

Letters convey thoughts, thanks to relatives, friends

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier Columnist

When Jesus said, "Go, teach all nations," I suppose He knew from His divine knowledge that one day there would be typewriters, duplicating machines and the like, that would spread good and evil, truth and error, joy and sorrow. The printed word has long been an important part of my apostolate. Hence these letters.

To nieces and nephews: With 21 nieces and nephews, and 84 grandnieces and grandnephews, (and the Lord knows how many "great-greats" there are!), how does an uncle — who is not very avuncular — try to let them know that he thinks of them at the altar, and in other ways?

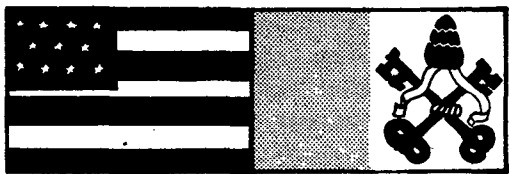
I send 39 subscriptions of *Catholic Digest* and 30 of *Our Sunday Visitor* with the hope that my nieces and nephews will remember me kindly.

Many of you remember the family home at 69 Fulton Street in Auburn. I was born in that house over 81 years ago. When Mr. and Mrs. Michael Cuddy — Irish Catholics to the core — moved into the neighborhood, it was a shock to the purely WASP neighborhoods. But a good neighborly spirit developed.

The last large family gathering was at the funeral of your sainted aunt, Florence Young, Uncle George's widow. That was on Dec. 2, 1988. As Fulton Street was once the family meeting place, 123 South Street has now taken its place.

The hosts now are Judge Jim Cuddy and his wife, Laila. She is a Curtin from Scranton, and has a brother who is a holy Jesuit. Jim and Laila met in Washington when he was a law student at Georgetown, and she a student at Trinity College.

In the February issue of *Catholic Digest* there is a good article on Dorothy Day, who



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

I think was a genuine saint. Another article, "A Bar Mitzvah for St. Columbkille" is touching. The periodical is light and has something for everyone.

Of *Our Sunday Visitor*, one nephew told me: "I was teaching CCD, and found it a good supplement for my class. In fact the text we had was pretty vapid, so the OSV gave substance."

Well, Happy New Year to all of you, and kindly remember your ancient uncle ...

Freedom carries choice between life and death

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier Columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 5:17-37; (R1) Sirach 15:15-20; (R2) 1 Corinthians 2:6-10.

Comic Flip Wilson, through his character "Geraldine," made famous the expression "the devil made me do it!"

Geraldine must never have read Sirach (R1). Three times in the first three verses, Sirach uses the word "choose" — underscoring the theme that we are free to choose. Since we are free, we are responsible for our actions. "No man does God command to sin."

In the gospel Jesus sets before us good and evil. The gospel begins a new section of the Sermon on the Mount. It presents Jesus as the fulfiller of the Law and the

A post-Christmas letter of thanks to many: In 1925, when I was a senior at Auburn Academic High School, we had Florence Webster for English.

As graduation grew near, she gave us a strong talk epitomized thus: "If anyone gives you a gift — even if it is a single rose — be sure to express your thanks. It can be by note, or speaking directly to the person. But you *must* express your thanks."

In my innocence, I was wondering who would be sending me a single rose.

Now that Christmas is nearly a month past, let me thank each one of you who sent a gift for Christmas. Gifts included sweets, juices, fruits, nuts, books and handkerchiefs; and also cash and checks enclosed in beautiful Christmas cards.

To all of you for all of these, I give my sincere thanks. Everything was shared (excepting the handkerchiefs) so all gifts ac-

complished a double good.

This should please Webster, who was a WASP to the core (but an excellent teacher to whom I remain grateful).

And it pleases me to be sincerely grateful to you.

A light note to cheer your day. Last week the phone rang about 10 p.m. at our St. Alphonsus rectory, which is the home of eight priests — five retired but still active. I answered with a cheerful, "St. Alphonsus!"

An astonished male voice said, "Who?" which reminded me that when I was with the Air Force in Casablanca in 1955, I answered the phone in the office, saying, "Chapel." A voice said disgustedly, "Oh, hell!"

"We're trying to keep people out of there!" I interjected.

Then he hung up.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Prophets.

Jesus speaks, not to those in conflict with Himself, but to those whom He had called "blest," "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world." He is inviting them to enter His Kingdom. But they won't unless they go beyond the letter of the Law.

Jesus draws six contrasts. The first four (on murder, adultery, divorce and oaths) are treated in this Sunday's gospel; the last two (on retaliation and love of enemies) are in next Sunday's gospel.

Each contrast begins with "you have heard ...," then Jesus gives the Mosaic Law. But He reveals He is greater than Moses by modifying the Law itself on His own authority: "What I say to you is ..."

The pattern is you must not only not do this (murder, lust, hate), but you must also do this: for Jesus morality must proceed from the heart. Law touches only the external action; Jesus' Law addresses the heart.

Thus Jesus forbids not only murder, but also the evilness of heart that can lead to murder. He forbids not only adultery, but also the looks and desires that can lead to adultery. He forbids not only oaths, but the lying in every day speech that makes oaths necessary.

In a word, Jesus deepens and radicalizes the Law. We see the pattern of "not only ... but also." As for the other three contrasts on divorce, retaliation, and hatred of enemies, Jesus revokes the letter of the Law and we see the pattern of "not this ... but that."

Thus He forbids divorce. The exceptive clause "Lewd conduct is a separate case" is not a loophole for divorce. The clause is better translated "unless the marriage is unlawful."

Lewd conduct refers to an incestuous marriage, for instance, between a son and a stepmother. Such marriages are not marriages at all; therefore separation in such an instance is not an exception to His ab-

solute prohibition of divorce.

"Before man are life and death, whichever he chooses shall be given him," Sirach said. That seems like a pointless remark, doesn't it? Who in his right mind would choose death?

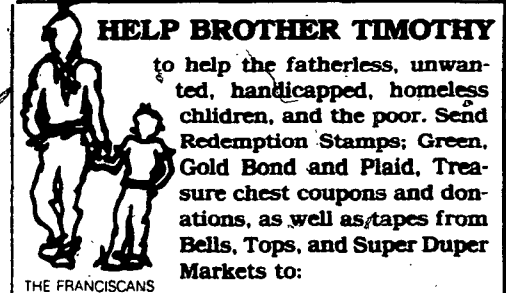
Put like that, it can sound pointless. But when we remember that it is in the personal choices we make each day that we are gradually choosing life or death, it may not sound so stupid.

Life is a game of checkers. As your moves determine the outcome of the game, so your choices determine the outcome of your life.

William James said this about the effects of choices on life: Sow a thought and reap an act; Sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.

These are the choices Jesus is speaking about in the gospel. He tells us virtue must go beyond the letter of the Law. What we say and what we do must express what is in our hearts.

That is what Jesus means when He speaks of anger and lust in our hearts, and of our yes meaning yes and our no meaning no. We have the choice: life or death.



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Society sets up fund for St. Joseph's Park

ROCHESTER — The Landmark Society of Western New York has established the William E. Lee Fund, a tribute to Lee's leadership role in the restoration of St. Joseph's Park.

The fund will raise money to support

Dr. Lawrence to address renewed Nestle boycott

ROCHESTER — Dr. Ruth Lawrence, professor of pediatrics at the University of Rochester, will address issues surrounding Nestlé boycott at a lecture on Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 7:30 p.m. The talk will take place at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St.

Sponsored by Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, Church Women United, and the Y.W.C.A., the talk will explore possible strategies for reactivating local support for the boycott of Nestlé and American Home Products products and services. The boycott was started because of the companies' methods of promoting breast-milk substitutes in Third World nations.

musical performances and community programs, and to provide landscaping for St. Joseph's Park, which is located at 108 Franklin St., downtown.

St. Joseph's Park, which is owned by the landmark society, is built on the site of the former St. Joseph's Church — Rochester's oldest Catholic church dating from 1843. It was preserved as an outdoor park after a fire destroyed most of the building in October, 1974.

Lee spearheaded a community movement to create a courtyard park for the remains of the church. He based his plan on the restoration of churches in post-war Europe and the creation of the vest-pocket parks in New York City.

Since its dedication in 1980, St. Joseph's Park has been the site for noontime music and holiday performances.

Contributions to the William E. Lee Fund for St. Joseph's Park may be made to The Landmark Society of Western New York, 130 Spring St., Rochester, N.Y., 14604.

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