

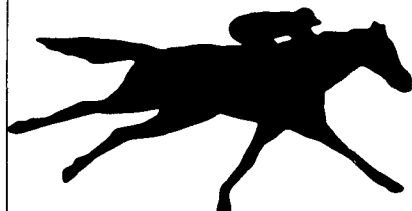
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Columnists

Happy are those who fear the Lord

By Father Albert Shamon
Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 10:2-16; (R1) Genesis 2:18-24; (R2) Hebrews 2:9-11.

If you visit Jamestown, the first English settlement in Virginia (1607), you will be touched by the fine reconstruction of town and costumes. One thing that stands out is the woman's touch in certain cabins that seemed to mark off the "homes" from the less attractive barracks for single men. One touching memory is the inscription on a tombstone erected by a husband in memory of his wife. It reads: "She touched the soil of Virginia with her little foot and the wilderness became a home." Even under conditions of hardship, no human happiness wears quite so well over the years as a good marriage. On the other hand, no luxury can quite compensate for an unhappy home life.

It is stating the obvious to say everybody wants to be happy. The problem is the variety of opinions as to what constitutes happiness and how to attain it.

The Responsory Psalm (No. 128) defines happiness in terms of family life. The psalmist begins with the formula: "Happy are you who," then fills in the blank with what he thinks will make us happy. "Happy are you who fear the Lord"

Such a one enjoys the fruits of his labor. His wife is like a fruitful vine; her children like clusters of grapes. The father delights in the seedlings springing up under the old olive tree. For the psalmist, the fear of the Lord is the key to happiness.

He who fears the Lord is faithful to his religious duties; his family is part of the larger family, the Church. From her, from Zion, comes forth the Lord's blessings, especially peace and grandchildren.

In Our Lord's day, His people had tampered with marriage. They had even gone so far as to grant divorce — and this in the name of Moses. What did Jesus do? He set aside the Law of Moses and He reached back to the dawn of creation. He did not discuss whether or not divorce is allowed; rather He arrowed to the heart of the matter — what did God intend for sex when He made man male and female? Then He quoted the two passages from Genesis that state God's purpose for sex.

Sex is unitive: "Two shall become as one."
Sex is creative: "Increase and multiply and fill the earth."

A Word for Sunday

Thus Pope Paul VI, in his landmark encyclical, *Humane Vitae*, declared that the connection ... between the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal act (is) inseparable and willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative" (No. 12).

"What God has joined together, no man may put asunder."

That is why every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life. Any person who tries to separate these two elements contradicts the will of God, acts contrary to it, and therefore does what is intrinsically immoral. Such a one does not fear the Lord, and sows unhappiness.

There is so much unhappiness in marriages today because there is so little fear of the Lord. To fear the Lord means to walk in His ways. And yet so many prefer their own ways. A simple rule for understanding the Church's stance on sexual ethics is to grasp this basic concept of Jesus in quoting Genesis: the unity and the creativeness of sex cannot be separated on man's initiative.

Thus masturbation is wrong because it is neither unitive nor creative. Homosexuality and lesbianism are wrong because they are unitive, but not creative. Test tube babies are wrong because, although creative, they are not unitive. Condoms are wrong for married couples because, even though the act is unitive, it is not procreative. They are wrong for singles because such an act is neither unitive nor procreative.

The whole concept of marriage is under attack today. Practically everyone has friends or relatives whose marriages are either on the rocks or broken up. Perhaps it might be useful here to prepare homilies on marriage with the help of Marriage Encounter couples, family groups, parish councils, and so on. We must restore the family to what God meant it to be if we would restore happiness to marriages.

The day the great storm came

By Cindy Bassett

Sudden storms on the Sea of Galilee are commonplace for an experienced fisherman. My brother, Andrew, always says, "The weather out on the Sea of Galilee is as changeable as Peter's moods!" But one day, even an old fisherman like me was confounded by what he saw.

It was late that afternoon when Jesus suggested to us: "Come, let's sail over to the other side."

Those of us who had become known as Jesus' apostles were all there. So everyone climbed into my rugged old fishing boat, and off we went. Jesus had been preaching all day and he looked very tired. I found a cushion for him to recline on, and in a few minutes, he was fast asleep.

"Today is quite a bit different than last time we were all together in a boat," Andrew pointed out.

"I suppose it is a good thing that you gave up fishing as an occupation," John said, smiling. "You were never very good at it."

"I guess I just lack the patience for it," Andrew admitted.

"Well, the Master has certainly changed my life," Matthew said. "Until a few months ago, I worked for the Romans collecting taxes from my own people."

"And making a handy profit on us besides!" Andrew joked.

"What would you say of our lives now that we have met Jesus and become his followers?" I asked, looking at each one of them.

"Why Jesus has made us fishers of men," Andrew said. "Perhaps I shall yet become a good fisherman!"

"But is there a real difference in each one of us?" I asked.

"How could we have not changed?" John asked me. "We have seen Jesus heal lepers, the blind and the lame right before our eyes. Only a few days ago, Jesus brought a widow's son back to life. Whatever do you mean, Peter?"

I made no reply as the boat continued in its steady course far out into the Sea of Galilee. "Always the serious one, my brother, Peter,"

The Bible Corner

Andrew quipped before everyone fell silent.

The winds picked up slightly and I made the necessary adjustments in the sails. Two more minutes hadn't passed when suddenly the winds gusted to gale force and the boat started rocking wildly from side to side.

As I struggled to anchor the sails, the boat was being tossed so hard by the waves that my friends had to start bailing out water. Oddly enough, I noticed that Jesus was still sound asleep.

I tried in vain to steady my boat until the wind snapped one of the main lines. "I fear we shall capsize! Wake Jesus and tell him!" I shouted to the others.

Andrew and James rushed over to him and cried, "Master, we are nearly overcome by the storm! Help us or we will all drown!"

As we looked on, Jesus stood up and calmly faced out to sea. He shouted something, and in a few minutes, the water had become so calm that there was not even a flutter of a wave.

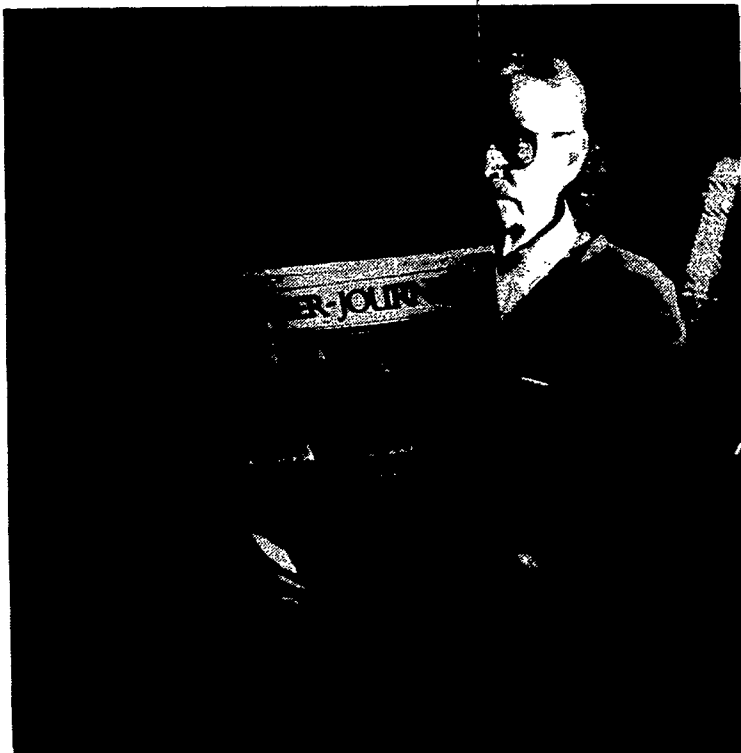
Jesus turned to face the frightened group of men who huddled together in the center of the boat. "Where is your faith?" he asked us all.

We were so amazed by what we had just seen that no one answered Jesus. Onshore later that same evening, Andrew asked me, "Peter, what happened out there today? The winds and the sea stopped at Jesus' command. Just who is he?"

"That is something which each one of us must decide," I said. "And when we do, we must never forget, no matter what happens in our lives."

Scripture reference: Luke, Chapter 8:22-25.
Meditation: Dear Jesus, help me to trust you during both the good and bad times of my life.

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