

Thoughts shared with a nephew stationed in the gulf

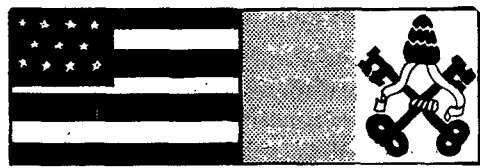
By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Here is a letter I wrote to my Auburn nephew in the Persian Gulf:

"I think of you and so many others who are in the gulf war, each night in my evening prayers. And I include the Iraqis who I suppose are not happy about the war. All over Lyons — where I am presently serving for Father (Richard) Orlando — I see golden ribbons on trees in the village park, homes, stores and even on St. Michael's Church. The ribbons indicate the support and concern for the men and women in the gulf.

"It's a strange war. The country is pretty well united in support of the objectives of stymying Saddam Hussein. Tonight on the McNeil/Lehrer Report, Robin MacNeil had former vice president (Walter) Mondale on for a lengthy interview.

"I have not held Mondale in much regard since the time he ran for president with running mate Geraldine Ferraro. In the 1984 election, they advocated so many things contrary to Christian morality: abortion, extreme feminist programs and such, but tonight I quite admired his exposition regarding the war. His face seems chubbier. He was impressive, thoughtful,



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

reasonable, honest and calmly earnest.

"While Mondale believes that we should have given the sanctions more time to work, and he is disappointed we got into the war so soon — which is my own opinion — he clearly supports the objectives of President Bush and Congress. He is convinced that Hussein is a megalomaniac who — if allowed to continue unchecked — would be a menacing power in the Middle East.

"Then with trillions, not just millions, but trillions of dollars, he (Saddam) would develop a dreadful weapons system and a mighty army to dominate the Middle East with the megalomaniacal spirit of Hitler.

"In Lyons, Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network can be seen on Geneva Cable System from morning to 6 p.m. each day. I tuned in to watch the network a couple days ago at 5:30 p.m. and

found a civic affairs program called 'Focus.'

"Henry Kissinger was being interviewed by Bishop Philip M. Hannan of Louisiana, and some young woman who is almost as sharp as Barbara Walters. The interview was about the gulf war, and prospects afterward.

"Kissinger, whom I have always regarded respectfully, was on the same wave length as Mondale. The object of the war is freeing the Middle East from the influence and power of Saddam Hussein.

"It seems strange to me that Cable News Network broadcasts constantly covers the gulf war as if it were a football game between the Buffalo Bills and the New York Giants.

"A sad cartoon appeared in the papers recently. It showed an elderly couple comfortably seated in two large over-stuffed chairs, looking at the TV screen. The caption read: 'Let's watch the war,' as if it were a soap opera. I'm afraid that — with the exception of those who have experienced war — a tendency exists to sit comfortably back home and visualize the war on TV.

"But viewers can never get the impact endured by our military men and women:

the boredom for many; the fleas; the excessive heat coming up soon at the Moslem Ramadan; no alcoholic beverages; and no female companionship for the men and vice versa for the women. (Sometime I should like your ideas of women in the military.)

"Viewers also don't know about the exhilaration of bombing crews along with the concomitant nagging dread of being shot down; the constant training toward a ground war; and the loneliness and longing to be with family and friends.

"War is a terrible thing and I often compare it to those TV programs showing animals fighting one another, struggling to survive and to surpass.

"Well, such are the ruminations of your great-uncle. You are one of the few correspondents who write in *extenso*. I once said to your father, 'Andrew writes an essay when he writes a letter, and always interestingly.' Let me know the state of religion among our military. Do you have Mass? Are chaplains available? Is there any apostolic zeal among your fellow men and women? It seems to me that you, as a graduate of Holy Cross, should have the zeal of the Jesuits — at least the early Jesuits — and long to bring your companions closer to Christ and his church.

"Oh, yes. While CNN is a valuable conduit for news from the war zone, many wonder about the valuable information being given to the Iraqi command. It seems like playing poker and showing your hand to the others.

"Also Mr. Rogers warns parents not to expose their children to the dreadful war news on the TV. That will require more discipline than most parents are willing to exercise.

"Well, God bless you and your comrades. Your folks are well, but anxious as are all the families who have loved ones in the Middle East. I know you will write to them faithfully."

Faith in God is sometimes like a leap into the dark

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 9:2-10; (R1) Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18; (R2) Romans 8:31-34.

A house caught fire in the middle of the night. The parents awakened their children and led them out of the burning home. Their five-year-old son, however, slipped away and ran back upstairs to get his toy dog. It wasn't until they were outside that they saw him in a second-story window surrounded by fire and smoke.

The boy's father yelled, "Timmy, jump. I'll catch you."

"But, Daddy, I can't see you," the child cried.

"But I can see you, Timmy," the father answered, "and that is all that matters. Jump!"

Tim then jumped into the safety of his father's arms.

Faith is like a leap into the dark. G.K. Chesterton called faith "going gaily into the dark."

Sunday's readings are about two fathers: Abraham and God the Father; and two sons: Isaac and Jesus.

God the Father asked Abraham to do a most difficult thing, namely, to sacrifice his only son Isaac — whom he most deeply loved. Abraham obeyed without a moment's hesitation. "Ready!" he answered God. For he said, "I believed, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'" (Response).

His faith was rewarded. God spared his son, showing that all he desires of us is the sacrifice of our wills. Once given, then one can "walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living."

God spared Abraham's son, but his love



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

for us was so great that he did not spare his own dearly beloved son. God the Father so loved us he gave his only Son to us. And the son so loved us that he gave his life for us. Greater love than this no one can have.

Why did he make these sacrifices? To teach us to trust in God when he asks sacrifices of us, and to help us realize that to those who love God all things will work together unto good.

Both fathers asked both sons to do a very difficult thing — give their lives in sacrifice. Both sons obeyed. Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice, and Jesus carried the wood of his cross. Isaac was given his life back again, and Jesus was resurrected from the dead. By accepting their sacrifice, Isaac and Jesus reaped incalculable blessings for the entire human race.

I'm sure you heard the story of the man who fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down.

He cried out frantically for help. A voice from above answered, "I will help you. I am the Lord. But do you believe in me?"

"Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can't hang on much longer," the man said.

"That's all right. If you really believe, you have nothing to worry about," the Lord said. "I will save you. Just let go of the branch."

After a momentary pause, the distressed man called out, "Is anyone else up there?"

Isn't this typical. So many say they believe in God but is it often only words?

God the Father said, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Do we? Are we fasting during Lent? Are we giving up excessive drinking? Habitual sins of impurity? Drugs? Do we make the Stations of the Cross? Do we go to the Sunday Mass and daily services, if possible? Are we going to confession regularly? Do we pray the rosary?

Are we listening to our passions? Our own wills? Or to his beloved Son as the Father asked us? He knew what was best for Abraham and Jesus. He knows what is best for us.

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

EDWIN SULEWSKI
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

How do I help the elderly at the time of a funeral?

Death of a loved one is painful. There is a tendency to believe that the elderly adjust more easily because they "should" anticipate the loss. Having more time to prepare does not guarantee that grieving will be easier. The elderly may have fewer resources such as friends, money or good health. Losing a partner or long time friend may mean living life alone at a time when a person may be least able to be independent. Support from family and friends at this time is most important. Being over protective or taking away a person's independence by making decisions for them is not desirable and may be harmful. Help the elderly begin their adjustment by attending the funeral and offering specific help.

We purchase all forms of insurance to protect our family & assets, not because we expect the worst to happen, but to be prepared. Doesn't it make sense then to prepare for what will happen. Let our trained counselors assist you with the many options available in planning for a worry-free future.

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