

Columnists

Following Webster pilgrims' progress

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Our Webster Spiritual Action Committee decided on a three-day pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, which adjoins The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

On Monday, June 27, we had our pilgrims' Mass at 6:30 a.m., with coffee and doughnuts served right afterward. By 7:15, all 44 pilgrims were on the bus. We reached Washington at 5 p.m., got our quarters at the university's student dormitory, and relaxed in readiness for the morning.

Our directress had scheduled Mass at the basilica for 8:30 a.m. After Mass, a competent, cultured volunteer guide at the shrine led us through a well-planned agenda, beginning with a brief history of the shrine. From the beautiful crypt, we went upstairs into the vast interior of the church, with its dozens of chapels — each with great mosaics depicting devotions to Our Lady typical of various nationalities.

Even the most spiritual pilgrims get hungry. Beneath the basilica is a large cafeteria, where we enjoyed a hearty breakfast. Then our bus took us to the Franciscan Monastery, only a mile away, where there are replicas of places in the Holy Land and Rome.

One replica was of the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Our guide, a bearded Franciscan brother, said: "Many pilgrims sing a hymn here." Our directress made an authoritative nod at me. Spontaneously I began: "Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All, how can I love Thee as I ought?" At the conclusion, the brother was teary-eyed and said: "I haven't heard that hymn in years. That was beautiful!"

Do you know why that hymn and others similar have been put on the index by progressive liturgists? They repel the idea of a personal "Jesus and I" and insist on a communitarian "Jesus and Us." That's why the traditional Credo, "I believe in God," has been derailed after 1,900 years to a communitarian "We believe in God?"

To add to the derailment from tradition, some places, agitated by women libbers, have further deformed the Credo into, "We believe in God, the Father-mother Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." How goofy can people

On the Right Side

be?

After the Franciscans, our pilgrims were off to the famous Hogate Restaurant on the Potomac River, Arlington Cemetery, and then to the Vietnam memorial, which is impressive but depressing, remembering that over 60,000 young lives perished and millions of others were disrupted for an ideal stymied, many believe, by politics.

We planned to return home by way of Emmitsburg, Md., where we could have Mass at the shrine of Mother Elizabeth Seton. I stopped at the Dominican House of Studies to phone for a Mass time. The phone system was disrupted and it took 30 minutes to reach the Emmitsburg motherhouse. O felix culpa!

This gave me a chance to talk to two young priests, Fathers Clark and Hodropp, diocesan priests from Minnesota, who studied at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, near the Seton shrine. They commented that Mt. St. Mary's is overflowing with 250 seminarians.

Both priests are high school teachers. One taught only religion. Smiling, I inquired: "Do you teach Father Charlie Curran? He's from our Rochester diocese?"

Seriously the priest replied: "We do not even mention his name. We are with the pope and the magisterium?"

On Wednesday, we had Mass at the tomb of St. Elizabeth Seton, made a quick tour of the grounds hallowed by her history, and got back to Rochester at 8 p.m., tired and happy.

At the Seton Motherhouse, the sisters give a 13-minute slide presentation of the life of Mother Seton, and the Daughters of Charity. While the presentation is beautiful, it does not begin to present the life of that great foundress of the Catholic school system in the States, with all her gifts and crosses.

A long-awaited letter from a friend

By Cindy Bassett

Even before Theophilus began to read the long scroll, he knew whose hand had written the words. Each letter had been carefully transcribed by his friend, Luke. Three years had passed since Theophilus had last seen the doctor.

Luke was missed by everyone in Antioch. He had gained a considerable reputation as a skilled physician throughout the entire region. Yet Theophilus had sent his friend in search of something much greater than Luke's customary life in Antioch.

For how was a person's life measured when all was said and done? Certainly not in wealth or possessions or even in a position of great authority. As a Roman government official of considerable rank, Theophilus had already attained all of those things.

No, the value of a person's life could not be measured by mere things, but by beliefs held deep in the heart — the very core of someone's existence.

The followers of Jesus had little but intangible beliefs on which to depend — and many of them had been imprisoned and martyred for those beliefs.

But something strange had occurred. The very act of stamping out the movement had only served to increase it. The few followers of Jesus who had come to Antioch had attracted an even larger group of followers.

In Antioch, these followers became known as Christians. Their message was simple: For everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, there is forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Theophilus had learned much from these Christians. Paul and Barnabas, two of the leaders, had stayed in Antioch for a long time instructing new believers, before moving on to spread the "good news" of Jesus' message to all people.

Theophilus knew there was much more to be learned about Jesus. Who was more trustworthy than Luke for such a quest? It was Luke's nature as a doctor to carefully examine everything and then make a clear-minded judgment.

Theophilus financed Luke's trip, so that he could accompany Paul and Barnabas on their

The Bible Corner

journey. In this way, Luke was certain to know the entire truth. Theophilus sat down and eagerly began to read Luke's letter.

Dear Theophilus, I am sorry my writing is so long in coming to you. We have just now stopped in our travels. Paul has been imprisoned because of some false charges brought against him by the Jewish leaders. But, since he is a Roman citizen, Paul intends to bring his case before Caesar.

There is but one guard to keep track of Paul and the quarters are quite comfortable. He is busy writing letters to all of the new churches set up along our journey to Rome.

For my part, I am grateful for this respite. Now I will be able to tell you everything about Jesus Christ that I have come to learn on this greatest journey of my life.

This Jesus was not just another prophet or a gifted teacher. He was the Son of God, the Messiah promised long ago by God. Many others, Theophilus, have tried to explain the events concerning Jesus that have been fulfilled during our lifetime. These facts have been handed down by people, who from the very beginning, were eyewitnesses.

Since I myself have investigated everything, I will write an orderly account for you of all that occurred during Jesus' time on earth. In this way, you will know with absolute certainty the truth of what you have been taught by his followers. I am sure that when you hear the story of Jesus, you will hold these truths deep in your heart.

TO BE CONTINUED ...

Scripture reference: Luke dedicated both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles to Theophilus. Not much is known of him, other than that he was an important Roman government official living in Antioch who wanted to know more about Jesus Christ.

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