

Simple booklet has helped thousands

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

In 1958, while an assistant at St. Ann's Parish in Hornell, Father Vincent Collins, who had a popular literary flair, wrote the script of *Acceptance*. He had a faithful parishioner and a Legionnaire of Mary type the script and mimeograph it. It was used for local distribution for two years. Father Collins wanted a publisher for his script, but it is hard to break in without any previous publication. However, in 1960 Abbey Press of St. Meinrad, Ind., agreed to print 10,000 copies. Father Collins thought if it would reach 10,000 people, that would do a lot of good. The latest printing, in 1988, has reached over four million copies.

He later published two more pamphlets, *Grief and Partnership*, and a paper book, *Me, Myself, and You*, which is an extension of the theme of *Acceptance*.

What is the genius of this 24-page booklet? It doesn't say anything we don't already know. But somehow it says it in a simple way that it strikes the needling cord of hundreds of thousands. Here are some excerpts.

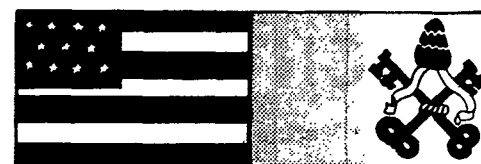
"Sooner or later, everyone arrives at a point where life seems to have become too big to cope with. Life is never really too much for us, but it can seem to be. When this happens, we have to get life back in focus. We have lost our perspective, but it can be regained.

"...That big bogey-man, Life, can be cut down to his real size. Life is only this place, this time and these people right here and now. This you can handle — at least today.

"But my life is just one problem after another!" Of course it is — that's life.

"I don't know how it is with you, but it took me a long time to realize that at least some of these problems were of my own making. For instance, I thought that it was my duty to solve other people's problems, arbitrate their disputes, and show them how to live their lives. I was hurt when they rejected my unsolicited advice. I finally learned that you cannot help people unless they really need help, are willing to be helped, and want you to help them, and ask you to help them. Even then, you can only help them to help themselves.

"I caused myself a lot of unnecessary grief by trying to be 'unselfish,' to think of everybody else first, myself last, and to try to please everybody. But you can't please everybody. You can save yourself a lot of grief by admitting the futility of trying to please everybody, or trying to please somebody who just can't be pleased."



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Acceptance ends with the popular Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change; COURAGE to change the things I can; and WISDOM to know the difference." That means: Living one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time; Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace; Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will; That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next. Amen.

Following Christ requires a lifetime of steadfast commitment

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 14:25-33; (R1) Wisdom 9:13-18; (R2) Philemon 9-10, 12-17.

Chapters 9:51 to 18:14 in the Lucan gospel deal with Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, the city of destiny, where his exodus (suffering, death, resurrection, ascension) was to take place. From there, too, the proclamation of the good news of salvation was to go forth. Consequently, Jesus spent most of his time en route in teaching his disciples to prepare them to be witnesses after his exodus.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus continues his journey, but he doesn't travel alone. A great crowd follows him. As he walks, Jesus talks to them about what it means to follow him.

Jesus used examples to illustrate two aspects of what it means to follow him. One is that of building a tower. This idea of building up in reference to the spiritual life is capsuled in the word "edify" (1 Cor-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

inthians 3:10).

A tower is not built in a day — it takes time. Following Christ is a lifetime endeavor — a gradual work. "We have not wings, we cannot soar; but we have feet to scale and climb/ By slow degrees, by more and more,/ The cloudy summits of our time."

The foundation of a tower is most important; it is hard work, dirty work. In the beginning, following Christ often demands breaking habits, relationships — hard ascetical work. Tower building calls for planning, calculating costs. So, in following Christ, one must plan on encountering a lot of difficulties and suffering, just as Jesus did.

The second example Jesus gave was that of going to battle. Following him is not

only a building process but also a spiritual combat. The enemy king is Satan. As he attacked Jesus at the beginning and all through his public life, Satan is bound to assail us. But as Jesus gained total victory so shall we. No need to sue for peace with this enemy, because the balance of power is all on our side. We have Jesus, Mary, Joseph, our guardian angels, the saints.

St. Polycarp offers an inspiring example of steadfastness in following Christ. He was one of the apostolic fathers — one of early bishops taught by the apostles. Polycarp was taught by St. John the Evangelist.

When Polycarp was 86 years old, he was seized during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius (circa 155 A.D.). At first

the governor of Asia Minor used sugar and cream to lure Polycarp away from Christ. He could not. So kindness turned to violence. Polycarp was threatened by wild beasts. Then by fire. He persevered.

He was burned alive. During the holocaust, a wonderful thing happened: The flames formed themselves around him like the sails of a ship swelled with the wind and gently encircled his body. The odor emitted was not that of burning flesh but of bread being baked — a fragrance like incense. He was pierced with a lance. As he died, a dove came forth.

What about us? "In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood ..." (Hebrews 12:4).

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