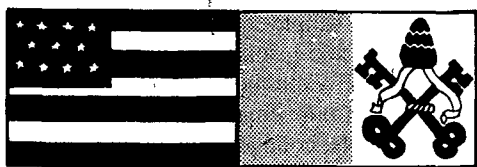


Reverence for sacrament still thrives in the diocese

By Father Paul J. Cuddy
Courier columnist

From a dejected diocesan: "None of the priests today ever mention sin. I never hear a priest encourage his parishioners to remember the souls in purgatory. Our pastor walks back and forth in front of the tabernacle, and never once has genuflected. What an example he is setting for the altar boys."

Comment: Many Catholics become disappointed because of their own convictions and traditions and because of their concept of obedience to the church's instructions. A young friend of mine who has a degree in music from Eastman, a degree in engineering from the University of Rochester and is a pilot in the Naval Air Force — he's no slouch intellectually or spiritually —



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

wrote to me that the liturgy of the Mass is so crass in the diocese in which he lives that that he drives 50 miles to another diocese to attend Mass.

The one oasis of normalcy for him is the naval base chapel, where the naval chaplains celebrate Mass in accordance with the Catholic Church.

A friend from another diocese wrote: "Oh, for a return to reverence in the Mass.

Our priest is theologically OK, but he 'horses around' at Mass."

I asked him, "What do you mean by 'horsing around?'"

"He goes in for childish chumminess, with cutesy remarks during the Mass. He's a good man, but I wish someone would get hold of him and straighten out his Mass celebration," he said.

The priest is probably a good man who is evidently trying to be "relevant" today, not realizing how repulsive banalities in the Mass are to people who have retained a deep reverence for that holy liturgy.

Why any priest should be silent about praying for the souls in purgatory is a mystery. It would serve such a man right to be parked there a bit longer because of such neglect. I have heard that Bishop Ber-

nard McQuaid had such devotion to the souls in purgatory that he refused to take out fire insurance for St. Bernard's Seminary, entrusting its care to the poor souls.

And he never had a fire there. Purgatory is a defined doctrine, which must be accepted by any who claim to be Catholics. According to The Council of Trent: "There is a purgatory, and the souls detained there are assisted by the suffrages of the faithful but especially by the most acceptable sacrifice of the altar."

That a priest does not genuflect when passing in front of the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved may be because he has arthritis or a case of bad knees. Of course, it could also mean that his devotion to the Sacrament has become tepid.

The Sacrament has been given a lot of down-grading since Vatican II, not because of Vatican II, but because of the humanist thrust fermenting in much of the church and the weakening of the sense of the transcendent.

Not all is negative, however. Some parishes have developed quite an increase in eucharistic devotion. Forty Hours are observed in some parishes in our diocese, especially outside Rochester. Eucharistic days are observed in many churches, and even Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament has been revived.

The fact that we have to close our churches during the day because of vandals and thieves has hurt visitation to the Sacrament. Recently, however, I celebrated Mass at St. Francis Church, Auburn. When I got there 30 minutes ahead of time, nearly a hundred people were already worshipping the Lord in the Tabernacle.

Pluses and minuses exist in the present Catholic milieu. Let's not forget the pluses in our dissatisfaction with the minuses.

God takes initiative in calling people to vocations

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 1:35-42; (R1) 1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19; (R2) 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20.

Besides the Christmas and paschal cycles of the liturgical year, there remain 33 or 34 Sundays called "The Sundays of the Year."

The first of these Sundays is the baptism of the Lord and the last is the feast of Christ the King. This year, five of these Sundays come before Lent, the rest come after Pentecost.

During these five Sundays, the Gospels speak of the baptism of Our Lord and his early ministry. The theme of next Sunday's readings is that of vocation: the call of Samuel (R1) and the calls of John and Andrew (R3).

God made this world. Like any other maker, God had a purpose for everything he made and everyone he created. God calls everyone to fulfill that purpose for which he created them. We label this call "vocation."

When a person in Scripture had a great job to do, his call by God was recorded in history. For instance, Samuel was the last of the judges of Israel. He began the prophetic movement in Israel and inaugurated the monarchy.

John and Andrew began the new Israel. Hence their calls are recorded. Their calls can teach us much about our vocations in life.

First of all, vocations are calls from God. He always takes the initiative.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Samuel was sound asleep, not even thinking about God, when he was called. John and Andrew were merely tagging behind Jesus, not knowing really what to do. It was Jesus who turned around and said, "What are you looking for?" Jesus took the initiative. It is always that way with God because he seeks us and initiates the call.

Secondly, God's call is not always clear and distinct. Samuel mistook the voice of God for that of Eli. John and Andrew needed the Baptizer to point out that Jesus was truly the Word of God. Samuel, John and Andrew needed help from outside themselves. God's will has to be clarified for us. That is one of the great purposes of the church, a Catholic home, and a spiritual director.

Thirdly, God's call ordinarily comes early in life — Samuel was only 12-years-old; John and Andrew were about 20. And God's call demands an answer. Both readings show us the kind of people who are likely to respond positively to God's call.

There are youths, such as Samuel, who are courteous to the aged, considerate of weaknesses and devoted to God's sanctuary. Youths, such as John and Andrew, really wanted to find God. They were scar-

chers: "we have found the Messiah," Andrew tells his brother Simon Peter. Had they not been searching, they would not have found God.

What is our vocation? To what are we called by God? A diversity of ministries exist in the church. Some people are called to be priests, some to be religious, others to be husbands and wives, single or unmarried. But all of us are called to one common vocation by our baptism and confirmation. We are called to bring others to God.

Samuel was called to bring the whole nation back to God. John and Andrew were called to bring the whole world to God.

We are called to bring God to those with whom we live, those with whom we work and the entire society in which we move. We are called to do this, not so much by word, as by example, by our living the faith, and by our prayers. Each Mass gives us the word and the bread to enable us to fulfill our vocation.

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