

Columnists

The trials of a Texas parishioner

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Just before Christmas, a friend in Texas wrote me a letter. "A friend gave me several back issues of the *Courier-Journal* last week and, of course, your column was read first. Life seems to get more complicated as we get older. My youngest daughter and her husband are living with me, along with their two babies. They are darling, but it's impossible to leave 'mothering' behind, even when your children are grown. The arrangement comes from the fact that 'mama' did not want to go back to work after Babe One was born, so she and my son-in-law opted to be 'poor' — with my approval. Nothing can replace the time spent with little ones."

COMMENT: The last sentence is a bombshell. The mother made a heroic but difficult decision, with the assistance of the babies' grandmother.

Referring to an *On the Right Side* column about a young man newly arrived in a mid-Southern diocese and anguished by the first parish he experienced, my Texan friend wrote: "I sympathize with the young man who talked about the churches that look like doctors' offices. That is all that is permitted to be built in our diocese. A new church cannot have the tabernacle in the sanctuary, nor can there be stained glass windows with any religious picture. All have to be geometric designs."

COMMENT: I think liturgists have gone daft in their enthusiasm to relegate the eucharistic Christ to some less honorable location. According to genuine liturgy, if the Blessed Sacrament is placed in a non-traditional location, it is supposed to be placed in an aura of great beauty and reverence. It is shocking to find the Blessed Sacrament parked indifferently on a stand, without a surrounding beauty or honor. The 16th century English reformers took great delight in smashing windows with beautiful pictures of Christ, His mother and the saints. Seemingly, many liturgists find this an improvement on the beautiful stained-glass windows in Chartres Cathedral in France, St. Michael's Church in Rochester, Holy Family Church in Auburn and many other churches in our diocese where the representations of the holy ones are both works of art and symbols of the sacred. The Muslim religion forbids the depiction of living creatures — saints, animals or the like. Consequently, the Muslims have beautiful windows in their mosques, but always with geometric designs.

My friend's letter goes on: "We had a fine pastor and assistant until last July. The pas-

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tor said he would not build a church with the tabernacle shunted off to another room, and apparently was ordered to build one without the tabernacle. He chose to take a leave of absence from the diocese rather than disobey the bishop. We have very angry parishioners — enough so that collections have dropped 40 percent. Gift bearers and ushers have been forbidden to genuflect."

COMMENT: Would this Texas diocese not be better off if the bishop took a leave of absence? Regarding genuflecting: I was asked about a priest not genuflecting at the elevation, so I wrote to Father Tom Mull, Rochester's liturgical mentor, about the question. He wrote back that there is no warrant for changing from the traditional custom of genuflecting after the elevation. One exception is the matter of a bishop, who may bow.

The letter continues: "A penitential service was held for children last week, and the children were told not to confess more than one sin in the confessional. The priests told them they did not want any 'grocery lists.' The congregation was berated in one Sunday's sermon for not obeying the priests because, after all, we are not as well-educated as the priests, and they were appointed by a divine institution. A lot of people have left the parish, and quite a number have left the Church as a result of all the changes made by the new priests since their arrival. We were badly spoiled to have had such fine priests. Perhaps all this happened so that we could appreciate our faith even more. Please pray especially for our very orthodox deacon, who must take verbal abuse from both priests regularly. He has not told us this, but parishioners have heard this harassment."

COMMENT: A woman once said to me: "I asked my pastor what I should do if the pope says one thing and the bishop says another. He replied, 'The bishop lives nearer.'" The great consolation for many is a study of Church history, in which we read about unbelievably bad things happening within the Church. Yet the Church rolls on with its mission of teaching, sanctifying and saving souls.

Continuing in faith despite adversity

By Cindy Bassett

Can the history of the world be changed because of one woman's faith? Well, it happened many years ago in the ancient land of Moeb. Disaster struck a family there not once but three times, and because of the tragedy, three women — Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah — had all become widows.

One day, Naomi, who was an old woman, decided to return to her former home in Bethlehem. "It is time, my dear girls, for you, too, to go back to your homes," she told Ruth and Orpah. "For I have no more sons for you to marry; all has been lost." She kissed them both and turned to leave.

Orpah said goodbye and went on her way. But Ruth lingered, and Naomi again urged her to leave. "No, mother," Ruth said. "I will never leave you. I want to go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God (Ruth 1:16)."

There was no changing the young widow's mind, so together Naomi and Ruth went back to Bethlehem. Many of Naomi's relatives were surprised to see her again after nearly 10 years, and they all greeted her warmly.

"You must not call me 'Naomi' any longer," she said, "but 'Mara,' for the name means 'bitter.' The Lord has given me bitter things in my life."

Ruth listened patiently to all Naomi's complaints. Then she said, "Mother, the God I have come to know through you will not abandon us. We must keep going."

It was harvest time in Bethlehem when the two women arrived. According to Hebrew custom, widows and other poor people went to the fields to gather bits of grain the harvesters had left behind after gathering the best for themselves. To support Naomi and herself,

The Bible Corner

Ruth went to glean in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy landowner. Boaz had told his foreman to make certain that his workers left extra grain behind, so that Ruth would have plenty to gather.

One day, Ruth asked Boaz: "Sir, why have you been so kind to me?"

"Everyone in Bethlehem has heard of your great faith," Boaz replied. "You have left your own home and come here to live among strangers so that you could care for Naomi. May the God of Israel bless you."

Every day after that, Boaz gave Ruth something to eat when she worked in his fields. And before long, Ruth and Boaz had fallen in love and married. God blessed them with a son, whom they named Obed.

"See, Mother," Ruth said to Naomi, as she rocked her new baby, "we kept going in faith, and God has taken care of us. It was God who led me to the fields of Boaz in the first place."

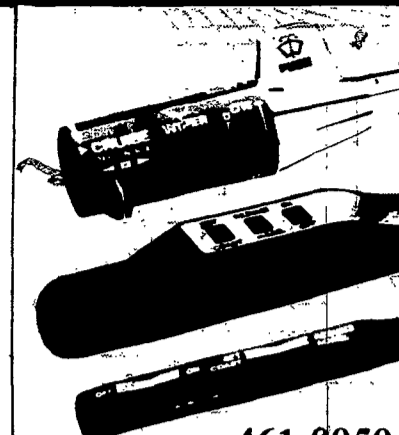
But how was the history of the world changed by Ruth's faith? Obed became the grandfather of David, one of the most famous kings ever to rule Israel. King David was the ancestor of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Scripture reference: The story of Ruth is found in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament. Jesus' family tree is described in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:25-38.

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