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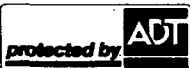
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Columnists

A warning of coming chastisement

By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 13:33-37; (R1) Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7; (R2) Corinthians 1:3-9.

The First Sunday of Advent begins the Church's year. To give greater exposure to Scripture, the Sunday readings are arranged according to a three-year cycle: A, B and C. Cycle A features the Gospel of Matthew — we've just finished this cycle. Cycle B highlights the Gospel of Mark — we are beginning this cycle. Cycle C stresses Luke.

The year divisible by three — 1989, for instance — is always the Lucan year. It is simple to go from there: 1990 is Cycle A, Matthew; 1991, Cycle B, Mark; and 1992, Luke. So this year, the focus will be on Mark.

On Sunday, Mark presents the discourse of Jesus about the "last things." That is a good way to begin the Church year, for whenever we plan a trip, isn't our first question "Where are we going to go?" A goal is the first thing we think about, but the last thing we achieve.

The Church year begins with the end, the goal of life: judgment. Jesus likened Himself to a man traveling abroad. His Ascension is more than an overnight journey, so He set His house in order, encouraging His servants to do their jobs well till He returns.

In Chapter 13, Mark ties the coming of the Lord in with the destruction of Jerusalem. That calamity was necessary to break the umbilical cord of the early Church from Judaism. The destruction of Jerusalem signaled the expansion of Christianity.

We have seen parallels to Mark 13 in the Blessed Mother's messages given at Fatima, at Medjugorje, and most recently, to Father Stefano Gobbi. Just as Jesus did toward the end of His life, the Mother of God proclaims conversion. "Come back! Come back, O Humanity, so far away and depraved! . . . Come back to the Lord of your salvation!" (7/3/87). Only if her message is ignored does she speak of chastisement.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because its inhabitants did not know the things that were

A Word for Sunday

to their peace (Luke, 19:42). Mary weeps over the world, because it too does not know the things that are to its peace. Father Gobbi has reported that in apparitions, Mary has said: "Because this humanity has not accepted my repeated calls to conversion . . . there is about to fall upon it the greatest chastisement which the history of mankind has ever known. It is a chastisement much greater than that of the Flood. Fire will fall from heaven, and a great part of humanity will be destroyed." (*Our Lady Speaks to Her Beloved Priests*, 9/6/86, pp. 510-11).

However, this will not be the end of the world any more than was the destruction of Jerusalem. Mary herself says: "At the time of Noah, just before the Flood, those destined to survive this terrible chastisement entered into the ark. In these, your times, I am inviting all my beloved children to enter into the ark of the new covenant, . . . my Immaculate Heart . . . that they may be assisted by me to carry the bloody burden of the great trial, which precedes the coming day of the Lord;" (idem, 7/30/86, p. 502).

We enter this covenant, by doing what Mary has asked in her apparitions: making peace with God through monthly confession; praying the rosary daily; wearing her brown scapular devoutly; and making the five First Saturdays.

If you want a brown scapular and the leaflet of Our Lady's last locution to Father Gobbi, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Father Albert J.M. Shamon, 5 S. Marvino Ave., Auburn, NY, 13021.

God's people celebrate a miracle

By Cindy Bassett

Moses, a great servant of God, was 120 years old when he died just outside the Promised Land. The Hebrews mourned the passing of their faithful leader for 30 days.

Just before he died, Moses blessed a new leader named Joshua to take his place. Joshua had been with Moses from the very beginning of the long journey when they first left Egypt, and had witnessed with him all the great signs of God.

Joshua called together the leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel for a meeting. "We are in sight of the land promised long ago to our ancestors," he began. "God has been faithful to us all of our lives. We must never forget Him when we are full and prosperous in our new home. Teach your children to love and obey the one true God. He is the cause of all of our blessings."

That night, Joshua went to a solitary place on Mount Nebo and prayed to the Lord. "O God, I am afraid. Maybe I am not the strong leader for your people that Moses was. Please help me."

The Lord answered Joshua, saying: "Do not be afraid. For I will be with you in all that you do for my sake. If you teach the Hebrews to obey my laws, then you will be successful. Soon I will do a great miracle so that my people will hold you in high esteem as they did Moses."

A few days later, the people had traveled as far as the banks of the Jordan River. It was harvest season, and the river had risen so high that the water overflowed its banks. Many of the Hebrews began to question Joshua. "How shall we reach the other side safely?" they wondered.

After three days, Joshua sent a message throughout the camp. "Make ready to enter the Promised Land," he instructed. "Follow the priests who will be carrying the Ark of the Covenant." Watch them closely, for a wonderful miracle of God is about to happen."

As the Hebrews looked on, the priests walked directly into the Jordan River with the ark held high. As soon as their feet touched the water, the Jordan River stopped flowing. The water separated to form a large path through the river. The priests were now standing on the river bed!

The Bible Corner

A great cheer went up from the crowd. It was just like the first day they had left their slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh had chased them with all of his armies, and God had parted the waters of the Red Sea for their escape.

Joshua called together the leaders of the 12 tribes and said: "Each of you must take a large stone from the center of the riverbed and carry it to the other side. Pile these rocks together as a monument to the Lord. For today, He has performed another sign as we enter the Promised Land!"

After the leaders had done so, all of the people then crossed over to the other side and waited. The priests, carrying the Ark of the Covenant, came out of the riverbed and the Jordan River flowed just as before.

That evening, a great feast was prepared. It was a meal of thanksgiving to God. Before they began to eat, everyone knelt before the stone monument and prayed.

When they had finished, Joshua stood and addressed them. "Never forget our God and all of His wondrous deeds. You must tell this story to your children and their children forever. The Lord removed us from our slavery in Egypt and did mighty miracles. He guided us through the wilderness for 40 years, with a cloud to lead us by day, and a pillar of fire by night. God gave us manna from heaven to eat and water from a rock to drink. He forgave us all of our sins and continued to lead us even when we grumbled against Him. And He brought us here to the Promised Land just as He said.

"Today, we dedicate ourselves in thanksgiving to our great God. He alone is worthy of our praise. Thank you, Lord!"

Scripture Reference: Deuteronomy, Chapter 34: 7-8; Joshua, Chapters 1, 3 and 4.