

Surgery offers new appreciation for hospital workers

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Three years ago I was troubled with a Zenker's diverticulum. That is the medical term used when a pouch adjoins the esophagus so that some of the food for the esophagus goes into the sack and stays there.

Consequently, it had to be constantly coughed up — a dismal activity for the sufferer and spectators.

My medical doctor in Rochester, Dr. Bernard Farand, sent me to a specialist who said, "It would be good to have it taken care of while you are healthy. But you must decide."

"Well, at 78 I shouldn't be around much longer, so why have the operation?" I thought. After three years I was still here.

In February, after reading one of my favorite *On the Right Side* columns that said, "Do it now. There is danger in delay!" I phoned Rochester from Auburn and got the office of Dr. Jose Mijangos.

"I should like a date for surgery," I said.

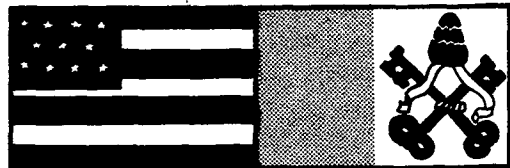
"Don't you want to come in and discuss it with the doctor?" the person on the other end of the line said.

"No. I talked with him three years ago. Just make an appointment for the surgery," I asked.

Two days before St. Patrick's Day, I arrived at Rochester General's cardiothoracic afflictions department. Four nurses and aides were preparing me for 2:30 p.m. surgery — which eventually took place at 4:45 p.m. — when the charge nurse stopped at the door.

She looked at me and exclaimed, "Oh God! He's a priest!" After expressing her disaffection from mean priests and the church, she said cheerfully, "We'll take good care of you, honey."

With such a woman of uninhibited hon-



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

esty I was confident I was in good hands.

When Archbishop Sheen named me the chaplain at Hornell's St. James Mercy Hospital in 1966, he said, "Father, teach your patients to offer their sufferings as prayers in union with the passion of our Blessed Lord. Suffering is the greatest prayer."

I am no hero and dread pain, so anticipating the coming surgery I prayed, "Blessed Lord, a miserable few days are coming. I do not ask for suffering, but just the grace to accept what will be my lot. I offer all for a certain seminarian who could

do great good for your glory and for your church. Watch over him, dear Lord."

On the following worst days I prayed with some grimness, "Lord at this rate, my seminarian should be a bishop."

Not every day was bad, however. On a good day I read a superlative address on priestly formation by Cardinal Ratzinger. It was given in January to 225 conference participants, including Archbishop Pio Laghi and 63 other bishops, at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. I have never read a better presentation of what is expected of priests and of men preparing for the priesthood.

Here is a key segment of the address: "The priest's task, over and above this, is to bring and hold together in the community of faith those who are strangers to one another by reason of origin, education, temperament, and circumstances of life. He has to lead people to reconciliation, to be able to forgive and to forget, to

forbearance and magnanimity."

The address continued, "He must be ready before all else to stand by people in their tribulations ... How should he do all this, if he himself has not learned it first of all? Why does it seem so farfetched to practice the art of renunciation, of self-mastery, of inner freedom from our addictions?" (p. 48).

My departure came after eight days. My experiences in the hospital gave me a great appreciation for the skill of doctors and nurses, and for the multitude and variety of people involved in hospital care.

On the first morning, for example, a girl set my breakfast on the tray over the bed and said, "Here's breakfast. Now say grace!"

I was humbly shocked at the number of people who sent cards — many with a dollar bill "for the African missions." It proves the old adage that "you're never too old to learn."

World's most often-described death was Jesus'

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 26:14-27, 66; (R1) Isaiah 50:4-7; (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.

Whenever a famous person dies, especially by violent means, much is written. The tragic assassination of President John F. Kennedy prompted a torrent of words, books, articles and speeches. It is said that President Kennedy now ranks third among famous men in the amount of material printed about his death.

The second ranking goes to Abraham Lincoln, and first place goes to Jesus. The death of Jesus has prompted more written words than the death of any other person in the world.

Seven hundred and forty years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah wrote about Him. He called Him God's "suffering servant." Suffering

because he was beaten, buffeted and spit upon. Servant because He did not rebel at His role, but with flint-like determination He embraced suffering "knowing that I should not be put to shame."

After Jesus had suffered and died, Paul reflected upon it and extolled His obedience — even when it meant death on a cross. Wherefore God exalted Him highly.

The gospel tells the story of His sufferings and death.

Each Passion Sunday, the church reads the Passion story as told either by Matthew (Cycle A), Mark (Cycle B), or Luke (Cycle C). Every Good Friday, however, she reads the Passion story as narrated by St. John.

Ask two people's opinions of a mutual friend, and you will get two descriptions that sound different, but are both accurate. By looking at your friend from both perspectives, you get a better picture than one perspective would yield.

So one side of Our Lord's Passion is presented by the synoptics and another by St. John. Both give us a better perspective of the Passion story.

John presents Jesus in the Passion as a King who is in total control of the situation. He commands soldiers to let His apostles go, and they obey. He reprimands the high priest's flunky who struck Him in the face. He judges Pilate. The crowning with thorns for John merely symbolizes the crowning of Christ as King.

Matthew, Mark and Luke, however, tell a different story. Unlike John's Jesus, whose kingship is acknowledged by Pilate in three languages, Matthew's Lord receives recognition only at the end of the story, when a Roman centurion declares, "Clearly this was the son of God!" This



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

conversion comes only after Jesus' total abandonment.

One of the saddest scenes in the gospel is Matthew's garden scene. The disciples of Jesus fall asleep three times while Jesus prays. All desert Him: Judas betrays Him, and Peter denies Him with oaths and curses. From the cross Jesus cries, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Why this suffering and death of Jesus? Because He loved us so much. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son" (John 3:16). And the Son so loved us, He gave His life.

I asked Jesus, "How much do you love me?"

And Jesus said, "This much," and He stretched out His arms and died.

Series offers discussion on post-abortion issues

ROCHESTER — Women with concerns following an abortion are invited to a five-week series offering support, discussion and education. Known as PAST — Post Abortion Support for Today and Tomorrow — the group will be led by Sister Sheila Brody, SSJ, Phyllis Collier, R.N., and Kathie Quinlan, R.N.

Meetings will begin after six to eight participants have expressed interest. Times and dates will be determined. The cost is \$20, but scholarships are available.

Those interested in participating in the series can call Collier at 716/275-8892.

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