

'Action of Christ' demands discipline

By Father Albert Shamon
Catholic Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 9:11-17; (R1) Genesis 14:18-20; (R2) 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Sunday is the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. So the first reading speaks of the sacrifice of Melchizedek, the offering of bread and wine, which foreshadowed the Holy Eucharist. Melchizedek was probably one of many priest-kings of Canaanite cities. Abraham wanted to enter a treaty of friendship with him and offered a tithe of his victory spoils as an assurance of goodwill. The Responsorial Psalm speaks of the Messiah as a king and a priest like Melchizedek.

The second reading is the text used on Holy Thursday. Paul is correcting abuses in the community at Corinth by asking the people how they can act so unkindly while celebrating the Eucharist, which proclaims the death of the Lord and His great love for them.

Luke shows the Eucharistic connection

of the miracle of the loaves by using the words that still remain at the heart of our celebration of Mass: "Taking the ... loaves ... Jesus raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced a blessing ... broke them and gave them to his disciples."

The church begins the General Instruction on the New Order of Mass with this pregnant statement: "The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and the people of God hierarchically structured, is the center of the entire Christian life for both the universal and the local Church, as well as for each of the faithful."

The Eucharist is "the action of Christ." In the theology of recent years, the classic definition of sacraments is that they are "acts of Christ." The Eucharist is a sacrament. That is why the early church avoided the term "priest" for the presiders of the Eucharist and used instead the terms "bishop" or "presbyter" or simply "minister."

Christ did not found a church and then leave it. He lives and acts in and through her down the ages. He does not need sub-

stitutes, but only representatives in the sacramental order. For He alone is the priest of the Christian people "living always to make intercession for us."

Two things follow from this fact. First, the celebration of Mass is more than a human event. It is a divine happening: the action of Christ, bringing the people of God into contact with the Father. Therefore, "the center of the whole Christian life." Secondly, since the Eucharist is the action of Christ, Mass celebrants must not act according to their own ideas or tastes, nor even according to the tastes, ideas, and understanding of the congregation over which they are presiding. Obedience to the rubrics of the church is more than a simple disciplinary obligation. Rather, obedience to them is based principally on the theological truth that the Eucharist is chiefly the action of Christ.

Another point, the Eucharist is an act "of the people of God hierarchically structured." The Eucharist is not an act of the priest with whom the people unite themselves; but rather an act of the people,



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whom the ministers serve by making Christ sacramentally present. They join the minister and with him unite themselves to Christ and with Christ they celebrate the Eucharist. Therefore, the Eucharist is an action of Christ and an action of the people of God.

However, it is a celebration of the people of God "hierarchically structured." The desire to abolish all distinctions in the Eucharistic assembly is not legitimate. Nor can sacred vestments be discarded to create the idea that the celebration is a meeting of brothers. All are brothers, it is true, but the people of God are "hierarchically structured." A football team would not be a team if everybody was a quarterback.

Particularly important in this respect is that the bishop or priest alone recite the presidential parts of the Mass, especially the Eucharistic prayer, because the assembled faithful have to sense that the risen Lord presides over them through the ministry of His bishops and priests. These are not simply the prayers of the assembly, but the prayers of Christ which the assembly make their own.

Finally, the Eucharist is "the center of the Christian life for the local and the universal Church." For the goal of the Christian life is to achieve communion with the Father and to extend this communion to all people. That is the purpose of the Gospel and all the pastoral activity of the church. But the Mass raises humankind to the right hand of the Father and gives it the Spirit of God, the bond of unity.

Scholarship benefit slated

The Women's Scholarship Committee of St. Bernard's Institute will honor eight local Catholic women at a dinner Wednesday, June 7, at St. Bernard's Institute, located on the campus of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1100 South Goodman St., Rochester.

The evening will begin with a social hour at 5 p.m., followed by dinner at 6. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will conclude the evening with remarks and a brief prayer service.

Tickets for the celebration cost \$25 per person. Proceeds will fund scholarships for women attending St. Bernard's Institute.

For reservations, call 716/385-4173 or 271-3479.

Jesus shows a merciful measure of judgment

By Cindy Bassett
Catholic Courier columnist

Eli stood at the back of the synagogue. His deformity was something which could easily be hidden from view. Nevertheless, his limp, paralyzed hand had made him a sort of outcast from society.

True, he had never been reduced to begging in the streets of Jerusalem to sustain himself. Few people were willing to hire someone with only one usable hand for even the simplest task, but there were plenty of menial jobs with scant pay for a person of his circumstances. Eli was not a proud man and he willingly took any work which was offered to him.

What made him feel like an outcast was the judgment made against him by the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the leaders of the Hebrew community and with pious accuracy, they were able to recite all of the laws of Moses. "This condition of yours is a result of a sin committed by you or your parents," they had told Eli. "You must pray that you will be forgiven."

Today, in the synagogue, Eli heard Jesus speak of a different God. This God was

merciful and loving. And the kingdom that Jesus described was open to all who believed.

For their part, the Pharisees were aghast at such references to God. Besides, they wanted nothing to interfere with the established order of things — one in which they had achieved high ranking positions of authority. Jesus was a threat to all of this.

When Jesus finished speaking, one of the Pharisees stood up and posed the following question to him: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

Everyone waited to hear what Jesus would say. According to the strict laws of Moses that they observed, it was wrong to do any kind of work on the Sabbath.

Jesus knew at once that his critics sought to trick him. So he answered this man with another question. "What is lawful on the Sabbath — to do good or evil, to save life or to kill?"

No one in the synagogue voiced an opinion. Jesus asked another question. "If you have a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not pull it out? Which has more value — a sheep or a man?"



Everyone was silent. Then Jesus looked to where Eli was standing and said, "Come up here."

There was no condemnation in Jesus' eyes as he looked at Eli's deformed hand. "Now stretch it out," Jesus told him.

Eli's hand was completely restored on that Sabbath. Everyone, except the Pharisees, was amazed. News of the healing spread throughout the region. People began bringing their sick to Jesus.



But the Pharisees were so angry that they began to plot a way to have Jesus killed.

Scripture reference: Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6.

Meditation: "Do not judge, or you, too, will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2).

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