
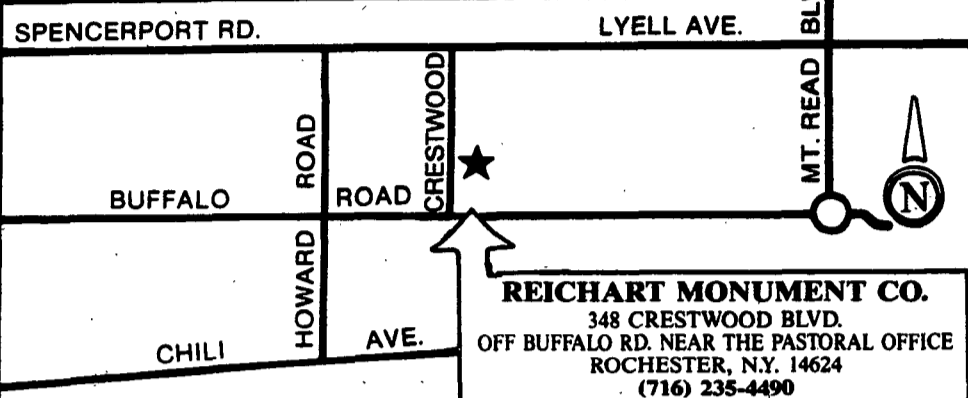


Columnists

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Sunday, June 5, 1988

10:00 am Mass celebrated with Most Rev. Matthew H. Clark

12:00 Open House of Parish, Outreach Ministries, and School facilities

2:00 Centennial Dinner at the Mapledale Party House: Social Hour, Dinner and Program, Dancing

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A sign of our Trinitarian faith

By Father Albert Shamon
Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 28:16-20; (R1) Deuteronomy 4:32-34; (R2) Romans 8:14-17.

Trinity Sunday follows Pentecost. After Pentecost, the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year begins again. Every journey starts with an ending. The end of the journey of life is the Trinity, hence its position at the end of the liturgical year.

When we make the Sign of the Cross, we express our faith in two mysteries: the Trinity and the Redemption.

After Our Lady's first apparition at Lourdes, on February 11, 1858, people testified that what struck them most about little Bernadette was the way she made the Sign of the Cross. It was a great, gleaming sign — slowly traced, broadly made, with deepest recollection. Bernadette was simply imitating Our Lady.

The Sign of the Cross, as everyone knows, is traced from forehead to breast, then from left to right shoulder. Eastern Catholics, however, go from right to left shoulder, because Hebrew and Arabic are written from right to left.

The cross reminds us that we cannot be delicate members of a crucified body. To be glorified with Him, we must suffer with Him (R2).

The cross strengthens us to bear the crosses of life. When St. Isaac Jogues was tortured by fierce Mohawk Indians, he could not pray because of the pain. With mangled hands, he is said to have carved crosses on trees and drawn strength from merely contemplating them.

The cross shields us against the attacks of Satan. As the blood of a lamb sprinkled on doorposts saved the first-born of the Hebrews in Egypt, so does the devoutly made Sign of the Cross put the demons of hell to flight, as St. Teresa of Avila testifies.

With the Sign of the Cross, we synchronize words that express faith in the mystery of the Trinity. We begin with the words "In the name of." We don't use the plural: "In the names of," for God is one.

"Name" answers the question "what?" In the Trinity, there is only one "what" — one divine nature. Were I to ask you, "What is the Father? Or the Son? Or the Holy Spirit?" you would answer "God" to all three questions,

A Word for Sunday

for there is only one God in the Trinity — only one "what?"

Following the words "in the name of," however, we name three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Person answers the question "Who?" Were I to ask: "Who (not what) is the Father?" you would describe a Person. There is only one "what" in the Trinity, but three "whos." The one divine nature is possessed by three Persons.

A single driver can handle a passenger car, but it takes at least three people to handle a jumbo jet. Likewise, a single person can possess a human nature. But the divine nature is so infinite, it takes three Persons to possess it.

The Cure of Ars, St. John Vianney, (Father Bart O'Brien's fine book on the Cure has been reprinted by Tan) explained the Sign of the Cross simply, as was his wont. At the words "of the Father," we touch our foreheads, for He is the head of the Trinity. When we say, "and of the Son," we touch our breast, for the Son told us of the Father's love for us. And when we say, "and of the Holy Spirit," we touch our shoulders, for He is our strength, helping us shoulder the burdens of life.

The two "ands" in the formula are of superlative importance. "And" is a coordinate conjunction. It expresses equality. The names Father, Son and Holy Spirit express Persons who are distinct; the "ands" indicate that these Persons are equal to each other.

The Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross to recall our baptism, which admits us to the Eucharist. Mass ends with the same sign to remind us that all blessings come from the cross. When we make the Sign of the Cross, we bless ourselves. We should, therefore, make it often — especially in time of temptation — and devoutly.

Deception: the worst sin of all

By Cindy Bassett

The apostles did not leave the city of Jerusalem immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had begun to direct all of their activities, and in their hearts they believed it best to remain in the city.

The apostles often met with the new believers for prayer and teaching. Every day they also gathered to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection with the breaking of the bread.

One day, after Peter had finished teaching, his brother, Andrew, came to talk to him. "Peter, I estimate that there are nearly 5,000 people who have joined the new Church," Andrew said. "I think it best that we sell our boat and fishing equipment."

"Yes, that's a good idea," Peter said. "We shall place the money in the common fund and share with everyone else."

"Andrew, I hear you are selling your business," Philip said as he joined the two brothers. "I plan to do the same."

"We shall all still be fishermen in a way," Peter said, chuckling. "Do you remember what Jesus said when he first met us?"

"Come along and follow me!" Andrew stated. "For I will make you fishermen for the souls of men."

As they discussed these things, a man and a woman stood nearby, listening. After a few moments, the man approached the apostles and said, "My name is Ananias and this is my wife, Sapphira. We have heard you preaching about this new life with Jesus, and we would like to join the Church."

"If that is your intention, then welcome to you both!" Peter said, smiling broadly.

"My husband and I must first return home and sell our property," Sapphira added. "We shall give all of the money to help you in your work."

"God will bless you both for your generosity," Peter told them as they departed.

But by the time they made all of the necessary arrangements, Sapphira had a different idea. "Ananias, I know that we are starting a new life, but I think that we should hold back some of this money for ourselves," she said.

"We made a promise to Peter," Ananias said. "That we did. Nevertheless, Peter need not

The Bible Corner

know exactly how much money we received for our land," Sapphira insisted.

"He must never know," Ananias said, agreeing to her plan. "We'll keep this as a secret between us."

"Go, now, and present this money to the apostles," his wife said. "I'll be along as soon as I put the rest of the money in safekeeping."

Something about Ananias' manner immediately told Peter that a deception had occurred. So he confronted the man before the entire assembly. "No one forced you to sell what was yours, or once that was done, to give all of the money to the Church!" Peter charged. "But you came here today claiming before God that you were giving everything to the Church. There is no worse deception than lying to God, who knows all that is in your heart!"

Members of the assembly were still shaking their heads over this falsehood, when Ananias fell to the floor and died. Peter told some of the followers to take his body outside and bury it.

Sapphira returned to Jerusalem a few hours later. When Peter asked her about the money, she made a similar show of hypocrisy.

"I am sorry to say that neither you nor your husband really understood Jesus' message about the new kingdom," Peter said. "Jesus was willing to surrender everything, even his own life for us: You have preferred to believe only if you are not deprived."

When Sapphira learned of her husband's fate, she also died. Jesus' followers buried her next to Ananias.

Scripture Reference: Acts 5:1-11.

Meditation: "If you want a happy, good life, keep control of your tongue, and guard your lips from telling lies!" (1 Peter 3:10).