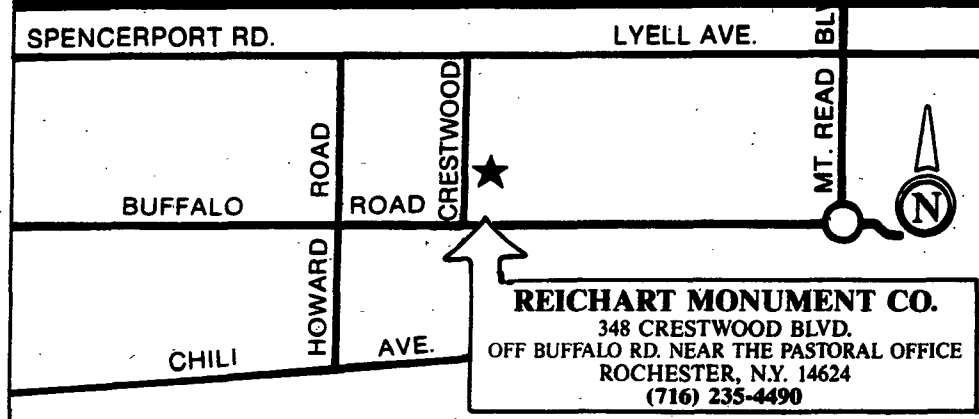


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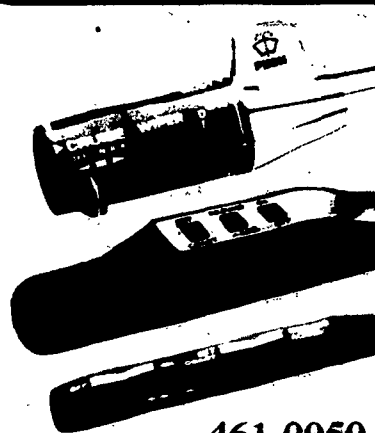
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Harvesting the fruit of the Spirit

By Father Albert Shamon Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 20:19-23; (R1) Acts 2:1-11; (R2) 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13.

Pentecost is one of the big feasts in the Church's calendar. The Jewish Pentecost was originally a harvest feast, but by the first century A.D., the date also celebrated the covenant of God with His people, and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai.

Our Pentecost celebrates God's new covenant with the new Israel, His Church. Wind and fire accompanied both covenants. The gifts, however, differed. In the old covenant, the law was given; in the new, the Holy Spirit.

If you study the Acts, you will discover that the Holy Spirit always came in answer to prayer. Prayer is the cloud that causes the Spirit to rain down upon the Church and her children.

The Spirit is given to help the Church and us in mission, in proclaiming the Good News to all. Pope Paul VI stated beautifully that our mission is "to create a civilization of love." Now love is something that has to be put into us, like gasoline into a car. We "fall" in love, for love comes from outside us. Christlike love comes only from Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Christ and the Holy Spirit come to us in the Mass. One of the chief fruits of the Mass is love. Right after the consecration, the priest — in his second invocation of the Holy Spirit — prays: "May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit" (Eucharistic Prayer II).

The priest is asking God that all who receive Holy Communion, the sacrament of love, become one through the Holy Spirit, the God of love. The bond of unity is love. Thus the Church makes the Eucharist, but the Eucharist makes the Church by forming it into a community of love through Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit.

Of course, this is a long, long process. Many, many Masses and Holy Communions are needed. That is why Our Lady at Medjugorje in her April 25 message to the world said: "Let holy Mass be your life!"

A Word for Sunday

The other gift of the Holy Spirit is peace. Twice, Sunday's Gospel mentions our Lord's greeting of peace.

Pope Pius XII called peace the work of justice. Paul VI in his encyclical "Progressio Populorum," said that "development is the new name for peace." Pope John Paul II, in his latest encyclical, said that peace is the fruit of solidarity.

The Gospel tells us that peace is the afterglow of the forgiveness of sin — a good confession! Confession is the basic avenue to peace, for sin is injustice. Sin erects the structures of sin that impede development. Sin denies solidarity: the oneness, the togetherness of all peoples. Sin destroys peace of soul, as it had for the apostles on that first Easter day.

If we would have peace for individuals and peoples, then we must recede from personal sin. We can start by a good confession. The importance of this sacrament can be gleaned from the fact that the Gospel describing the institution of the sacrament is repeated twice in this season — on the second Sunday of Easter and on Pentecost Sunday.

I have written before of Sister Faustina, the apostle of God's mercy. In the apparitions that she described, Our Lord told her: "Write, before I come as the Just One, I first open wide the gates of my mercy. 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."

Now is the acceptable time for mercy. The place is the confessional. The fruit is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy and peace.

Justice or charity?

By Father Richard P. McBrien I appeared several weeks ago on William F. Buckley's television program, "Firing Line," along with Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C.

The topic under discussion was Pope John Paul II's new encyclical, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" (The Social Concerns of the Church).

Toward the end of the hour-long program, I emphasized that Catholic social doctrine teaches that when we as individuals or as nations come to the economic assistance of the poor, we do so as a matter of justice and not as a matter of charity alone.

In other words, the poor of the world actually have a right to our so-called superfluous wealth.

Needless to say, the point did not go uncontested by my two politically conservative colleagues on "Firing Line." It also preoccupied several of those who wrote to me from around the country following the telecast.

The reaction only confirms what most of those involved in the Church's social ministry already know: Many Catholics are unaware of the Church's official social teachings. And those who are aware resist the moral conclusions of those teachings.

When most Catholics were at the lower end of the economic scale, back in the 1930s and 1940s, Catholic social teaching on such topics as the just wage was transmitted through Catholic labor schools and magazines like Social Order.

Today, most Catholics are firmly situated in the middle class. Many others have made it into the upper-middle class, and even into the ranks of the super-rich.

Catholic social teachings, on the other hand, are typically concerned with those at or beyond the economic margins of society.

Whereas Catholic social doctrine once supported the economic aspirations of the great majority of Catholics, the same doctrine now makes severe demands on their children and grandchildren.

Some politically conservative Catholics try to circumvent the problem by stressing the episcopal origin of the teachings. The fact is, however, that some of the teachings they find most objectionable are rooted in papal and conciliar

Essays in Theology

authority, and ultimately, in sacred Scripture. The Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" declared that our own "lawful possessions" are also "common property in the sense that they should accrue to the benefit ... of others."

"The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor, and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs ... According to their ability, let all individuals and governments undertake a genuine sharing of their goods" (No. 69).

Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical, "Populorum Progressio" (The Development of Peoples), made the same point, insisting that "private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditional right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need when others lack necessities" (paragraph 23).

Pope Paul VI extended this principle to nations as well: "We must repeat once more that the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations" (paragraph 49).

Pope John Paul II has also been emphatic on this social principle in his three major social encyclicals, and in his famous October, 1979, homily at New York's Yankee Stadium.

"We cannot stand idly by," he said at Yankee Stadium, "enjoying our own riches and freedom if, in any place, the Lazarus of the 20th century stands at our doors."

This is where the rock of the Gospel meets the hard place of material attachments. Understandably, many of us don't want to be anywhere in the vicinity when they make contact.



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