

# Priest-author asserts church doctrine throughout book

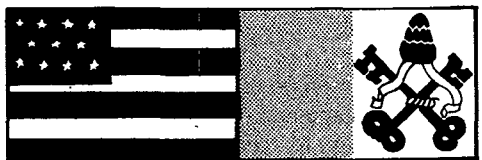
By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

While recently en route from Auburn to Fairport, where I was substituting for Father Robert C. MacNamara at St. John of Rochester Church, I listened to a cassette made in Rome on the occasion of a huge Taize pilgrimage to Pope John Paul II and the Holy See.

I was thrilled with the beautiful singing by thousands of pilgrims. In the middle of the gathering, the pope gave a short paternal talk in French, English, German and Slavic. Remarkably, you could feel the assembly's vibrations of reverence, love and admiration for the pope even from the cassette.

After I got settled in at the rectory, I picked up a small book called *A View from the Steeple*, written by Redemptorist priest Father Joseph Manton. I had met the priest when he gave a parish retreat for Father Frederick W. Bush at Holy Spirit Church in Webster, and remembered how he combined spirituality with a sense of humor.

These two qualities are found throughout Father Manton's book, which is a collec-



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

tion of articles he had written over the years. One article in particular, entitled "Follow the Pope," caught my eye.

About five years ago, I stopped in to see the Trappists Fathers at the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard, and met a young man in his mid-20s at the retreat house. I asked him, "Are you a priest on retreat?"

"No," he replied. "I have finished college and am visiting different religious houses on my motorcycle, considering a vocation."

"Oh. Did you go to a Jesuit College?" I asked.

"Oh, no. I just became a Catholic two years ago," he said. "I never went to any Catholic schools."

"Why did you become a Catholic?" I

asked.

"I was an Episcopalian and there was so much doctrinal dissension there I investigated the Catholic Church, and finally came over," he replied.

"We seem to have enough dissension in the Catholic Church," I grumbled.

"But we have the pope!" he retorted emphatically.

The "Follow the Pope" article begins: "During the 1960s liberal Catholics did not cheer wildly for Pope Paul VI. He had stepped front and center into the spotlight and said some stern things about sacerdotal celibacy and matrimonial contraception, so he was not a popular pope. But John XXIII, when he came on the scene, ah, here was something else! Here was a true forward-looker, a progressive, a modern."

"Was he, though?" the article continued. "John XXIII, warm, genial and portly 'out in front' only in his personal architecture. Actually he was a confirmed traditionalist, a 'rosary Catholic.'" He said the whole 15 decades every day. If you read his *Journey of a Soul* or *Mater et Magistra*, you realize that this man could

never abide any essential change in age-old teaching of the church. What he wanted from Vatican II was simply to present the old truths in a modern package. But when you read some recent Catholic literature you wonder are you reading right. Here writers wonder about the Real Presence, the Virgin Birth, interpret the Resurrection, and even condone pre-marital sex as long as it represents true love. Take the statues out of the churches, bring far-out catechisms in, and if you demur to all of this, you are hopelessly medieval or at least pathetically Tridentine. All this breaking away from the anchored doctrines of the Church in the name of Vatican II.

"During Vatican II the Church was like a ship being overhauled and refitted in dry dock," Father Manton wrote. "The same ship returned to the water with a crashing splash and is still quivering. It will take time to steady itself and sweep forward. Keep in mind that after Vatican II, not because of Vatican II, confessions began falling off, as did conversions, Mass attendance. The once radiant image of the priesthood has dimmed, and its ranks have thinned. Among the laity, particularly the young, there has been much confusion.

"Theologians can suggest; the Church teaches," the article concluded. "Theologians can offer opinions; the Church lays down doctrines. Theologians may present theories; the Church announces truths. Only the Church is the legitimate channel of faith, and only to the Church did Christ say, 'He who hears you, hears Me.' If you want the real doctrine, hold on to the Church and the teaching head of the Church, the Holy Father. In three blunt, simple, straight words: 'Follow the Pope.'"

# Trials and crosses should bring us closer to God

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 3:14-21; (R1) 2 Chronicles 36:14-17, 19-23; (R2) Ephesians 2:4-10.

During the first three Sundays of Lent, the first readings deal with God's covenants with Noah, Abraham and Moses. This Sunday's first reading states that God's people had broken the covenant, which led to the Babylon captivity.

The book of Chronicles was written after the Babylonian captivity — some time between 537 and 400 B.C. A chronicle is a day-by-day record of events. It differs in part from history, which is generally selective, analytical and interpretive. The main concern of the chronicler was the temple and the Davidic line of kings.

For centuries Israel had added "infidelity to infidelity ... and mocked the messengers of God ... and scoffed at his prophets." Jeremiah had warned that the temple would be destroyed and the people would go into exile, "until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths."

Israel had commercialized the Sabbath through greed, just as we today are doing with the Sunday. As a result, the Exile lasted for 49 years — a sabbath of a sabbath of years, seven times seven years (from 587 to 538 B.C.); and the temple remained desolate for 70 years — 10 times a sabbath of years (from 587 to 517 B.C. when the temple was rebuilt).

The lesson of Sunday's readings is that though man is faithless, adding "infidelity to infidelity," God is faithful, "rich in mercy." Because he is rich in mercy, he sent a Cyrus to free his chastened people. Later, he sent his son to save the world.

Redemption is not Jesus trying to change the Father regarding us. God is changeless. He loves us and loves us always. Nothing



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

we do can alter his love.

A man and his wife were taking a Sunday-afternoon drive. He sat behind the steering wheel, and she sat resting against the door of the car. During their conversation, the wife happened to say, "Hubby, when we were courting each other, we used to sit close to each other. Now we sit apart." Her husband answered, "Dearie, I haven't moved."

God never moves from us, it is we who move from God — especially through sin. And still, God loves us, no matter what we do. Like one deeply in love with us, he woos us. We often spurn his invitation to love, as did Israel. Just as often, punishment follows.

God permits punishment, not to destroy us, but to bring us to our senses. A mother spanks her child, not to harm it, but to help the child learn from what is wrong. She doesn't discipline the child to be vindictive because she loves her child.

That was the way the Babylonian captivity worked. It brought tears of repentance: "By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept" — Israel learned repentance through her sufferings.

That is the way our crosses and trials should work in our lives. Instead of rebelling against the crosses of life, and saying, "Why does God do this to me? I've always tried to serve him," the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune should bring us back to God.

Instead of pointing the finger at someone else during time of war — as was the case

in the Middle East — we ought to turn in on ourselves and say, "Be merciful to me a sinner." We ought to go to the sacrament of reconciliation, to Christ hanging on the cross, ready to forgive us just as he did the dying thief.

Those bitten by poisonous serpents, regained their health by looking at the brazen serpent on the tent pole of Moses. Such is the way with the wonderful Sacrament of Penance, which draws out of us the poison of sin and restores us once more to the embrace of God.

We might say that the message of the mid-Lent readings is "go to confession now before Easter."

## THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER



EDWIN SULEWSKI  
FUNERAL DIRECTOR

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