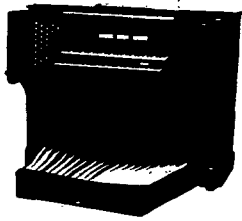


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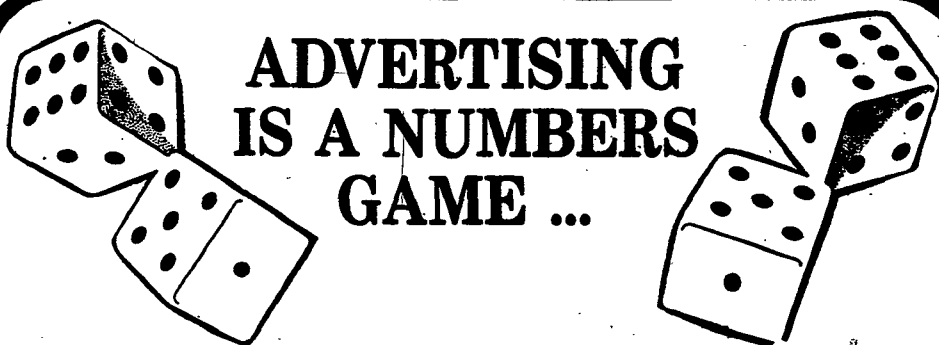
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The sacrament of Christ's mercy

By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 20:19-31; (R1) Acts 4:32-35; (R2) 1 John 5:1-6.

Between 1930 and 1938, Our Lord is believed to have appeared to Mercy Sister Faustina in Kracow, Poland. According to the story, He came to teach us the story of His love and His disappointment in us for our distrust of His mercy.

Sister Faustina's life was very ordinary; tending the door, cooking, sweeping and gardening. Even her closest companions in the order never guessed at the wonders of grace given her in prayer.

Sister Faustina reported that on February 22, 1931, Jesus appeared to her, dressed in a white garment. One hand was held in blessing; the other on His breast. From under the garment came two rays of light: one red, the other white. Jesus advised her to have a picture painted according to the vision and to place under the image this inscription: "Jesus, I trust in Thee" Sister Faustina said that Jesus told her that people who venerated this picture would not perish.

In 1935, she saw an angel with lightning bolts in his hand, ready to unleash God's wrath upon the world. When she prayed, "Eternal Father, I offer Thee the body and blood, soul and divinity of Thy most beloved Son and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in atonement ..." she discovered that the angel was powerless to punish the world. This prayer is called the Chaplet of Mercy.

You can get the picture and the chaplet by writing to Franciscan Publishers, Pulaski, Wisconsin 54162.

Our Lord is said to have told Sister Faustina that He wanted the Feast of His Mercy to be celebrated on the First Sunday after Easter. Here again, Jesus made a prodigious promise. He said that those who go to confession within a week and receive Communion on that day will obtain complete remission of sin and the punishment due to sin.

How apposite this Sunday's readings are! The first reading tells of the early Christians' mercy for the needy. The responsorial psalm speaks of God's love and mercy. The second reading mentions water and blood, which are symbolized by the white and red rays emanat-

A Word for Sunday

ing from the Jesus' side in the picture of Mercy. And the Gospel speaks of the institution of the sacrament of mercy, the sacrament of reconciliation.

Of course, there will be the doubting Thomases. But Jesus warned: "He who does not want to pass through the gates of mercy will have to pass through the gates of justice ... Woe to him who does not recognize the time of My visitation!"

Sister Faustina died October 5, 1938. Her time to work for God's Mercy has ended. It is up to us to tell sinners about the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart.

In my last two columns, I spoke about Catholic education. I shudder to see how easily we are closing our Catholic schools. I discussed this matter with a business executive, who also was appalled at our defeatist approach to the problem. He said businesses are always confronted with adversity, but that they seldom succumb. When businesses have a good product and a strong market, they expand — they do not contract!

Might not our Catholic educators take a lesson from the optimism of our businessmen? We have a fantastic product in Catholic education and a ready market, with parents yearning for disciplined and quality education with moral and spiritual values. There is little reason for the contraction and collapse of our Catholic school system.

Thanks to the vigorous marketing, recruiting and teaching of a single pastor, one high school and one parochial school remain open to this day. Both had been closed — one by a bishop and the other by the parish council. It can be done. As Father Andrew Greeley has said: "The closing of our schools is both irrational and insane and due mainly to a loss of nerve on the part of people and priest."

Go forth as my witnesses

By Cindy Bassett

James' mother rushed anxiously into the room with Mary Magdalene, Salome and Joanna behind her. "Ah, we were certain that we'd find you all still here," she said, glancing around at the bewildered faces of those gathered there.

Even now, the women still carried the spices and balms used to anoint the dead. Seeing the men's questioning looks, the women began to explain. "As we approached the tomb of Jesus, we worried about many things," Mary Magdalene said. "How would we move the huge stone that covered the entrance? What if the guards would not allow us to pass?"

"But when we did arrive, there was no stone, no guards, just two angels," James' mother continued. "The angels saw our fright and asked, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?'"

"Jesus must be alive!" Joanna broke in. There was a long silence before any of Jesus' followers spoke. "Is it possible that you went to the wrong tomb?" James asked, voicing the others' thoughts.

"That's ridiculous!" Salome protested. "We followed those who took Jesus' body down from the cross. And we saw them place the body in a new tomb provided by Joseph of Arimathea."

"But if you were there at the tomb, why did you wait until today to anoint the body?" Matthew asked.

"We went home to prepare the spices and ointments," Mary replied with annoyance. "And when we had finished, it was time for the Sabbath. Why do you ask so many foolish questions? Jesus is alive, I tell you!"

"Mother," James said gently, "we appreciate how much you did for us while Jesus was alive. We miss him, too. But could you be mistaken?"

"James, you saw His miracles; you heard Jesus preach. You were there when He brought Lazarus back to life. Why do you find it so difficult to believe the greatest miracle of all?"

In the end, it was decided that Peter and John would return to the tomb and report their findings to the others. A short time later, they

The Bible Corner

burst back into the room, out of breath from running. "It is just as they say," John gasped. "No body, just an empty tomb with the stone rolled back!"

"Maybe someone has stolen the body," Andrew said.

"You are all a cowardly lot!" Mary Magdalene cried angrily. "You were supposed to be Jesus' friends. Where were you when he needed you? Only John stood with us at the cross to watch Him die. And now you hide behind locked doors! Why would Jesus come back to see you now?"

Peter hung his head in shame, remembering his denial of Jesus. The others were silent. No one noticed Jesus standing in the room until He said, "Peace be with you." Then, seeing their shock, He showed them the marks of crucifixion in his hands and feet, and sat down with them to eat.

"Have you lost your voices," Jesus asked. "Certainly a dead man cannot take food."

"No, master," Peter replied, sheepishly.

"Do you not remember all that I taught you? It was my Father's plan that the Messiah suffer and die, and on the third day rise from the dead. Now do you believe?" Jesus asked.

"Yes," they said, nodding.

"Much work remains to be done. You are to be my witnesses now. You must go forth to all people and all nations to spread the good news. I promise forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who believe in me."

Before Jesus left them, He embraced each of His followers. All of the apostles, except Thomas and Judas the betrayer, were present that day.

Scripture reference: Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-9.