

Missal sale demonstrates need for written 'readings'

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

To Father Ed Foy, Waverly: I have just returned from the 80-mile jaunt from Auburn to Waverly. (I explain to people: "Waverly is just two miles from Packer Hospital, Sayre, Pa., and is the home town of Fathers Joe Hogan and Bart O'Brien,) and have been ruminating about my meeting with your Altar and Rosary Society. It is rarely that I am called to assist in the Southern Tier, so I asked Mrs. Steed, the president: "How did you happen to invite me?" "Father Foy suggested you," she replied. So, many thanks.

Mrs. Steed informed me that she had become president of the society before becoming a Catholic. She became involved in parish affairs through her children's attendance at St. James' School some years ago.

As I was parking my car behind the rectory, I noticed lights on in the school gym-



nasium. A bunch of young men wearing a kind of boxing gloves and heavy sneakers were punching and kicking one another. Then I read a sign: "St. James Karate Academy." Some transition from the original intent of the school.

I wonder how history will portray the folding up of Catholic institutions to which our people were so dedicated, and the decline of practicing Catholics, and the contentions against the Holy Father. One cleric proudly sports a button saying: "Priests come in both genders," which

demonstrates that not all clowns are in circuses.

As I drove home to Auburn, I listened to a cassette talk by Father Basset, SJ, and was struck by this sentence: "In order to change the world, we must not have the values of the world." I turned off the cassette to cogitate on this.

Several of your parishioners had been interested by booklets in my religious-goods display. I get the items from Agnes Nolan's Catholic shop in Auburn, where I had picked up a copy of the *Vatican II Daily Missal*.

I have never understood why so many devout people who go to daily Mass do not have a daily missal. A missal gives an opportunity to reflect on the Scriptures of the day.

Some clerics say: "Do not let the people read the Scriptures at Mass. Let them listen as it is proclaimed." Can't you sense the

petulance as they demand: "Let them listen!" They presume that the people can hear the lector (more than 50 years ago Ithacan Father Byrne told us: "Over a third of a congregation are hard of hearing, although most don't realize it"); that all lectors, clerical and lay, read intelligibly; and 3) that the congregation is glued to the words being read, without distraction or day-dreaming. This is fantasy world.

A man wrote: "There is an agitation in our parish to get rid of the Sunday missalettes and substitute song books. I want to ponder over the Bible readings. My pastor wants to take them away from me." All I could say was: "Bona fortuna! But I suspect you have a lost cause. Why not buy yourself a Sunday missal? You could surreptitiously hide behind a tall person in front of you, out of the vigilant eye of your shepherd."



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

become totally committed as he was. He was a military man who loved the Jewish people whose land he occupied. He had heard of Jesus and sought His help. He wanted healing for his slave, not show for himself. He had faith in Jesus' power to heal that was simple and sure. He was a marvelously ego-free person!

Powerful, intelligent, influential, he used all of this in the service of love. Because he loved and wanted to love more, he was able to see and believe in the power for love in Jesus.

Faith commitment means hope in Jesus' power

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 7:1-10; (R1) 1 Kings 8:41-43; (R2) Galatians 1:1-2, 6-10.

Solomon prayed that foreigners would come to the Temple he had built, which had an almost mythological reputation for magnificence, and worship the one, true God (R1).

The centurion in the Gospel is one of a long line of foreigners who were attracted to the worship of Israel.

Centurions were not ordinary men; they were the backbone of the Roman army. This centurion was unusual in more ways than one. He had an unusual love for his slave. In the eyes of Roman law, a slave was a living tool, to be dealt with as a thing. However, his personal concern spurred him to seek help for his slave.

The Gospel's centurion was a deeply religious man, for he had built a synagogue for the Jews. He was a humble man, for he sent the Jewish elders to intercede for him with Jesus. Not being a fully practicing Jew, he did not want Jesus to become ritually unclean by contact with himself and by coming into his home.

He was a man of great faith — a faith based on common sense. He argued from the here and now to reach the there and then. He argued from his own experience to God. If his own authority was so effective, how much more would that of Jesus be!

Jesus recognized the depths of the centurion's faith — no Israelite had faith like this foreigner. Luke, the disciple of Paul, apostle of the Gentiles, shows how a non-Jew was more ready to accept the Messiah than were the chosen people.

The centurion really believed that Jesus could help him. Do we? Many of us feel that God is "up there" and does not actually touch our lives or care about our suffering. We can be tied up by quiet despair (a way of not believing) without knowing it. We do our religious duties, but there is no vibrant meaning or joy in them for us.

They are habit devoid of hope.

This is an absence of living faith, just the opposite of the centurion's living conviction. He did not yet have all the right doctrines, but he believed in Jesus. So we should ask, do we actually believe in God? Do we act as though God acts in history and in our lives, making a difference? If we do not believe God touches our suffering with an intimate love, we cannot believe for long in any human effort to change our lives, let alone our systems or our institutions. Some of us churchgoers cannot see Jesus in our world, in our hearts. But some outsiders might. The centurion helps us to see that faith is not just words, but living, not just talking, but acting.

A few weeks ago, I attended the first National Conference on Medjugorje held at Notre Dame University. One of the best

speakers was Father Ken Roberts, the "Playboy priest." In his talk, he spoke of three kinds of Catholics: the cultural Catholic, the habitual Catholic, and the committed Catholic.

Fifty-eight million people claim to be Catholic; 50 percent of them are cultural Catholics, for though they profess to believe in God, only 42 percent worship Him. Seventy percent are habitual Catholics: they go to Mass on Sunday and do everything the church says they've "got to do," but don't ever ask them to really pray. Committed Catholics are those who talk to God. God is part of their morning, meals, marriage, life!

The message of the centurion is that we

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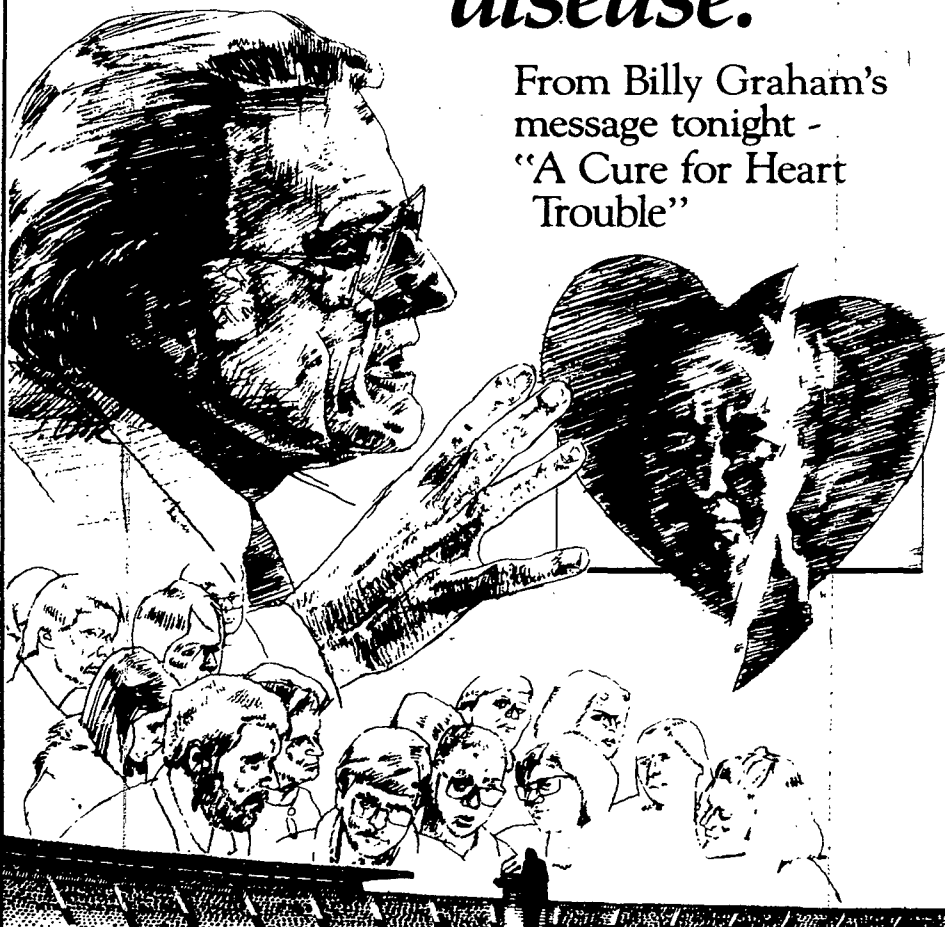
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