

Donors' generosity stirs reflection on African priests

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

When I read in the papers that Robert B. Wegman made a gift of \$1 million to the Aquinas Institute, my heart sang a triple alleluia.

I then wondered to myself how many prosperous graduates of other Catholic schools have shared their good fortune with their alma mater.

I have held a special admiration for Aquinas since 1946, when Bishop James E. Kearney asked me to be the Catholic chaplain at Sampson College, near Geneva. Sampson was one of several colleges in the state asked to temporarily take care of our men returning from World War II. Through the GI Bill of Rights, veterans were provided college tuition and a pit-



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

tance — \$50 per month — to pay for food and board.

All the soldiers at Sampson — whose ages ranged from 22 to 28 — had matured through the military service. I remember that several of the veterans came from the Aquinas Institute. Just like Notre Dame had its famous "Four Horsemen," Sampson had what I considered the "Three Horsemen" in Ed Beickirk, Norman Ladd

and Frank Aleri.

I admired each of them for his strong Catholicity and goodness. One Saturday night, for example, the college had a big dance featuring a well-known band in the drill hall. On Sunday, Beickirk and Ladd attended the noon Mass with their dates from Rochester. I remember that all four of them received Holy Communion, which meant that their dates were chaste and that they each had fasted from food and drink since midnight.

Changing the subject quickly, I love money, not for its materialistic value, but for the good that can be done with it. An Auburn woman recently sent me \$100 "for Father Aman's mission in Africa. A good friend of mine, Father Gerry Aman is a Jesuit from Holy Trinity Church in

Webster and a graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School.

Father Aman is currently involved with the training of seminarians for the priesthood in Nigeria, Africa. Applicants for the seminaries in Africa are so great in number that many have to be turned away.

In his note thanking me for the donation he wrote: "Our Jesuit community is in Ibadan, and we have just finished first semester at Ss. Peter and Paul Seminary. Our seven first students (Jesuit candidates) got absorbed into the class of 124 seminarians. They've gotten to form many friendships with diocesan seminarians as well as with Dominicans, White Fathers, Redemptorists. It's great to see so much unity among the group. It bodes well for the Church in Africa.

"We had to start the year with nothing. Now I am trying to get together more furniture for the five new seminarians we expect to join us. To give you an idea of how (far) your money goes over here, I can buy the desks for all five with your gift. I will tell them to remember to pray for you as they do their studies and papers. One Nigerian Jesuit will do student-teaching of philosophy for two years. He is a brilliant young man and will make an excellent priest.

"During the three years I was at Sampson College we had five students who became priests. All are still living. All have persevered in their vocation.

"The Church calls for priests, but only for those who are willing to dedicate their lives from the love of Christ and His Church to the service of the people, both Catholics and non-Catholics. After 55 years in the priesthood I can affirm that I know of no vocation that is so great and so happy.

"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your Name give glory," a verse to be pondered over by men who have ideals, and ponder over a call to the priesthood."

Church needs young men to be good shepherds

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 10:11-18; (R1) Acts 4:8-12; (R2) 1 John 3:1-2.

Seven Sundays separate Easter and Pentecost. The first three Sundays of Easter focused on the resurrection of Jesus. The last four Sundays focus on his presence in the Christian community.

Jesus is risen! So what? What difference does the risen Jesus make in our lives?

In addition to describing the relationship that should exist between Christ and his own, the last four Sundays illustrate the relationship that should exist between his own and one another. He is to us as the shepherd is to his sheep (fourth Sunday) and the vine to its branches (fifth Sunday). We are to love one another as he loves us (sixth Sunday). Therefore, the shepherd prays for his sheep (seventh Sunday) and sends his Holy Spirit on Pentecost. We need his prayers and his spirit.

The theme of the Sunday readings is that of the Good Shepherd. The shepherds of Israel were the kings of Israel. Most of these kings were weaklings, unable to lead the people of God. They used people for their own gain. Jeremiah denounced them as failing in their duty by allowing their sheep to be preyed upon and scattered.

Jeremiah, however, provided a ray of hope for the sheep when he said that God would raise up a king from the shoot of David who would be a good shepherd.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." Unlike most of the past shepherds of Israel, Jesus is the good shepherd, not just because he is kindly and gentle, but



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

because "he lays down his life for his sheep."

One of the tragedies in the church today is the death of shepherds — the Latin word is "pastor." Without shepherds, the sheep will become easy prey to the wolves. God is calling shepherds. But too often youths ignore the call because another call is drowning it out: the call of the flesh and the world.

Leo Tolstoy tells the story of a man who could have all the land he could walk around from sunrise to sunset. So desirous was the man to get all the land he could that he rose at the crack of dawn and walked all day. He walked so fast and so far that when he returned to his starting point at sunset, he dropped dead in his tracks from sheer exhaustion. So much effort for so little. Six feet of ground was all he got.

How many men labor, sweat, grunt and groan for the nothings of this earthly life.

As James Russell Lowell put it: "For a

cap and bells our lives we pay, Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking."

And yet what vistas of glory Christ holds out to the generous people who leave these material things and follow him: "You shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the world." Just as the good shepherd needs shepherds, the sheep need shepherds as well.

Why is there a shortage of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life? I have already noted my reasons: the world is too much with us; the closing of our Catholic schools; the gibberish about celibacy and ordination of women; the decline of family prayer and of families living the faith; and the movement to laicize the clergy and clericalize the laity.

The good shepherd's call to priesthood can be answered by anyone who has the three H's: a good heart, good head and good health. If a lad has the right intentions, average intelligence and health, he need look for nothing more to pursue than the priesthood.

I always say to such lads, "Read about the priesthood, think about it, talk about it, pray about it, then do something about it. You have only one life to live, why not live it heroically?"

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