

Why not get ideas out of your head and into the mail?

By Father Paul J. Cuddy
Catholic Courier columnist

"The Apostolate of the Pen" means the written action of people who wish to express their ideas: to individuals, to the press, to TV and radio stations, to bishops, pastors, civil servants: to commend, to complain, to suggest, to request. Does it do any good? Not always. Yet sometimes it does. It is estimated that of those who read any section of a newspaper, 85 percent read the letters to the editor. Who has a larger reading public than Ann Landers, with her letters from everywhere?

To be consistent, I have long been a letter-writer: to praise, to commend, to thank, to complain, to suggest. Below is a sample.

To The Postal Philatelic Affairs Service, Washington, D.C., December 17, 1988:

"For four years I have dutifully re-

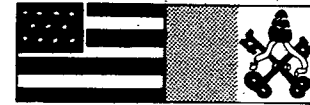
gistered my wonderment at the Christmas religious stamp. Could you explain to me why the Christmas stamp is of a nice Madonna and child, but the child is usually a chubby youngster a year or two old, and does not really pertain to the birth of Jesus, the event being commemorated?

"If the Postal Service were commemorating the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, wouldn't it be strange to have a stamp of Moses in the bull rushes instead of a stamp of a magnificent patriarch leading his people toward the Promised Land?

"I suppose we should be grateful that at least the size of the Christmas stamp this year is larger than that dinky thing we had last year, and other Christmas stamps in previous years equally small.

"May I respectfully request that you and your staff: select a stamp which is of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, not of a year or two later; and that the size of the stamp

ON THE RIGHT SIDE



be fitting for the occasion?"

From Postmaster General's Office,
Anthony M. Frank, January 25, 1989:

"Thank you for your recent letter commending Webster Postmaster Charles T. Gnage and his staff for outstanding services. ...

"As for your question about the Christmas stamps featuring a Madonna with an older child rather than an infant, I can only suggest that the postal service, in seeking the most attractive traditional design, has reproduced famous Madonna and Child paintings by old masters, who probably made them for year-round devotion, and by custom used either a toddler or a miniature adult for the Christ-Child.

"Regarding this year's larger stamp.

You may be interested to learn that this larger size was issued in response to customer requests such as yours. ..."

It is worth noting that if you write to an editor or a TV or radio station; or to a bishop or congressman, or to any public and important person, use a good quality paper, and if possible, an impressive letterhead. A letter with the head reading: "Murphy-Cohen-Spedaro-Bialaszewski, Attorneys at Law" will grab attention.

Letters should be short, succinct, courteous, with an air of expected action if that is what is sought. It does little good to complain to people who agree with you. It often does good to explain your ideas, if you get them out of your head and into the mail.

Promises of mercy made through private revelation

By Father Albert Shamon
Catholic Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 22:14-23:56; (R1) Isaiah 50:4-7; (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.

Private revelation is often used by the Holy Spirit to point out to God's people those truths from the deposit of public revelation that here and now most need to be heeded.

Public revelation is like one of those smorgasbords on a cruise liner in the Caribbean. I remember the first time I went to dinner on one such liner, a table half a block long was loaded with foods piled high and laid out with skillful artistry. I stood at one end of this banquet table with one plate in my hand. I was immobilized: Should I pick and choose foods from this end, only to discover more delectable choices at the other end? Rather than hold up the line, I just picked helter-skelter.

Private revelation is the Holy Spirit doing the picking and choosing for us from the smorgasbord of public revelation. Private revelation points out to us the truths needed for people in a particular period of history. When Jansenism had made the hearts of people grow cold, Our Lord appeared to St. Margaret Mary, revealing to her the love of His Sacred Heart and asking her to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart, especially by the nine first Fridays.

Private revelation is not the revelation of new truths, but simply a re-affirmation of some truth or truths of public revelation either forgotten or neglected, but absolutely necessary at this moment of church history. It is a special grace of God given to one age of humankind, pointing out what truth or truths of our faith are most needed by this generation here and now.

In the first half of this century, there were two private revelations made to humankind pertinent to this century. The first was made at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917; and the second to Sister Mary Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938) of Cracow, Poland, in 1931.

I want to say something about the revelations to Sister Faustina because on Good Friday we can do something Our Lord asked us, through her, to do. She joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy at age 20. In 1934, her spiritual director ordered her to keep a diary of the extraordinary revelations she was receiving.

Her diary declares how God had entrusted her with a very special mission: to announce again the Gospel message of His mercy and to promote devotion to the mercy of God.

Sister Faustina died October 5, 1938, at the age of 33.

In 1958, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith prohibited this devo-

A WORD FOR SUNDAY



tion to God's mercy as set forth by Sister Faustina. She had foretold to her spiritual director that this would happen.

Then, in 1978, the Holy See, after a thorough examination of original documents previously unavailable to it, completely reversed its decision. The one man primarily responsible for this reversal of decision was Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, the Archbishop of Sister Faustina's home diocese of Cracow. Six months later, this champion of her cause was elevated to the Chair of Peter as Pope John Paul II. His first encyclical was *Dives in Misericordia*, "Rich in Mercy" (Nov. 30, 1980).

One thing Our Lord asked Sister Faustina to do was to request the church to establish a "Feast of Mercy," to be celebrated on the First Sunday after Easter. The Gospel for that Sunday is on the institution of the sacrament of reconciliation, the sacrament of mercy.

Our Lord promised that on the first Sun-

day after Easter "The depths of My Mercy will be open to all. Whoever will go to confession and Holy Communion on that day will receive complete forgiveness of sin and punishment. Mankind will not enjoy peace until it turns with confidence to My Mercy ... Tell souls the greatest miracles take place in the confessional. I am only hidden by the priest, but I myself act in the soul. Here Mercy and misery meet."

The second thing God asked of Sister Faustina was that we prepare for this feast by making a novena beginning on Good Friday for the conversion of the world. This can be done by praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. "Oh, how great the graces," Our Lord said, "I will impart to the soul who will recite the Chaplet!"

You can obtain a booklet on this from the Marian Helpers Center, Congregation of Marians, Stockbridge, Mass., 01263. Ask for "Devotion to Divine Mercy."

Local sisters of Mercy join national media blitz

The Sisters of Mercy of Rochester have joined in a national media campaign to update the image of Sisters of Mercy in the United States and to stimulate interest in religious life among women.

The campaign, which includes 60-second radio spots and print ads for local and national newspapers and magazines, was launched by the Mercies in January. The world's largest English-speaking order of sisters, the Sisters of Mercy claim 8,000

American members working in 46 states and 11 countries.

The radio and print ads will emphasize career choice in the context of religious motivation, community life and service to the poor.

Funding for the campaign was provided by the Mercy sisters and the Catholic Communication Campaign of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference.

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