

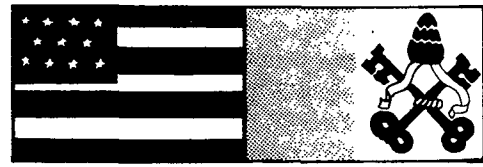
# A longtime friend takes up missionary work in Kenya

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

I first met Ursuline Sister Vianney Kennedy a dozen years ago while escorting a group on tour of Ireland. We had stayed over night at a Sligo hotel, where the water went on the fritz for a few hours — just enough to keep everyone on edge. The following morning was on a First Friday.

I thought: "I wonder if the First Friday devotion persists in Ireland." So I slipped up to the cathedral, only a couple blocks away, to observe. A holy nun came in and began her prayers in the back pew, awaiting Mass. I sidled over to her and introduced myself as a priest from America anxious to learn about the Church in Ireland.

The nun was Sister Vianney. She was frank and direct. She lived with a community of 50 Ursuline sisters in Sligo; the Church was doing well in many respects, but had its problems. Likewise with religious communities, which throughout the



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

world were in turmoil from changes. Sister herself is a registered nurse and social worker, and was working among the old and deprived. I can still see the shadow over her face as she said: "Oh, Father, the drink is such a curse in Ireland!"

I asked her: "Have you ever heard of Archbishop Sheen?" She smiled and answered: "Indeed yes! He gave a series of talks in this very cathedral last year." So when I returned home I phoned *Our Sunday Visitor* office at Gary, Indiana, which produced the first album of Sheen confer-

ences, to air mail a set to Sister in Sligo. I am pleased to say I have sold over 50,000 Sheen cassettes these past dozen years, and there is still a good call for them.

During 15 tours to Ireland I always tried to meet with Sister Vianney. The last time was in the lobby of Jury's Hotel in Dublin three years ago. She was in Dublin attending a language school, taking Swahili in preparation for an assignment in Kenya. She said: "I would rather continue with our poor in Sligo, but Reverend Mother wants a nurse for our mission in Kenya. So of course I will go." Occasionally I send a check for her work. In May she wrote:

"Thank a thousand times for your interesting letter and \$300.00 cheque. The Lord reward you as I convert the cheque into food and clothing for his poor in Kitui, Kenya. I will put some aside to procure a sewing machine for a young married girl, so as to help her make a living for herself and her two little ones ...

"The Ursulines here in Kenya are building a big noviciate in Karen in Nairobi. There are 14 novices there now. More to come, please God. Four have made their first profession, and they are all very fine girls. Some of the 14 are in teacher training colleges. One is studying to become a medical clinic officer. One sister is a trained teacher, and is teaching in Karen. Each novice does an intensive spiritual course at Hakema College during the spiritual year, lectured by the Jesuits, etc ..."

The future of the universal church will be greatly strengthened by the church in Africa. It is good to know that even in our own diocese of Rochester, thanks to the Sisters of St. Joseph and Mercy and other benefactors, four fine young sisters from Tanzania are taking courses at Nazareth College: four bright hopes for the future of the Church in their own native land, and an important section of the Third World.



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

"But it ain't too late for you!" the preacher continued. "So, why wait? Now is the day of decision. Now is the time to make your life count for something. Give your life to Jesus!"

On the way home, Willimon said to his wife, "This was the worst thing I had ever heard. Can you imagine a preacher doing that kind of thing to a grieving family? It was cheap, inappropriate."

His wife agreed it was manipulative and callous. "Of course," she added, "the worst part of it all is that it was true."

Jesus confronts us with a decision: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self..." Thank God, it still "ain't too late for you."

# Discipleship means more than wearing a cross

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday Readings: Luke 9:18-24 (R3); Zechariah 12:10-11. (R1); Galatians 3:26-29 (R2).

The book of Zechariah was written by at least two different authors. Chapters 1-8 were written by Zechariah himself and span a two-year period from October 520 B.C. to December 518 B.C.

Chapters 9-14 are quite different. They are more visionary than prophetic, even though they show dependence on the prophet Joel (c.400 B.C.). These chapters were most likely written about 325 B.C. by an unknown author.

In the first reading, this unknown author looks toward the future when God will step in and change the course of history. He sees God pouring out on the house of David "a spirit of grace." But he sees this outpouring as achieved by the death of an only son, a first-born — of him whom they have thrust through. St. John sees the words "they shall look on him whom they have thrust through" as applying to Jesus after He was pierced with a lance on the cross (John 19:37). The blood and water flowing from His pierced side symbolized the gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out on the house of David.

Ever since that piercing, Good Friday has been a day of mourning. The mourning in Jerusalem — in the church — is as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

Hadadrimmon was probably another name for Baal, the god of vegetation in Canaan and Syria. When the vegetation

died each fall, the worshippers of Hadadrimmon thought the god had died, and they would mourn his death. This was a put on; a ritual mourning.

Megiddo was the place where good King Josiah was killed in 609 B.C. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned his death. This mourning was for real.

Now if we look on the sufferings of Christ with the clear eyes of love, we, too, should mourn — mourn for our sins. And our mourning should be for real; it should lead to repentance, to a change in our lives.

That calls for decision: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps."

Some of us don't like decisions. A mother took her three children into the ice cream parlor for an ice cream cone. The man behind the counter asked, "Chocolate or vanilla?" The mother asked, "Why don't you have more flavors?" "Lady," he answered, "if you only knew how much time it takes some people to make up their minds between chocolate and vanilla, you'd never have another flavor!"

We have to choose, to make up our minds about Jesus. No doubt we admire His teaching. We admit His moral superiority. But have we ever been able to say with Peter, "You are the Messiah of God"? Have we made Him the Lord of our lives?

"Whoever wishes to be my follower..." Not fan, but follower. Not admirer, but

disciple. Not just wearing a cross, but carrying it. Whoever so wishes has to decide: Do I really want to follow the Master? Do I really want to live the Christ life? Or do I want to go on as I always have, living for myself, with little thought to God's purpose for my life?

William Willimon, a writer, tells of attending a funeral in a Baptist and country church. They wheeled the coffin and the preacher began to preach. He shouted, fumed, flailed his arms.]

"It's too late for Joe," he screamed. "He might have wanted to do this or that in life, but it's too late for him now. He's dead. It's all over for him. He might have wanted to straighten his life out, but he can't now. It's over."

"What a comfort this must be to the family," Willimon thought sarcastically.

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