

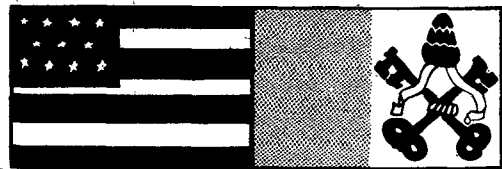
Priests receive special call to serve God and others

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

In June, 1935, I was a newly ordained priest assigned to Father Joseph Curtin in Clyde. At the same time, Father John Guy arrived at St. Stephen's Church, Geneva, to become the pastor of Montezuma and Port Byron.

Since we were clerical neighbors — we were only 15 miles apart — I stopped in to welcome him. He seemed so venerable and I so young and diffident. I racked my brains to find something to begin the conversation. In my innocence I remarked: "I said Mass in Lyons for Father Dissett this morning. The Mass wine was strange. It tasted like choke berries."

I do not know to this day whether he was pulling my leg or serious, but he shot back tartly: "The Mass is neither the time nor the place to be sating one's passions." After embarrassing myself, I made a quick departure. I have since regaled our mutual friends many times with this first meeting,



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

and I have enjoyed the incisiveness of his retort with every telling.

Yet for all the humor in the remark, I think there lies the key to the understanding of the mind and life of Father Guy. He was first and always a priest. He also loved the Mass, and revered the priesthood.

To him — and to most of us who are priests — the service to God and man radiates from the Mass. During Mass, Christ continues to offer Himself mystically in the Eucharist, uniting the congregation and the whole church in the unity of intercession, adoration and service to the

Eternal Father.

The priesthood is not a man-made office. It is the invention of God: "Every high priest is taken from among men and ordained for men in the things that pertain to God" (Heb. 5:1). The priest is certainly a man among them. But he is a man set apart so that he may faithfully embody the presence of Christ among men.

Concerned about suffering, sorrow, sin, poverty, loneliness of people, the compassionate priest embodies the compassionate Christ. He is concerned about the wrongs and the discordances that need attention now. That is why, for example, the priesthood rises up in vocal horror against the killing of unborn children. This is a monstrosity.

Vatican II reminds the world that the priest is the man of God. "The purpose which the priests pursue in their ministry and by their life is the glory of God, the Father, in Christ. That glory consists in

this: that in performing the works of the ministry for men, they devote all this energy to increase the glory of God and man's purpose in the divine life." Hence St. Paul writes: "People must think of us as servants of Christ, stewards entrusted with the Mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1).

Many years ago, the theologian Karl Rahner wrote to priests: strike out boldly along new paths in pastoral zeal. But if the paths do not lead in the end to the altar of Christ, to prayer, to the confessional and to final salvation, they are not the paths of Christ, the Good Shepherd leading to life."

Of the priesthood, Lacordaire wrote: "To be a member of every family, yet belong to none; to teach and instruct; to pardon and console; to bless and be blessed forever; O God, what a life, and it is thine O priest of God."

Why so few men are seeking to become priests of God is a constant puzzle to me.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

sandpaper. When he was finished, they understood that all of them were important to the Master Carpenter's work.

And so are we. All of us are important in the eyes of God — important to Him and for His work. It matters not how long we work, but how well.

We never have to compare ourselves with others. Nor prove we are somebody. We don't have to tear down others to build ourselves up. We are loved by God, each and every one of us — infinitely loved. That ought to be enough.

All who work for God are equal in the Lord's eyes

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 20:1-16; (R1) Isaiah 55:6-9; (R2) Philippians 1:20-24, 27.

The grape harvest in Palestine ripens toward the end of September. The rains follow close on its heels. The harvest is ruined if it is not gathered in before the rains. Harvesting is a frantic race against time. Any worker is welcomed, even if for only an hour.

In the parable, the men standing in the marketplace were not idlers. The marketplace was the equivalent of an employment office. A man would come there with his tools first thing in the morning, waiting for someone to hire him.

Such hired workers lived precariously. A day without work meant that he and his family would go hungry. Even slaves were better off because they were assured a daily meal. Meanwhile, the hired worker was at the mercy of chance employment.

The Jewish day began at 6 a.m. and ended at 6 p.m. The master of the vineyard came out at dawn, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and late afternoon.

The lesson of the parable is that God invites everyone into His kingdom: some at an early hour and some late. Some are born Catholics, some are converted; some are converted early in life, some late; and some at the last hour, like the good thief. Thus the city of God in the book of Revelation has 12 gates: three facing east, three north, three south and three west. Those who enter the kingdom at the dawn of life enter the east gate; those who enter at the setting of life come in through the west

gate.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, God said (R1).

The master of the vineyard exemplifies the great compassion of God. He gave work and a day's wage. He also went beyond justice, as if to teach that every man has a right to work and every worker has a right to a living family wage.

In the parable there were two classes: one that made a contract (so much pay for so much work); and the second which just wanted to work and said nothing of wages. The sole concern of the first class is what do I get? The sole concern of the second class is I want to work. There are also two types of Catholics: those who serve God for what they can get and those who serve God out of love. That is why the last shall be the first and the first last.

Underlying the parable is the basic human emotion of envy. "Are you envious because I am so generous?" Paul said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:16). Envy inverts Paul's words and rejoices when one

weeps and weeps when one rejoices. Envy is sadness about the good fortune of another.

Isn't that stupid. There is a legend that one day all the tools in a carpenter's shop were in a terrible argument. They wanted to make the hammer leave because he made too much noise. The hammer protested that if he must leave, then so must the plane because all his work is superficial. The plane replied that if he goes, the sandpaper should also go, since she is always rubbing the wrong way.

In the middle of the argument, the Carpenter of Nazareth entered the shop. He put on his apron and began to work, building a pulpit to tell the world about God's love. He picked up the hammer and used it, then the plane, and finally the

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