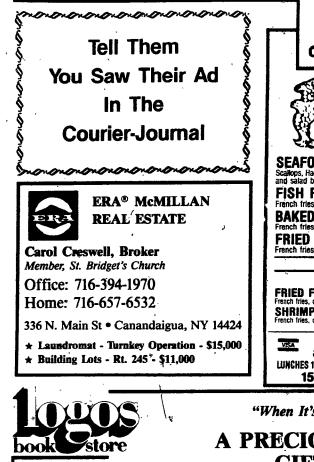
Thursday February 9, 1989



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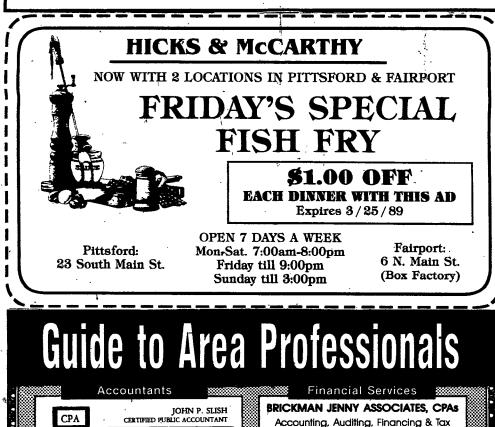
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Columnists **Our Lady's prescription for Lent** By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 4:1-13; (R1) Deuteronomy 26:4-10; (R2) Romans 10:8-13. The importance of Lent is endorsed by Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Chapter Five. A special paragraph is devoted to Lent. The council said: "The Lenten season has a twofold character: (1) it recalls baptism and prepares for it; (2) it stresses a penitential spirit" (No. 109).

The liturgy has been revised to highlight the baptismal and penitential themes. The covenants of the Old Testament help us understand what God has done for us in baptism, whereby we embrace the new covenant with God, effected by the death and resurrection of Our Lord.

Therefore, in the first readings of the Sundays of Lent, the church remembers the covenants of the Old Testament to remind us of the stages of God's plan for our redemption, as well as to instruct those to be baptized. She recalls the ancient Creed of Israel - first Sunday; the covenants with Abraham and Moses - second and third Sundays; the first Passover in the Promised Land - fourth Sunday; and God's promise to renew His people - fifth Sunday.

The second readings harmonize with the first reading or the Gospel passages. The Gospel readings of the first two Sundays of Lent recount the temptation and the transfiguration of Our Lord. For the remaining three Sundays, passages from John's Gospel dealing with faith and baptism may be used: the Samaritan woman at the well (third Sunday) instead of Luke's call to repent or perish; the man born blind (fourth Sunday) substituted for Luke's prodigal son; the raising of Lazarus (fifth Sunday) for the adulterous woman.

Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday to the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday. Passiontide has been suppressed. The Lenten Sundays number one to five. The sixth Sunday, Palm Sunday, begins Holy Week.

What ought we to do this Lent?

Our Lady at Medjugorje has told us loud and clear what we ought to do. An integral part of the Medjugorje message is fasting. The best fast, Mary said, is on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays. But everybody cannot do that. So modify the fast, but don't give up fast-

John welcomes the Lamb of God

By Cindy Bassett

Who is Jesus for you? This Lent we will hear the stories of some of the people whom Jesus encountered. Each one has a different opinion and a personal story to relate: Their stories will hopefully lead to an examination of your own life and discover just who Jesus is for you.

Every available space along the banks of the Jordan River was occupied by someone. It was almost as if the river had overflowed and left a sea of people in its wake. But this was certainly not the rainy season, when the Jordan's waters would swell over its banks. The hot desert sun was unrelenting in its fervor today. Even so, the crowds who waited to see the Baptist only seemed to increase with time.

Among those who waited to see the Baptist was a delegation of priests sent by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to investigate him.

John the Baptist's message was simple enough: "Repent! Make straight the way of the

A Word for Sunday

ing. I suggest the old canonical fast on Wednesdays: one full meal, cut down on the other two, nothing between meals. That is certainly possible. When one considers the rigors of dieting, fasting is child's play. More graves are dug by knives and forks than by auto accidents.

As for Fridays, why not start on Thursday night? Have nothing after supper on Thursday night, then coffee or tea and toast for Friday breakfast, the same for lunch, then a full meal at night. Again, very possible, and, I might add, very necessary.

Prayer is the breath of the soul; fasting is the prayer of the body. Prayer and fasting are as necessary to our spiritual life as breathing and eating are to our physical life.

Here is what Our Lady said: "If you do not have the strength to fast on bread and water, you can give up a number of things. It would be a good thing to give up television, because after seeing some programs, you are distracted and unable to pray. You can give up alcohol, cigarettes, and other pleasures. You yourselves know what you have to do" (Aug. 12, 1981).

"There are many Christians," the Mother of God said, "who are no longer faithful, because they do not pray anymore." Could this be the third secret of Fatima: the loss of faith within the church? Our Lady said it will happen unless we pray. Will we pray the rosary daily - as a family, before doing the dishes?

Then Our Lady continued: "Above all, abstain from television programs. They represent a great peril for your families. After you have seen them, you cannot pray any more. Give up likewise, alcohol, cigarettes ...

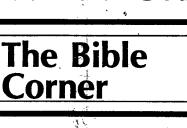
Finally, she made this momentous statement: "Monthly confession will be a remedy for the church in the West. Whole sections of the church could be cured, if the believers would go to confession once a month" (Dec. 30, 1984). We are the believers. We can save the West. Will we?

Joseph A. Lyndon John from 1965 Carter's sec fare from 1 partner in a Califano is Democrats. His article

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the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" he cried as Jesus came toward him.

"That is blasphemy!" one of the Pharisees in the crowd shouted, taking offense. "Only God can forgive sins!" "Baptize me," Jesus said when he came to stand next to John in the Jordan River.

"You who are without sin have no need of these cleansing waters," John said uneasily. "It is I who should be baptized by you.'

"I must fulfill all that my Father has given me to do," Jesus replied simply.

In the very-moment that John relented, a strange drama began to unfold. Some in the crowd heard a voice speak. Others argued that it was only thunder or merely the heat confusing their minds. Everyone saw the dove come and rest just over the head of Jesus. Those who insisted that they heard a voice said these words were spoken: "This is my Son whom I love. I am well pleased with him." This day was the very beginning of all that Jesus was to do. He began to preach and baptize. The crowds that followed him were even larger than those who had followed John.

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In 1955.

Courier-Jo

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Lord!" Other prophets had come in the past with a similar message. Yet no one had attracted such a huge following as the Baptist.

The Baptist was an eccentric to be sure, but so were some of the greatest prophets of Israel. John preferred to live alone in the desert, where he barely sustained himself on a diet of wild honey and locusts.

These priests waited for several hours until there was a break in the long line of those waiting to be baptized by John. "Are you the prophet, Elijah?" they asked him, coming right to the point.

"No, I am not," John replied.

"Are you the Messiah, then?" they continued. When John told them no, they asked, "If you are not Elijah or the Messiah, then why do you baptize?'

'You have not come here really seeking after the truth," John chastised. "For if you had, you would be forced to change your lives. I baptize only with water. Soon one will come who has surpassed me because he was before me.'

'Why must he speak in riddles?'' one of the priests asked, not even pretending to hide his annovance

"I am not fit to even untie his sandals," John added even as the priests had already turned their backs and left him.

A short time later, John was to point out the one of whom he had spoken. "Look, there is

Of Jesus, John said, "It is fitting that I become less now, so that he becomes greater. Whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life.

Scripture reference: John 1:15-34; 3:22-36.

Black ministries offers tour

The diocesan Office of Black Minstries invites high school students to participate in the Seventh Annual Tour of Black Colleges/Universities, March 27-31.

The tour has in past years taken nearly 200 students to visit institutions in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Georgia. The cost, which includes round-trip transportation by chartered bus, motel accomodations and meals, is \$355 per student.

For more information, contact Jacquelyn Dobson at 716/328-3210.

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