

Mother Church gains from variety, but not disunity

By Father Albert Shamon
Catholic Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R) John 20:19-23; (R1) Acts 2:1-11; (R2) 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13.

Next Sunday presents a dilemma: Do we celebrate Mother's Day or Pentecost Sunday? Let's say a word about both.

George Eastman, founder of Eastman Kodak Company, often stated that he never set out to become rich. While young, he lost his father and watched his mother mop floors and wash clothes to provide the bare essentials for himself and his two sisters. This memory haunted George like a bad dream. So he vowed to make enough money so that his mother would never have to work again.

He did make millions, and he revolutionized photography — but his real goal was a comfortable living for his mother.

David Copperfield at an early age was thrown into the streets. He lived for a time amid vilest associations and strongest temptations. But always he carried in his mind a picture of his mother. The memory of his mother guided him through all kinds of adversity to ultimate success.

Lincoln said, "All that I am and all that I hope to be I owe to my angel mother."

We are glad to have a special day to honor our mothers — the heroes of our

day. May God bless them wherever they are.

Sunday also celebrates the birthday of another Mother, Holy Mother Church.

During the California gold rush, some prospectors discovered a very rich mine. "We've got it made," they said, "as long as we don't tell anybody else before we stake our claims." They made a vow of secrecy.

But they had to go into town for provisions and tools. When they left, a great host of people followed them. Why? Their "secret" was written all over their faces. It was impossible for them to hide what they had found.

A gifted speaker was asked what was his hardest speaking engagement. His answer: a talk to the National Conference of Undertakers on, "How to Look Sad at a \$10,000 Funeral."

Likewise, on the first Pentecost, the disciples could not mask their joy. They were so slap-happy some people thought them drunk. Imagine driving to church on Sunday and being so excited that some people would think you were drunk!

Joy is one of the marks of the Holy Spirit, but it stems from another mark of the church — unity. The enemy of unity is dissent. Dissent with the church is not at all what it is purported to be — disagreement



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

about non-infallible doctrines. Dissent has nothing to do with fallibility or infallibility. That ploy is a red herring.

Rather, the question is one of obedience. Parents may make mistakes, but that does not absolve children from obedience, love and respect. The pope can err, but that does not justify disobedience, public dissent.

The Holy Father issued a magnificent letter on religious life in the United States, and some priests and sisters, instead of having the humility of heeding it, arrogantly attacked it. The infantile objections confirm the judgment, not of the pope, but of the commission of American Bishops, that one of the weaknesses of religious is an "inadequate theological foundation."

The Holy Father asked the bishops of this country to "promote a sound ecclesiology." The hallmark of the church is first of all unity. The touchstone of unity is obedience to him who walks in the shoes of the fisherman.

Of course there must be variety in the church, but not at the price of disobe-

dience, of disunity. As St. Francis de Sales put it: "Unity without variety is monotony. Variety without unity is cacophony. But unity and variety is symphony." And the principle of unity in the church is the papacy. That is what ROMAN Catholic means: one with the Bishop of Rome.

In the words of Cardinal John H. Newman when justifying a university in Dublin: "It is the decision of the Holy See; St. Peter has spoken ... he has a claim on us to trust him. He is no recluse, no solitary student, no dreamer about the past, no doter upon the dead and gone, he is no projector of the visionary."

"He for eighteen hundred years has lived in the world; he has seen all fortunes, he has encountered all adversaries, he has shaped himself for all emergencies.

"If ever there was a power on earth who had an eye for the times, who has confined himself to the practicable, and has been happy in his anticipations, whose words have been facts, and whose commands prophecies, such is he in the history of the ages, who sits from generation to generation in the Chair of the Apostles, as Vicar of Christ, and the Doctor of His Church."

Only an obedience of faith to the successor of Peter will give us the joy of the early church.

Unlikely ally helps apostles spread 'good news'

trophy our church borders on foolishness!" Peter said. "If you do insist on bringing him here, I'm not sure how the others would react. After all, Paul was one of those who approved of Stephen's death by stoning."

"And since that time, Paul has risked his own life by preaching about Jesus in the synagogues in Damascus," Barnabas replied.

"I am not denying that Paul did everything in his power to destroy our movement," Barnabas said. "If you would just let him come here and speak to you, I'm certain you'd understand. What were you

all like before you met Jesus?"

This last remark silenced everyone's arguments concerning Paul. The apostles decided that the next day Paul would come before them and tell his story.

When Paul arrived with Barnabas, no one even offered a word of greeting.

"Brothers in Christ," Paul began. "Yes, it still sounds odd for me to say these words. For up until a few weeks ago, I was one of the worst enemies of the followers of Christ."

"I went to Damascus in pursuit of them and as I approached the city, I was struck down by a light so brilliant, I was blinded. Then I heard strange words that I will never forget: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'"

"Who are you?" I asked

"I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting," came the reply.

"I had to be led into the city, where I prayed and waited at a house for three days. This same Jesus sent a man, Ananias, who placed his hands on my eyes and healed me."

"I have come here today to tell you that I have no other choice for my life now. Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, and I will spend the rest of my life telling others."

Peter looked sheepishly from one apostle to the other. "We, too, had different lives before we met Jesus," he said.

"I was a dishonest tax collector," Matthew said, recalling with a smile how he was hated equally by both the Hebrews and the Romans.

"After we met Jesus, our lives were never the same again," James said.

"We welcome you, Paul, as our fellow believer in Christ," concluded Peter.

Paul began preaching all over Jerusalem, much to the amazement of the Jewish leaders. Soon, a plot was discovered to kill him because of his belief in Jesus. So the apostles sent Paul to his home in Tarsus.

Barnabas went to minister to the church in Antioch. The number of Jesus' followers there grew so rapidly that Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Paul back with him to help. Together, Paul and Barnabas traveled to many other nations with the good news about Jesus Christ.

Scripture reference: Acts, Chapter 4:36-37; Chapter 9:1-31.

Meditation: "Be kind and tenderhearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ." (Ephesians 4:32).



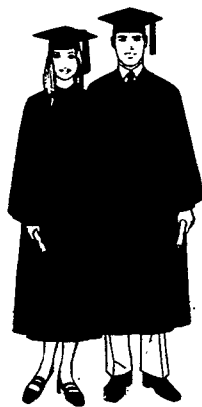
THE BIBLE CORNER

By Cindy Bassett

Catholic Courier columnist

Barnabas listened patiently as each of those present voiced an opinion concerning Paul. There was no condemnation in his face even though no one was in favor of having Paul join the church in Jerusalem.

"Barnabas, your willingness to quickly forget all that Paul has done to try and des-



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