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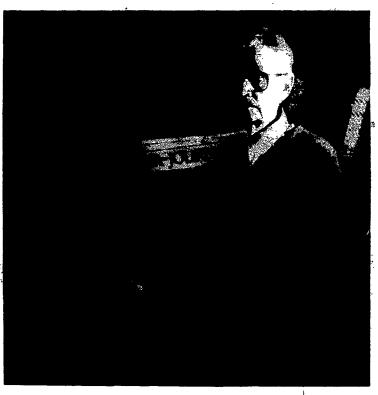
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Columnists

Sacrifices for the sake of Christ

By Father Albert Shamon Sunday's readings: (R3) John 2: 13-25; (R1) Exodus 20:1-17; (R2) 1 Corinthians 1:22-25.

The baptismal theme is well illustrated in Sunday's readings. In the Gospel, Our Lord cleans out the temple. When you were baptized, the Holy Spirit filled your soul. As light drives out darkness, He scattered the darkness of sin. And as fire ignites what it touches, He transfigured your soul, making it clean and godlike. We call that inner change "sanctifying grace."

When you were baptized as an infant, your sponsors made a covenant with God for you. Through them, you promised to renounce the devil and all his works. His works are works of hate — everything opposed to love of God and neighbor. In the Old Testament, God spelled out in the Ten Commandments what He meant by love of God and love of neighbor. Those commandments referring to God, Moses wrote on one table of stone; those pertaining to neighbor, he wrote on a second table.

For Himself, God asked only one thing: Keep one day a week holy. He wanted this, not so much for Himself, but because we need one day of rest each week and need to know our God. Two obstacles stand in the way of reaching these goals. The first is error: we can have false gods like power, money, drugs, drink and sex. So God said, "I, your Lord, am your God." Secondly, we can be downright indifferent to God, so He said, "Do not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain."

The remaining seven commandments regulate our relationships to others. The people closest to us and to our God are our parents. We must honor them. They give us life, and we must respect it. Sex is the gateway to life, and we must not pollute or adulterate the sources of life. Also, to provide for life, we must have possessions. We must respect this right, and must not steal. But more valuable than property is reputation. "Who steals my purse, steals trash. But he who filches from my good name, robs me of that which does not enrich him but leaves me poor indeed!"

Commandments nine and ten forbid in desire what six and seven forbid in action. The root of all action is desire.

A Word for Sunday

What a wonderful blueprint for life! If the Ten Commandments were observed, we would not need the countless laws that encumber all governments.

Yet to many people, the Ten Commandments are so often a stumbling block and an absurdity. You don't see them in the classroom, do you? And kids don't have to recite them anymore. I just wonder how many schoolchildren could recite the Ten Commandments today. What a tragedy!

The Lord reduced all 10 to two: love of God and love of neighbor. If you love your neighbor for love of God, the 10 could be reduced to one. So try these ten commandments of human relations:

1) Speak to people. Nothing is as nice as a cheerful word of greeting.

2) Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to make a frown; only 14 for a smile. Don't strain yourself.

3) Call people by name — the sweetest music.

4) Be friendly and helpful.

5) Be gracious. Speak and act as if everything you do is a real pleasure.6) Be interested in people. God is.

7) Be generous with praise and cautious with criticism.

8) Be sensitive to the feelings of others.They'll appreciate it.9) Be thoughtful of the opinions of others.

9) Be thoughtful of the opinions of others.
 There are three sides to every argument — yours, the other person's and the right one.
 10) Be alert to serve. What counts most in

life is what we do for others for the sake of Christ.

Love of neighbor is made up of petty sacrifices.

'Your faith has made you well'

By Cindy Bassett

No one in the town of Nain had ever seen the leper Joab face to face — not even the priest who left outside his door a small sack of leftovers for the leper to take. Joab's face was always covered. That was the law.

Ancient Jewish law also decreed that a person afflicted with leprosy be banished from the rest of the society. Once a day, when the leper came into Nain dragging his leg behind him, he was also required to shout, "Unclean! Unclean!"

In the early days of his sickness, some of the town's crueler citizens even beat poor Joab away with a stick, as though he were a disobedient dog. Joab had become accustomed to their scorn. "It's just their fear," he told the other nine lepers who lived with him on the outskirts of Nain. Even the other lepers had come to take advantage of Joab's good nature. For the past several years, he was the only one who ventured forth daily to bring back the sack of food from the priest.

In addition to his daily sack of food, Joab also carried with him the belief that he would someday be well again. He turned this hope over and over in his mind like a brilliant jewel, in order to cast out dark thoughts. To look at Joab, one would think hope an absurd daydream. The leprosy had eaten away at his flesh to such an extent that he could no longer stand up straight. But still Joab persisted in his belief.

Today, as Joab returned to the lepers' dwelling from his trip to Nain, he wasn't carrying the customary sack of food. Even from a distance, it was evident that there would be no meal for those who had waited all day. The lepers were loud in expressing their disappointment.

"Joab, what happened?" Mahlon asked as he ran to meet Joab. "Were you robbed along the way?"

"No, but I heard such good news that I never went to the house of the priest. I came directly home," Joab said.

The two men were quickly joined by the other eight members of the leper colony. "You left our food for someone to steal?" one of them cried.

"Joab, do you think of us as no better than the animals that roam the streets of Nain?" another said critically. "Some dog is certain to have a better meal than we will have today."

The Bible Corner

"Stop talking, all of you," Joab shouted. "Do you think of nothing besides your miserable stomachs? If so, you deserve to be treated as animals."

The other lepers had never seen Joab so excited, and no one uttered a word. Then Joab told them, "I have seen the Messiah, the one everyone talks about. Everywhere this Jesus goes, he heals the sick."

"Joab, I know how much you wish to get well," Mahlon said gently, "but there are those who say our disease is a curse from God. Why would this Jesus heal us?" "I heard him preaching about a new king-

dom that is open to all who will follow him,"
Joab continued. "Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem today by this road, and when he passes by,
I will be here waiting for him."
In the end, all 10 lepers waited by the road-

side for Jesus to come by. As soon as they saw him coming, they began to plead: "Jesus, have mercy on us!"

Only Joab dared to approach Jesus, and when Jesus touched him, Joab's leprosy was gone. "Go and show your yourselves to the priest," Jesus said.

And as the other nine lepers went with Joab to Nain, their leprosy, too, disappeared. The 10 men entered the town leaping like young children in their joy.

But later that same day, only Joab went back in search of Jesus. When he found him, Joab prostrated himself in front of Jesus, saying, "Glory to God! Thank you Jesus for healing me."

"Stand up," Jesus commanded. "It is your faith that has made you well." Then Jesus turned to the crowd, saying, "I healed 10 lepers today, but only this one has returned to give thanks. Take a lesson from him."

Scripture reference: Luke 17:11-19.

Lenten meditation: Jesus, you always answer prayers. How many times have I returned to thank you for your answers?

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