

Order may be bulwark for new century

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Three books have greatly influenced my life. The first is the Bible, sections of which all Catholics came to know well from the repetition of important scriptural sections during the Tridentine Mass year after year.

The second book is entitled *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471). This book has been the most read Christian spiritual book after the Bible. The work was read daily by Ignatius Loyola, and was a favorite of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley.

In addition, the book was appreciated by

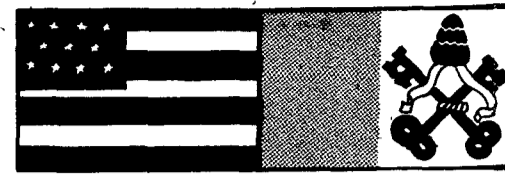
the French positivist, Auguste Comte. It was also the daily spiritual fare of the last four popes. *The Imitation of Christ*, however, is not a favorite of contemporary Catholic modernists who have made sociology and psychology a substitute for grace and the supernatural.

The third book which has influenced my life is *Saint Ignatius Loyola* by Francis Thompson, the English author of *The Hound of Heaven*, a superb spiritual poem. If we think the world is in trouble today, the life and times of Loyola and the early Jesuits of the 16th century make current times seem almost vibrant.

In our own country unfortunately,

Catholic dissidents dispense information — either from the pulpit or in print — that confuses Catholics who want to be faithful to Catholic truth. But this hardly compares with religious chaos of the 16th century, a century which also produced Ignatius and the early Jesuits.

The July 1 issue of the *Syracuse Post Standard* had a good feature about three brothers: Peter, James and Edward Hopkins of Cazenovia. Their father is a lawyer, and a sister — who taught at St. Thomas the Apostle School in Rochester — is currently a Dominican nun in Nashville, Tenn. Both their mother and father set standards of stability and devotion.



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

The three brothers belong to the Legionnaires of Christ, the fastest growing religious order in the Catholic Church. The order was founded 45 years ago in a basement in Mexico City by a 20-year-old seminarian, Marcial Maciel. Today, the order has 219 priests and more than 1,200 seminarians. The training and discipline is almost identical to that of the early Jesuits.

The order is often criticized by some as being too conservative and austere. Others say that members show too much devotion to the pope and the magisterium. Nevertheless, they are still able to prosper. On January 3, 1991, the pope will ordain 50 Legionnaires to the priesthood, including the three Hopkins brothers.

In 1983, I visited the order's headquarters in Rome and was impressed by the cheerfulness and comradeship there. My friend, Father Al Hauser, a McQuaid Jesuit High School graduate and a former secretary for the bishop of Ogdensburg, N.Y., has just returned to the states after two years of studying the Scriptures in Rome.

He was extremely impressed with the Legionnaires, whom he visited several times. He specifically mentioned their spirituality and their ability to learn.

The 16th century was chaotic for the church, but it produced the early Jesuits as a bulwark and a spearhead. The Legionnaires of Christ seem to have a similar vocation for the 20th and 21st centuries.

Gospel distinguishes the wheat from the weeds

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 13:24-43; (R1) Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; (R2) Romans 8:16-27.

About 100 years before Christ, some unknown Jew in Alexandria, Egypt, authored the book of Wisdom. To lend authority to his message, he claimed it was Solomon who wrote it. Solomon's wisdom was proverbial.

The book was meant to reassure Jews living in Alexandria that God rewards the faithful and that Jewish wisdom was superior to the new Hellenistic philosophies and advances in knowledge that were luring so many away from their faith.

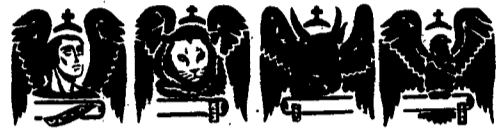
The Wisdom passage in Sunday's reading explains God's patience in the Exodus and in the conquest of Canaan. He used 10 plagues in Egypt and took so long to conquer Canaan in order to offer both Egyptians and Canaanites a chance to repent and turn to God. God is so powerful that He can take His time.

Now the gist of the parable of the weeds and the wheat in the Gospel is likewise patience: "Let them (the weeds and the wheat) grow together until harvest."

God again can afford to be patient, because, as the other two parables (the mustard seed and the yeast) teach: God can do a lot with a little, just give Him time!

Exemplifying the expansive force of the Gospel, the mustard seed grows to include sinners from all over the world. On the contrary, the yeast, leavening three measures of flour — enough to provide for 100 people — signifies the power of the Gospel to purify and to transform and better society.

But why does God make the weeds? They seem good for nothing. In his piece, *The Hound of Heaven*, Francis Thompson likened God's love to a weed: "Ah! is Thy love indeed/A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed, ..." You just can't kill a weed; just like you can never kill God's love for each one of us. If a weed serves only to ex-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

emply that point then it would justify its existence.

Weeds, however, teach us further that God permits the same thing to happen with human beings. Most people try to be good wheat! However, there are always the weeds — men and women who make no effort to be good wheat, good persons. Although outwardly they don't seem bad, inwardly they are evil; in fact, they may even seem beautiful, like the blue blossoms of cornflower weed.

God plants the wheat, good people. The devil plants the weeds, wicked people. God lets both grow until judgment day — the day of separation.

Since God is just and since no one is totally evil, He often permits the wicked to prosper to reward them on earth for the little good they may have done. Sometimes

He permits the good to suffer on earth for the few wrongs they may have done and to make their crown and joy even greater after the judgment.

Yet there is one difference between the weeds and the wheat. The weeds cannot change, but wicked people can. Our responsibility is not to destroy evil in the world and in the church. That was what the servants wanted to do in the parable. What God asks of us is to be patient, even with the evildoer. In addition, Our Lady constantly pleads with us to pray for the conversion of sinners.

She once said to Father Gobbi, when he asked what he was to tell parents bemoaning the lapse of their children from the faith: "Tell them to pray the rosary daily for their children and I will take care of them." We can do something about the weeds — not to uproot them — but to change them into wheat by praying for the conversion of sinners.

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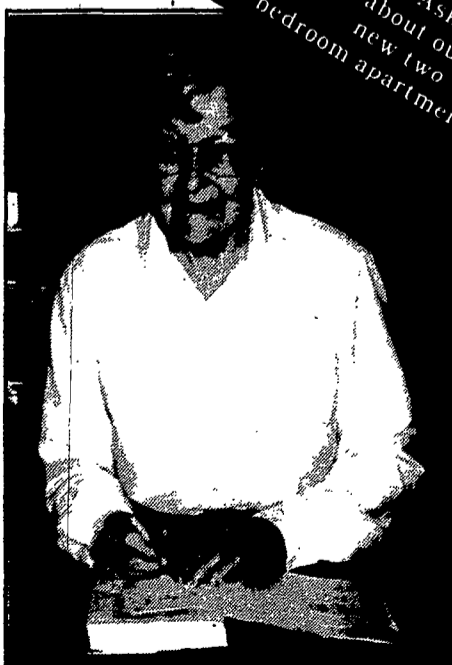
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