on Mary, is it something exaggerated or new? Absolutely not! The encyclical is not just one more paean of praise to fulfill the dictum of St. Alphonsus: *de Maria nunquam satis*, of Mary we can never say enough.

In fact, his encyclical is a mere gloss on that incomparable Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican Council II. It explains why we must prepare for the bimillennium jubilee of Christ's birth with and through Mary.

4) What particular aspect of Mary's life does the Holy Father focus upon? The two key words in the Encyclical are *faith* and *presence* — the faith of Mary as model for the Church and us and the presence of Mary in the life of Christ, the Church and our lives.

Two good questions to explore in the coming weeks will be what is the faith of Mary and what do we mean by her presence?

INVITATION TO REPARATION

Do You Know That —

- 1987 is the year of Fatima — the 70th Anniversary of the apparitions there?
- Our 1987 response to our Lady's requests at Fatima can convert Russia once again?

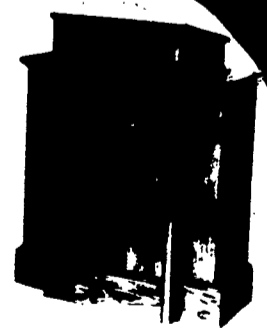
MAKE THE TEN
1st. Saturdays of Reparation

Our Lady of Victory
210 Pleasant St., Downtown Rochester
Rosary & Mass, 10 a.m.-Sacrament of Penance 11:30 a.m.



St. Alphonsus
95 East Genesee St., Auburn, N.Y.
Sacrament of Penance, 10 a.m.-Rosary & Mass 11 a.m.

OR MAKE FIRST TEN SATURDAYS ON YOUR OWN.



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