

Columnists

Finding God in life's storms

By Father Albert Shamon
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 4:35-41; (R1) Job 38:1, 8-11; (R2) 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.

Driving along the New York State Thruway, a man noticed a woman stranded on the shoulder of the highway, trying to fix a flat tire on her car. Being a gentleman, he stopped and offered help.

It was a hot and humid day. The work was hard and dirty. When the man finished replacing the tire, he moved around to the back of the car to release the jack. As he did, the woman said: "Let the car down easily; my husband is asleep in the back seat!"

Well, that woman did not need any help. Her help was asleep in the back seat. So it was with the disciples in their crisis at sea: their help was asleep right there in the boat. All they had to do was call to Him, awaken Him, and the crisis would be met.

The storm at sea in the Gospel is a symbol of the storms in each and every life. You will notice four questions in the Gospel. They are good ones to ask ourselves if we would discover our relationship to God in our life-crises.

One problem for all of us is why there is so much suffering in life. Doesn't God care? In the Gospel story, when the disciples ask "Doesn't it matter to you that we are going to drown?" Jesus answers with a command that brings immediate calm.

But in life there is no immediate mending. You do not recover from death, sickness or a broken relationship overnight. What is immediate, however, is the bonding.

Suffering draws people together. In crisis times, we see just how much people do care. We experience solidarity, how close we are to one another. "Sweet are the uses of adversity,"

Jesus answers the disciples' question with another, "Why are you so terrified?" In this macho Age of Rambo, we would deny that. Me — scared? That's for three- and four-year-olds.

If we could accept the question, maybe we would say, "We are so terrified because this life, which is so precious, is running out, and the forces of evil seem to be winning."

I was not a little shaken by Robert Morris' book, Our Globe Under Siege, No. 3. Morris, a Naval Intelligence Officer during World War II, writes that the USSR is realizing its grand

A Word for Sunday

geo-political design to conquer the globe. Well, that simply confirms my resolve to urge everyone to heed the message of Our Lady at Fatima, and now at Medjugorje.

Jesus asked a second question, "Why are you lacking in faith?" At least the disciples knew Jesus was sound asleep in the boat. But do we know He is here in our midst also — in the Mass, in the Blessed Sacrament, in us? It seems it does not much matter if we do, for our reliance has been put on the dollar bill. Money talks. One of the attitudes at the heart of modern problems, according to the Holy Father in his latest encyclical, is "profits at any price." Work, entertainment, shopping schedules get in the way even of Sunday Mass.

The disciples asked the final question, "Who can this be?" We don't even ask the question because we don't expect any payoff. We have our human resources — our wonderful cars, the airplane, the VCR, the telephone, the computer.

One day the courtiers of King Canute, Danish conqueror of Britain, flattered him on account of his power. The king ordered his throne to be taken to the seashore and set on the wet sands. The tide swept up to the throne and threatened to engulf it. The king cried out to the waves and commanded them to cease rolling in. Of course they did not stop. "Behold," said Canute to his flatterers, "how small is the might of kings!"

Yet Jesus commanded the winds and the waves and, as Son of God, said to the seas, "Thus far shall you come but no farther" — and all obeyed Him.

"Who can this be?" We know who He is. Yet do we have faith in Him? It isn't the Gospel questions that force us to think. It is the storms of life. Do we respond with faith to these? That is the question we must ask ourselves.

The what and why of tours

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Question: Are you still involved in directing tours?

Answer: Well somewhat. I am taking a group to Washington, a Marian pilgrimage June 27-29. Tours have been part of my apostolate since March, 1972. They began with a group of 47 people headed for the Holy Land under the aegis of the Courier-Journal. After a few years, the Courier discontinued its sponsorship, but Milt Voorhees, the travel agent, continued the tours uninterrupted until 1985, when he retired. The tours visited England and most of Europe — including 15 times to Ireland — the Holy Land, Hawaii, and a China-Japan-Hong Kong combination in 1982. Central America was offered just a year before all the fighting broke out, but there was almost no interest — excepting from myself.

Q: Is tour conducting hard work?

A.: No. Like marriage, it has its anxious moments, but it is really a happy work. The people are cheerful and appreciative. Many people who have never met before make good friendships on the tour. It delights my soul that we had one happy marriage from an Ireland tour. A widower, Bill Fisher, and Marie O'Connell, originally from Montezuma, N.Y., began courting at a famous pub with a flabbergasting name of "Dirty Nellie's," located next to Bunratty Castle. We had stopped for a sandwich and coffee. The courtship began. A year later, they were married by Monsignor Leslie Whalen at Our Lady of Lourdes, Rochester.

Conducting is a challenge: to get the baggage loaded on the planes; passports and plane tickets in order; plane seats arranged; special seats for the longer legs or for smokers; searching out wandering passengers; calming occasionally nervous people. But once we arrive in a country of destination, a local tour guide with a great bus takes over and my work is pretty much seeing everything goes smoothly. It usually does, though an occasional snag, like a missing bag or a wandering person or a misplaced pocketbook keeps one alert.

Q: Have you had any priests or sisters on your tours?

A.: Yes, and they are a good addition. Fathers Jay Walsh, CSV, my classmates Ray Heisel and James Lane (RIP), James O'Connell, Timothy McGough, O.Carm., of Elmira

On the Right Side

and Paul Wohlrab have all accompanied tours. Also included have been Brother Sebastian of Mt. Saviour Monastery in Elmira and Sisters Joseph Catherine Towns, SSJ, Elizabeth Lawler, SSJ, Teresita Williams, RSM, Winifred Welch of Trinity College, Washington, and Sylvia Reimondo of Lackawanna.

Q: Doesn't it bother you to leave the parish just to travel?

A.: I never "just travel," but am always on the alert to evangelize. That's why I was ordained. Every country we have visited is left richer by many Archbishop Sheen tapes given to priests, sisters, and laity on the travels. The greatest plum was getting Veritas, the largest Catholic bookstore in Ireland (Dublin), to carry the Sheen tapes, which ran into hundreds of orders. And with our tours, our people had daily Mass.

Q: What's this Washington tour coming up June 27?

A.: It is based from Holy Trinity, Webster, with our secretary, Mary Ann Penlon, in charge. We leave Webster at 7 a.m. for Washington. We are lodged at Catholic University, next to the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception — to which the Knights of Columbus donated \$1 million for the building of the campanile. We will have a guided tour of the basilica Tuesday morning, and of Holy Land replicas at the Franciscan monastery only a mile away. A tour of Washington will follow later. Wednesday, we return home by way of Emmetsburg to visit the shrine of Mother Seton. That is also the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity, founded by Mother Seton. The order has charge of St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester.

The price is \$90, which includes bus and lodging at Catholic University. Meals are on our own. If there are any places left, you can make reservations by calling (716)265-1616.

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