

A program guide to Mother Angelica's TV network

By Father Paul J. Cuddy
Catholic Courier columnist

When Father Richard Orlando engaged me to care for his Lyons parish in January, there was a bonus in discovering Mother Angelica's Catholic TV cable Eternal Word Television Network. I brought Holy Communion to Mr. Art Blanch on Water Street, who has been housebound for a long time and who was watching that channel. He told me it is on 18 hours a day and he watches it constantly.

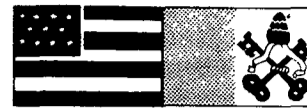
Since I had three weeks to be in Lyons, I decided to investigate the program about which I had only a vague knowledge. Mother Angelica is a Poor Clare Nun of Perpetual Adoration, superior of her convent near Birmingham, Ala. Full of evangelical spirit, and blessed with the spirit of enterprise, she saw the potential of television for evangelization. She also recognized the incredible inaction of the Catholic Church in the States to utilize this dynamo of evangelization, a blank for Catholics since the death of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

Televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker, Oral Roberts and Jimmy Swaggart all have used television effectively to haul in millions of dollars, using the Bible as a net to catch the cash. Rev. Billy Graham, Dr. Robert Schuller and Pat Robertson are more decent evangelists, who use television for their gospels effectively.

With no help from church officialdom, hierarchical or clerical, Mother Angelica established the Catholic TV EWTN in 1981. Today her programs reach an estimated 15 million souls each day.

During my stay in Lyons, I followed many programs. What a wide variety! There were learned lectures — one was on Thomism, as one might get in a good seminary. There were devotional sections: Mass, Benediction, rosary recitation with pictorial background for the mysteries. There was Bible study, which should attract Bible-loving non-Catholics as well as Bible-conscious Catholics. There is a charismatic tinge in some of the programs. There are panel discussions, gorgeous art presentations, good music, even sports.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE



One program I liked especially was a group of some 20 seventh-graders from a St. Patrick's School outside New York City in a dialogue discussion on the Mass. The children were bright-eyed, eager, responsive and knowledgeable as they discussed all sections of the Mass with a young priest who looks like my fellow Auburnian, Father Al Delmonte. I have written EWTN for a cassette copy which would be valuable to instruct adults as well as children.

The cable program emanates from Geneva into four counties, reaching tens of thousands. Father Al Shamon told me recently that there will be a meeting to bring EWTN into Auburn to service not only Auburn, which has a population of 32,000 souls of whom some 75 percent profess to be Catholics, and seven Catholic parishes, but also into the villages and farms and vacation spots in the Finger Lakes region.

Hopefully Rochester may some day

catch up, though presently there seems some hostility toward EWTN. In a recent column in the *Courier*, Father Richard McBrien expressed his distress that the American bishops voted 122 to 93 to unite with EWTN, which is positively loyal to the Holy See, to the magisterium, and to Catholic traditions, rather than joining, as he would have them do, with VISN, an ecumenical network in which the Catholic Church would be a mere part of a conglomerate of contending Protestant denominations. His disdain for the simple nun is clear as he wrote: "A folksy, self-assured woman, Mother Angelica has been described as an old-fashioned pre-Vatican nun with the personality of an old-fashioned, pre-Vatican rectory housekeeper."

I wonder why pre-Vatican nuns and housekeepers and religion are to be so disdained. Vatican II is a development of our traditions, not a rejection.

The great, unchanging, all-kind and merciful 'I AM'

By Father Albert Shamon
Catholic Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 13:1-9; (R1) Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15; (R2) 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; but only he who sees takes off his shoes." The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

Poets have X-ray eyes. They see the divinity hid in all creation. It is a wonderful world, yet we do not wonder at it — but a poet does. So often we take not off our shoes, for we do not see that all is holy ground.

Israel's greatest prophet received his vocation from God in a bush — not in a cedar tree, but in a lowly, commonplace bush. He received it while engaged in his work, for often God meets man when he is doing his work. It was night, in the awesome quiet and solitude of the foothills of Mt. Horeb. What attracted Moses was not the fire flaming out of a bush, but the fact that the fire did not consume the bush.

The bush symbolized God's people, and the fire, His presence among them and the fire of persecution they were undergoing in Egypt. Dramatically, God was telling Moses it would not consume them, for He was with them.

As Moses drew close to the bush, God called out to him, "Moses! Moses!" Twice He called, for it was urgent. And He called him by name — how wonderful! God knows us by name.

"Remove your sandals," God ordered. For this common bush was afire with God. And reverence befits God.

"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob," He said. God of the father, Abraham, bold, brave, faithful sheik; of the son, Isaac, ease-loving, quiet, simple; of Jacob, cunning, resourceful, timid, and of all his descendants — the one God who makes humanity one family, no matter how diverse their traits.

"I have witnessed the affliction of my people" — God knows, God cares, God loves. "And I have heard their cry of complaint" — a complaint of 80 years duration.

What a lesson in perseverance in prayer! God always answers prayer, but not always as we expect Him. His people prayed for deliverance. God immediately answered their prayer when He inspired an Egyptian princess to save the life of Moses. But they did not know it.

Next, God had to prepare Moses. For 40 years He let him learn how to govern by absorbing the culture of the most civilized nation of the ancient world. Then as a fugitive, for another 40 years, He let him learn how to live in the desert, where he would mold His people into a nation.

Then God had to prepare His people for the answer to their prayers. They wanted liberation, but God wanted more: He wanted them to leave Egypt, to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. It took 80 years of slavery to wean them away from Egypt. When Moses was ready to liberate them, they were ready to leave Egypt. How wondrous are the ways of God!

Moses did not accept his vocation without protest. "Who," he asked "shall I say sent me? Who are you?"

Were I asked, "Who am I?" I would answer, "I am a priest." Another might answer, "I am a doctor"; or "I am a mother"; or "I am a lawyer," and so on. Only God alone can answer, "I AM" without saying anything more. For only God is; all others become.

"I AM" is the present tense of the verb "to be." "I AM" means "to be" — the Being preeminently. Hence the All-perfect One, for imperfection is a lack of being. A hole in a fence is a lack of fence. He who is has no lack of being.

"I AM" means to be always in the present tense: all the past and all the future are present to Him. He is eternal.

A WORD FOR SUNDAY



Only one human being ever made the same claim: Jesus. When Jews asked Him how He could have seen Abraham, Jesus said, "Before Abraham came to be I AM" (John 8:58). In seven great "I AM's," John in his Gospel underscores the divinity of Jesus.

In the New Testament, the fig tree symbolizes God's people. Jesus is the vine-dresser. The Father, who planted the fig tree, in justice decides to cut it down for it

is fruitless. Jesus, like a new Moses, intercedes, pleads, prays and dies so that humankind might have a second chance.

It has been granted, for the Lord is kind and merciful. The great I AM never changes; He loves us still. And He who also is the great "I AM," like a new Moses, intercedes for us at every Mass, giving Himself and His Holy Spirit to us, so that we may bring forth the fruits of good works — the works of love.

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Fundamentalism talk set

Dr. Kathleen Boone, author of *The Bible Tells Them So*, will speak Tuesday, Feb. 28, at St. John Fisher College about fundamentalism and different interpretations of the Bible. The talk will take place from 12:30-1:45 p.m. in Haffey Formal Lounge.

Dr. Boone, who holds a doctorate in English from SUNY Buffalo, will use literary theory to explain how the Bible actually functions in sermons and other discussions. Following the talk, she will field questions from the audience.

For more information, call the college at 716/385-8104.

Correction

In the Feb. 16 article about the Diocesan Pastoral Council ("DPC studies diocesan budget reforms"), a section concerning the proposed job description for pastoral leaders contained several errors. To clarify, these leaders will be referred to as pastoral leaders, not parish administrators. The Diocese of Rochester currently has 510 professional ministers, some — not all — of whom are now prepared to assume the position of pastoral leader. The diocesan training program now being created will be for such ministers, not for pastoral leaders. The *Catholic Courier* regrets the errors.