

African churches can use what is overlooked here

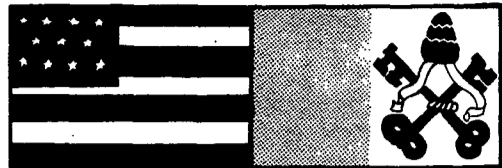
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Father Jerry Aman, SJ, a graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School, is a Jesuit priest now serving in Nigeria. This country, which is located just above the middle of West Africa, is the most populated African nation with about 100,000,000 souls.

Father Aman is on his third assignment in Nigeria. The Jesuits are strong for giving their men well-rounded experiences. A month ago, I sent Father Aman a check — donations from friends — but I forgot to endorse it. He returned it to be endorsed, with an edifying letter. Here are excerpts.

"We missionaries tend to be great beggars, so pardon me if I ask you to keep an eye out for some particular needs... I'd like to try to negotiate with you for a good price on a few Archbishop Sheen tapes. I haven't seen his cassettes over here at all, but a couple of his books have been very popular. So I'd like to try some of the tapes. I'm sure they'll be very helpful to our people."

Comment: When Fathers Heisel and Wohlrab and myself visited Bishop



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Raphael Ndingi in Kenya in 1983, I gave him some Sheen tapes. Later he wrote: "The ideas in Archbishop Sheen's conferences I incorporate into my own conferences for sisters and priests and the laity. They are invaluable. They are a veritable spiritual gold mine. I would like more cassette tapes for our priests and sisters."

In addition to the Sheen tapes, Father Aman asked that I watch out for other needs. "(O)n your travels to various churches could you keep your eye open for an old sacramentary with the Gregorian notation for parts of the Mass? Also, if you see any tabernacles, maybe in a church that has been redecorated, I could use either a small

one for our new community in Ibadan or a larger one for the church here. Or if you see any statue of Mary in a storeroom someplace — especially if it's three feet tall or bigger — we could really use one in the church here. We're sending over a shipment from New York to Nigeria later this year, so large objects I collect I can include in that shipment. I warned you I've become a beggar. But when I see the great use to which our people put things that are overlooked or neglected in the States, I lose all shame in asking..."

Comment: While our churches are discarding many sacramentals, Africa is begging for what they can't afford. If any parishes have such articles, why not donate them to Father Aman?

Back to his letter: "As with the sisters throughout the world, our sisters do tremendous work, especially in catechetics for the poor and the sick. They are just starting to get involved in education again after the government took over all mission schools back 25 years ago. Private education is beginning to be encouraged again, but it's hard to start from scratch again. We Jesuits are hoping to get

involved in secondary education within the next couple of years. There's a tremendous need for an educated Catholic leadership. The whole key to the future of Nigeria is leadership. We're entering into a new era of democratic government after several years of military rule. The only way it will succeed is good leadership. I would love to see our people on the forefront."

Comment: How grateful we Americans must be for the dedication of the sisters for generations. With our churches and Catholic schools closing and vocations to the sisterhoods and priesthood still on the wane in the United States, it is heartening to know the sisterhoods, seminaries and Catholic schools in Africa are booming.

Another Kenyan will soon come to the Southern Tier to join Father Ernest Bulinda, who is currently living at St. Mary's Church in Elmira while he studies at Elmira College.

The priest will live at St. Cecelia's Church — which is part of the cluster known as Elmira's East Side Catholic Parishes — under the tutelage of Father David Gramkee. Thank God we can help the burgeoning Church in Africa.

Spiritual lives suffer because of hesitation, fear

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 10:37-42; (R1) 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16; (R2) Romans 6:3-4, 8-11.

The first reading about the prophet Elisha illustrates the gospel words of Jesus: "He who welcomes a prophet because he bears the name of prophet receives a prophet's reward."

Life consists of many relationships. The quality of relationships determine what we are. If they are one-sided — always taking and never giving — then we die. We lose even the capacity to receive what God wants to give us.

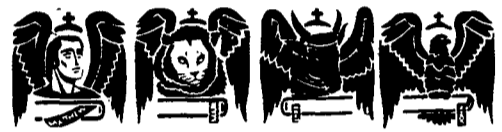
Generosity, a spirit of giving, like the rich woman to Elisha, is the precondition for growth and sanctity. "Follow me," Christ advised. His life was one of sacrifice and total dedication. Too often our spiritual lives suffer because they are marked by hesitation, calculation and fears. Our spiritual loves often lack total commitment, self-surrender, and abandonment to the will of God.

The second reading is the same as for the Easter Vigil. Although the Easter Season is ended, the Easter message lives on — namely, death is the door to life. In baptism we die to Christ — immersion was a dramatic symbol of our death and burial. But coming out of the baptismal waters also signified resurrection to new life.

New life means death to sin. Death to sin does not mean sinlessness. Rather, it means striving to walk in the footsteps of Christ. It implies forgiveness of the past and help for the present.

A German girl advertised a recital. She falsely claimed to be a student of the Hungarian composer-pianist Franz Liszt. Guess what? Liszt showed up for the recital. The poor woman became desperate. If Liszt exposed her publicly, her career would be forever destroyed.

Determined to take her medicine, she went to Liszt and confessed. Noting her humiliation and sincerity, the composer decided not to destroy her. He said he felt she was sorry and would not do such a



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

thing again. Then he had her play, and he made some suggestions. Her rehabilitation was complete when Liszt played the closing piece at his "students" recital.

What a magnanimous man Liszt was! Yet our Lord does much more than this for each and every sinner at each and every confession. He asks no thanks, but only a change: not to sin, but to walk in the new path of life. Thus we pray in the Opening Prayer of the Mass: "You call your children to walk in the light of Christ, free us from darkness..."

What is the darkness but our personal weaknesses and whims. Raynald III, a 14th century duke in what is now Belgium, was grossly overweight. Captured in a revolt by his younger brother, he was imprisoned in a room that was built around him. The room had no bars on the windows — not even a locked door — though the door was slightly smaller than normal.



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Still, because of his size, he could not squeeze through to freedom. He was too large. There was still hope. All he had to do to be a free man was go on a diet. His brother even offered to restore his title and wealth as soon as he was able to leave the room.

His brother knew Raynald's weakness, though. Each day he had sent to Raynald's room a variety of delicious foods. Instead of growing thinner, he grew fatter. He was a prisoner not of locks, or bars, or of iron gates. He was a prisoner of his own appetite.

It is sad to see people enslaved by their own weaknesses: alcohol, cocaine, nicotine, chocolates or sexual addiction. Inability to keep these strong drives under control has broken hearts, families and lives. And yet, it is precisely out of this darkness that Christ has called us and empowered us to walk in His marvelous light.

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EDWIN SULEWSKI
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Grief... Is help available?

Grief is the name of a complex combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. It occurs when we lose someone or something very important to us.

It is a natural reaction to the realization that we are not all powerful, that we ourselves are mortal.

Everyone deals with grief in a different way.

GRIEF RESOURCE INFORMATION FORUM and the PASTORAL CARE CENTER at Rochester General Hospital jointly sponsor a monthly bereavement group called WORKING THROUGH LOSS.

The group provides information, education and peer support for adults recovering from the death of a significant person in their lives.

The group meets the first Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the E-4 conference room at Rochester General Hospital.

Easy-to-follow signs are posted upon entering the hospital from the parking ramp.

Open to all adults. There are no dues or fees. You may attend as long as you choose.

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